

# FOOD & WINE

INSPIRATION SERVED DAILY

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SLIDESHOW

## Matt Jennings's Rhode Island in 10 Plates

The littlest state, once known for big plates of crispy squid with pickled peppers, clam "stuffies" (baked stuffed clams) and coffee "cabine... [MORE](#)

SLIDE 1 OF 11

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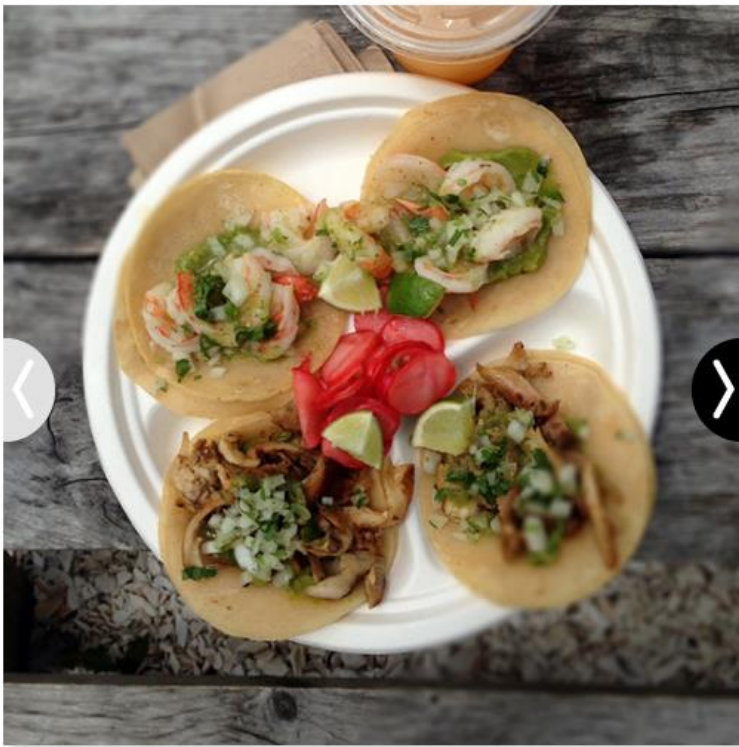


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### Tallulah's Tacos, The Shack @ Dutch Harbor; Jamestown

Owner Jake Rojas is the well-respected locavore chef at Tallulah on Thames in Newport. His newest project is a taco (and burrito and *torta*) shack in the back of a Dutch Harbor parking lot in beautiful Jamestown. Rojas's tacos with either slow-cooked pork, shrimp or—if you're lucky—locally caught and flaked swordfish, are destination-worthy. Pair a set of tacos with some of his homemade *horchata* or melon-and-mint agua fresca, sit at a weathered picnic table on the crushed shell lot and stare at the boats coming and going. That's a slice of Rhody paradise.

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[Modern Mexican Restaurants](#)

