

I've traveled to over 80 countries. Here are 13 of my favorite restaurants I've eaten at around the world.

By [Latifah Al-Hazza](#)



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I've traveled to over 80 countries and have found some great restaurants along the way.

Cuisine aside, I look for unique experiences and high-quality service when picking my top eateries.

My favorite spots range from a local eatery in Montana to a [fine-dining restaurant in Dubai](#).

I've eaten my way through almost 80 countries.

Throughout my travels, I've loved the meals I've had at casual hole-in-the-wall establishments as much as I've loved ones from Michelin-starred restaurants.

Plus, balancing high-end and casual dining experiences has shaped my taste buds and my views on hospitality and service.

Although it was difficult to narrow down my top picks, here's what I'd say are some of my favorite restaurants in the world.

Chicago's Esmé beautifully blends together art and food.



Some dishes at Esmé lean into color. Latifah Al-Hazza

This Michelin-starred fine-dining restaurant is in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, and it's the perfect place to go if you want a meal that blends food and art.

With an evolving tasting menu that changes each quarter, chef Jenner Tomaska and his partner, Katrina Bravo, excel in collaborating with local artists and creatives to create memorable, art-filled dining experiences.

From the dishware, surrounding artwork, and music, to the presentation of each dish, Esmé tells a story throughout the entire tasting menu experience.

Bahia is one of Malta's few restaurants with a Michelin star.



Bahia is a Michelin-starred restaurant. Latifah Al-Hazza

Bahia is one of Malta's seven Michelin-starred restaurants.

The restaurant is inspired by the four stages of an orange tree: seed, growth, bloom, and harvest. Guests are welcomed to each table by a small display that symbolizes the terrain and topography of Maltese and Gozitan villages.

The wooden display has three removable tubes, and diners are asked to select their degustation preference by placing the ceramic tube (for à la carte), bamboo tube (for plant-based), or bronze tube (classic) in the center of the wooden piece.

I loved that each thing I ordered came with a drawing and description of the dish and the village where it and its ingredients came from.

Bardea Food and Drink in Delaware is great for family-style dining.



I've had some delicious dishes at Bardea. Latifah Al-Hazza

Located in downtown Wilmington, Delaware, Bardea is an inventive Italian restaurant.

Co-owners Scott Stein and Antimo DiMeo (also executive chef) source ingredients from Italy and local Delaware Valley Farms to create fresh dishes. The restaurant values family-style dining and serves plates that are designed to be shared.

I love how, at its core, Bardea is all about bringing community together over a delicious meal.

Sifr is another gem in Chicago.



Sifr serves genuinely good Middle Eastern-inspired fare. Latifah Al-Hazza

It has always been difficult for me to find a restaurant that I feel embraces the true spirit of my home region in the Middle East. Then, I dined at Sifr.

This woodfire restaurant in Chicago is helmed by chefs Sujan Sarkar and Sahil Sethi, who excel at preparing dishes with incredible spices.

Their dishes give me the comforting feeling that I have when I'm eating in the Gulf Arab region. I highly recommend the mezze platter, falafel, tiger prawns, and Persian berry pilaf.

Food aside, the restaurant is also gorgeous with a beautiful rooftop overlooking the River North district of Chicago.

I love the Matsuhisa location in Aspen.



Chef Nobu Matsuhisa created Matsuhisa. Latifah Al-Hazza

Renowned chef Nobu Matsuhisa created the iconic Nobu chain, and he's also the mastermind behind Matsuhisa.

There are a few locations of this sushi restaurant, but my favorite is in downtown Aspen, Colorado, in an old Victorian house. The menu is influenced by Japanese and Peruvian cuisines.

All the dishes I tried during my visit were melt-in-your-mouth delicious. Some of my favorite bites were the black cod miso and yellowtail sashimi with jalapeño.

Plus, the service was incredible.

Snack De Mairipehe blew me away in Tahiti.



Snack De Mairipehe has some great fish dishes. Latifah Al-Hazza

While on a moped exploring the Polynesian island of Tahiti, I got so hungry and randomly stopped at Snack De Mairipehe.

