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The One Food You Should Travel for in Each State

Your guide to foraged ingredients, immigrant-born dishes, and state-fair staples in all 50 states, plus D.C. and Puerto Rico—and how to plan the perfect trips to taste them all.

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This story is part of Afar's America 250 coverage, which includes articles, podcasts, and social media storytelling.

Few topics get people as passionate (and heated) as regional foods, which can make putting together a list like this a daunting task. We've collected 52 foods from across the U.S—one for every state, plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.—and we're celebrating everything from wild ingredients to immigrant staples, historic dishes to viral newcomers (we're looking at you, Utah's dirty soda!). But more than simply a bite to eat, this list celebrates the transformative power of cuisine and the restaurants, roadside stands, markets, ingredients, and experiences that are truly worth planning a trip around. That might mean foraging for huckleberries in Montana or spruce tips in Alaska, immersing yourself in the Burmese community of Indianapolis, setting out on a taco crawl in Texas's Rio Grande Valley, or joining formerly incarcerated men in Hawai'i as they prepare a restorative meal in an underground *imu*. Read on, get hungry, and start planning your next food-focused adventure.

Rhode Island: Rhode Island–style fried calamari

Rhode Island–style fried calamari is a gift from the Ocean State: fried squid tossed with garlic butter and pickled hot cherry or banana peppers that lend a briny, puckery punch. The origins of the dish are a little murky, but it likely came together in the 1970s and '80s in the Italian American enclave of Federal Hill in Providence. These days, you can find classic renditions all over the state, from the waterfront perches at Matunuck Oyster Bar in South Kingstown or Evelyn's Drive-In in Tiverton to local institutions like Aunt Carrie's in Narragansett, which is located a mile from the Point Judith lighthouse and has been serving shore dinners since 1920. In Providence, the version at Camille's comes with champagne garlic butter and fresh mint, while Los Andes offers a bright Peruvian twist, with the addition of queso blanco, *choclo* (Peruvian corn), cherry tomatoes, and mint. For a true Ocean State adventure, though, book a night squid-fishing trip with Frances Fleet out of Point Judith to jig for your own catch under the stars; tours run from 7 p.m. to midnight from April 29 through June 20. —*RS*