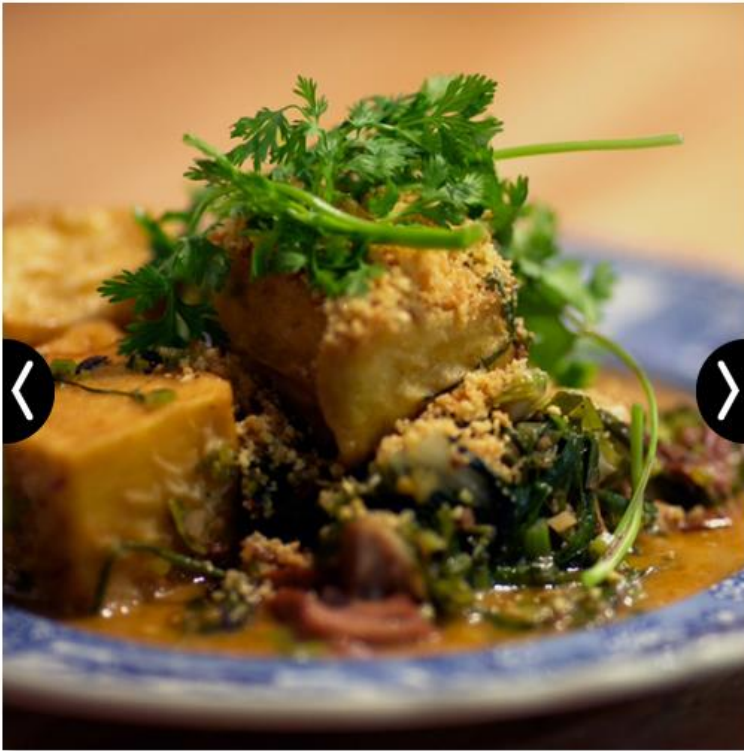


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## North; Providence

The team here crafts a unique blend of New England–inspired neo-traditional Asian cuisine, with dishes like a Sichuan-style rock crab feast for two to four people, or the crispy Burmese fritters with green tomato. My favorite dish is Mapo Shan Tofu, with chiles, peppercorns, peanut brittle and pork. This homemade tofu dish is everything you want it to be—spicy, savory, delicate, intricate—and yet it feels like the type of dish you would eat alongside a grandmother in a country village in Myanmar.



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## Mike's Kitchen; Cranston

Rhode Island has plenty of institutions. Mike's Kitchen is undoubtedly one of them. Heaping portions. Vinyl tablecloths. Bristly waitresses. I love taking my kids here because it is the type of place where no one cares if there is a three-year-old putting mortadella on his face like Hannibal Lecter. I always order the chicken parm. This monstrous plate of fried chicken cutlet, smothered with homemade "gravy," with melted cheese and a few spoonfuls of pasta underneath, may not be on my doctor's short list of favorite things, but it is on mine.

[Italian-American Classics](#)

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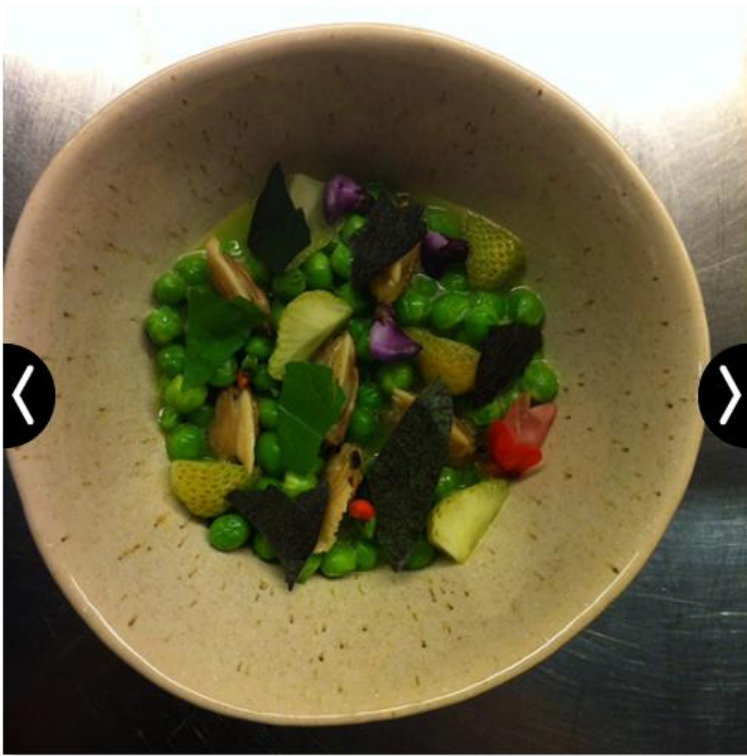


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## Birch; Providence

At Birch, my former chef de cuisine Ben Sukle cooks with precision, dedication and passion. If you are lucky enough to score one of the 20 seats in this micro-workshop, you might try local cornmeal hush puppies, heirloom lettuce with cured egg yolk and other modern interpretations of the classics. One of Birch's standout dishes is the warm buttered sweet pea dish, which comes with clams harvested from Charlestown, Rhode Island, tart green strawberries and floral jasmine rice. The whole concoction comes in a lacy broth made from the clams' juice, freshly juiced peas and seaweed. This is thoughtful and delicious grown-up food.