Fortunately, it was an excellent decision. The hole-in-the-wall, open-air restaurant has outstanding local dishes.

It's also where I was introduced to the island's signature dish, poisson cru, which translates to "raw fish." The dish resembles a ceviche but consists of raw fish marinated in citrus juice and coconut milk. I've never had anything like it.

Oystera in Todos Santos is great for fans of seafood.



I love fresh oysters. Latifah Al-Hazza

In the heart of Todos Santos, Mexico, lies a beautiful oyster bar called Oystera.

Built on the former site of a sugar mill, Oystera is a beautiful restaurant with lush greenery wrapping around its bar. It specializes in seafood, especially oysters sourced from Baja California that are served with a sweet sauce and ponzu.

Café Tola has pleasantly surprised me.



Café Tola is a bit of an underrated gem, in my opinion. Latifah Al-Hazza

I stumbled upon Café Tola years ago in Chicago and was blown away by it after just one bite of its spinach and cheese empanada.

The café's freshly baked, warm empanadas range in flavors from guava and cheese to birria, with enough options for all taste buds and many dietary restrictions.

This casual establishment has multiple locations throughout Chicago and one in New York City.

My FZN dining experience in Dubai was memorable.



FZN is a small restaurant. Latifah Al-Hazza

FZN by Björn Frantzén is an extraordinary blend of European fine dining with a sprinkle of Japanese influences. The restaurant spans two floors but only seats 27 diners.

My dining experience was incredibly memorable. Each meal begins in the "family room" on the upper floor, where canapes and drinks are served.

From there, I was introduced to the ingredients that would be used in the multicourse tasting menu and then escorted downstairs, where I received a glimpse of the kitchen.

Then, our group of diners was taken into a room with dim lighting so we could observe the magic happening in the kitchen.

I was impressed by Masseria in Washington, DC.



Chef Nicholas Stefanelli pays tribute to his Italian heritage at Masseria.. Latifah Al-Hazza

Named after 16th-century farmhouses in Puglia, Masseria pays homage to chef Nicholas Stefanelli's Italian heritage.

The Michelin-starred restaurant seats diners as if they're visiting an authentic Italian country estate — and the food is incredible.

In my opinion, Stefanelli succeeds in transporting diners to all regions of Italy as his menu features dishes and ingredients from varied Italian culinary regions.

Guests can choose a multicourse menu and seating options in the courtyard, covered pergola, or indoor dining room with a view of the open kitchen.

I enjoyed my dining experience at Dinner by Heston Blumenthal Dubai.



Heston Blumenthal is a Michelin-starred restaurant in Dubai. Latifah Al-Hazza

Dinner by Heston Blumenthal Dubai is a Michelin-starred dining experience where historic British roots appear in each dish.

I loved how the servers were like storytellers as they described the creation of each recipe and how it was inspired by the past, sometimes as far back as medieval times.

This eatery also has a London location, though the Dubai one won me over with its dim lighting and dark interiors that felt perfect for a romantic special occasion.

Campione feels like a hidden gem in Montana.



I love the freshness of the food at Campione. Latifah Al-Hazza

Located in a historical building in Livingston, Campione is owned by friends Joshua Adams, Jeffrey Galli, and Anthony Sferra.

They believe that eating well is not just for special occasions but is a requisite of every meal — and the food feels like proof.

The restaurant works with local farmers and suppliers to provide local proteins, veggies, fresh baked goods, pasta, and Roman-style pizzas to diners.

Virginia Beach's Love Song seems to always have something new on its menu.



I love the dishes I've tried at Love Song. Latifah Al-Hazza

Owned by chef Mike Hill and Jake Keller, Love Song offers seasonal dishes made with fresh ingredients.

The small establishment on Virginia Beach's oceanfront that packs a lot of flavor into shareable plates and its cuisine takes influence from a range of regions, from Spain to France.

Every time I visit, I love getting to try innovative new dishes.