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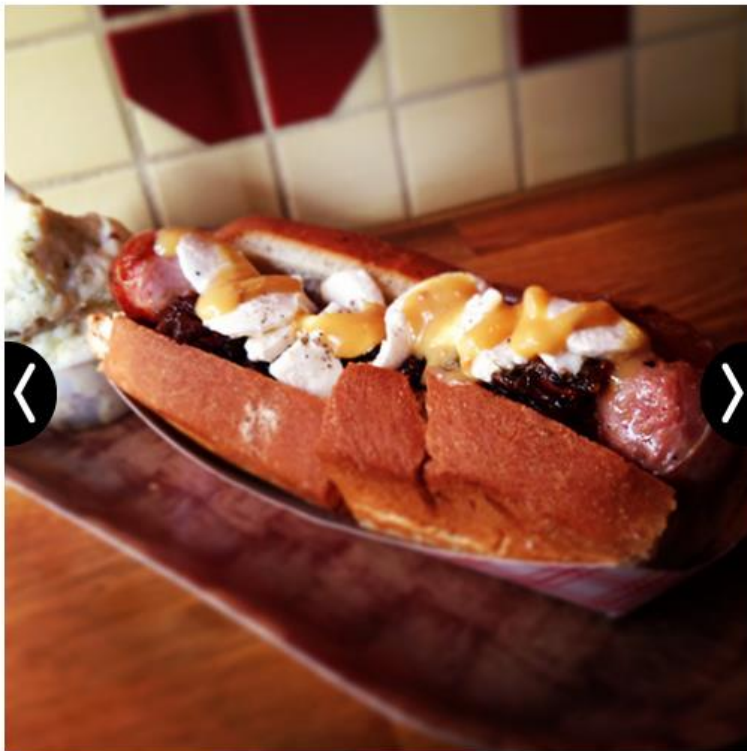


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## Wurst Kitchen at Chez Pascal; Providence

Matt Gennuso is Providence's sausage king. At Chez Pascal, the respected French bistro that he and his lovely wife, Kristin, own, they have quite literally cut a hole in the front and implemented a walk-up window where passersby can feast on a variety of Gennuso's house-stuffed sausages, meat loaf and hot dogs. Gennuso's sausages are definitely worth tasting, and in particular, his hot links: stuffed and smoked in-house and smothered with a bacon jam and shredded mozzarella from the local favorite Narragansett Creamery.

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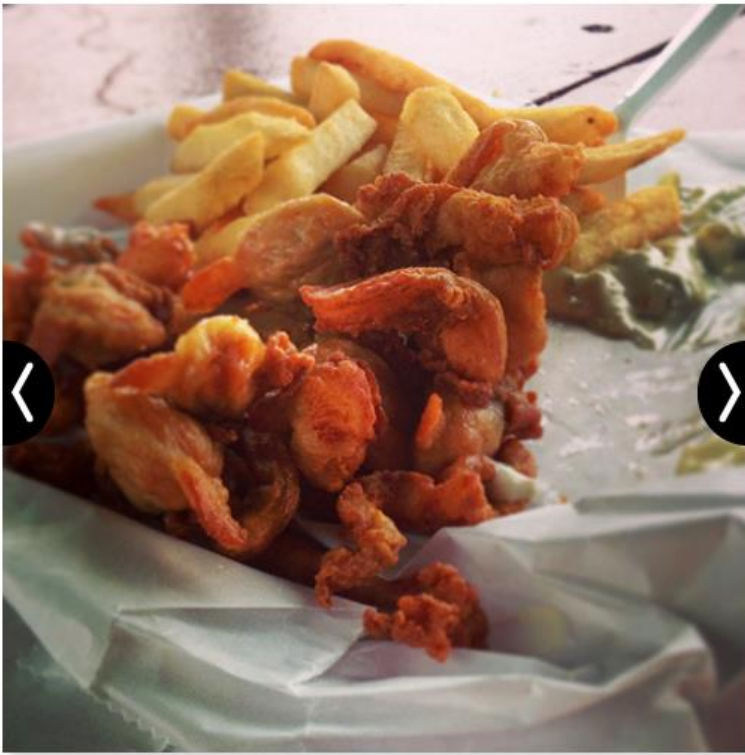


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### Evelyn's Drive In; Tiverton

My mother lives in Little Compton and frequently, on our way home from her house, I find myself pulling off the stretch of Main Road that runs along Nannaquaket Pond, into Evelyn's small parking lot. It seems like you can smell the fryer from miles away. The whole-belly clams are the reason your nose has led you to the take-out window. A small order should suffice. Don't get a clam roll like a tourist, because you'll only get strips. You want the whole belly. They're lightly battered, fried crispy, served with a side of hunky steak fries and as many packets of Heinz tartar sauce and ketchup as you can grab.

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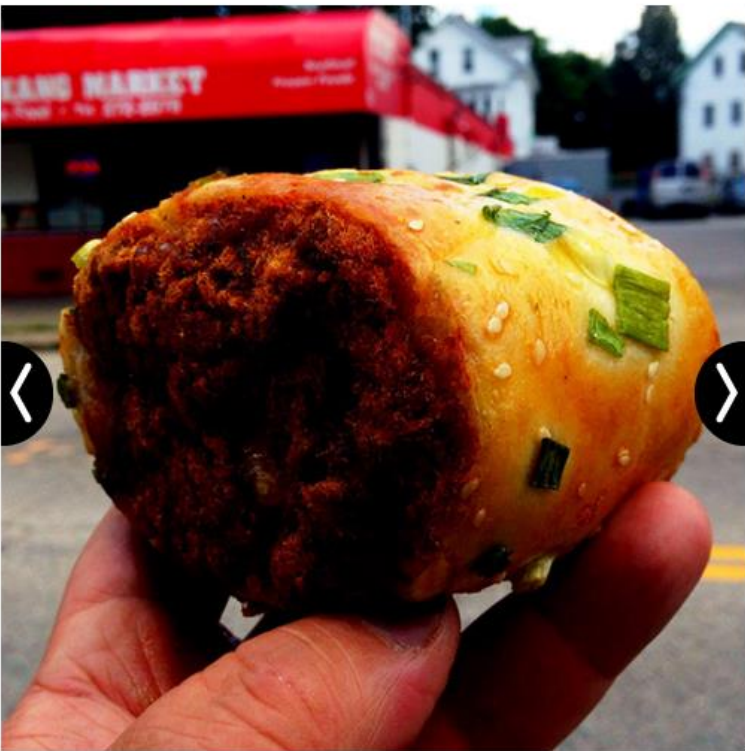


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### Lao Lanexang Market; Providence

This is the morning-after roll. As in, you just spent the evening making bad decisions at your local watering hole and might have seen the sun come up type of morning-after meal. Served on a sweet yeast roll, it is generously stuffed with chopped scallions and crusted on either end with dried, fermented pork. But wait, it gets better. Magically baked into the roll, are layers of mayonnaise. You heard me, but I'll repeat it: *layers of mayonnaise*. This thing is rich, salty, sweet and weird. But I can't get enough.

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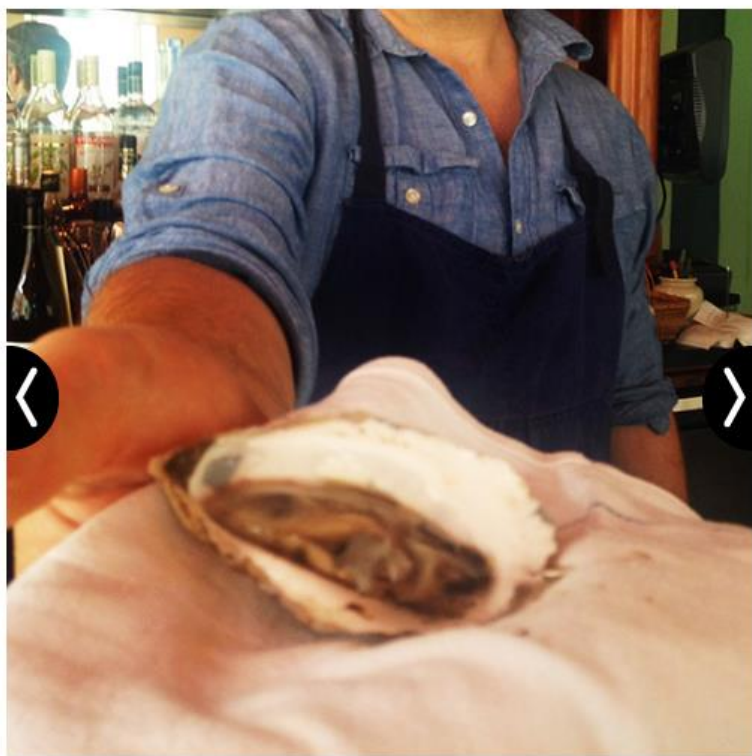


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## New Rivers; Providence

I'm an oyster glutton. Truly. I'll take those briny bivalves any way I can get them—raw, pickled, fried, baked or roasted. For a little more than a year now my buddy, chef Beau Vestal of New Rivers restaurant, has been offering "Buck-a-Shuck" night on Tuesdays. During oyster night, Beau provides a pedigreed roster of shellfish, which recently included a nice breadth of Rhode Island's finest: Walrus and Carpenters, Seapowets, Ninigrets and Plum Points. Ask the bartender to pour you a tall glass of Westport Rivers' Brut, and you're off on a treasure hunt of Rhode Island *terroir*.

[America's Best Oyster Bars](#)

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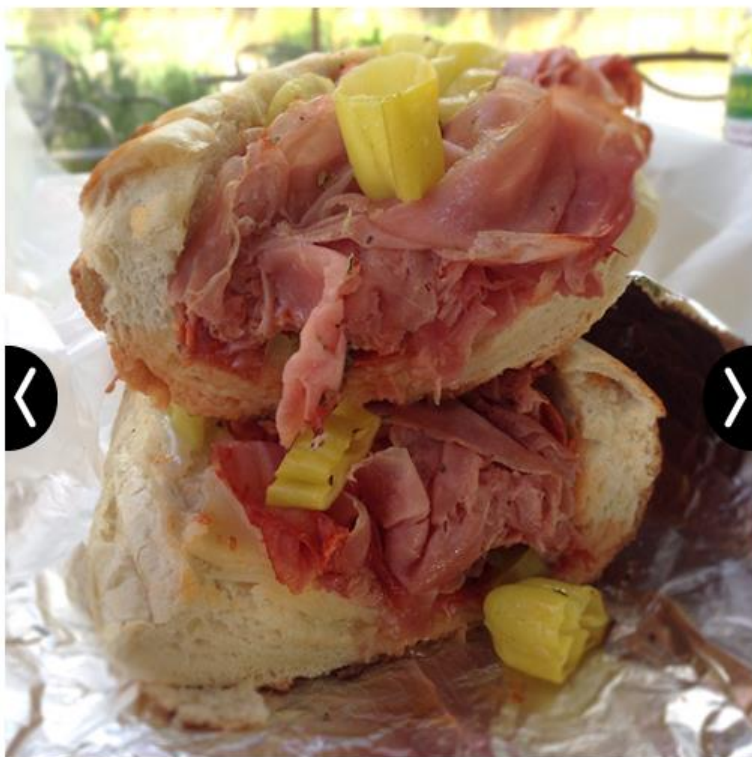


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## The Sandwich Hut; Providence

My final Rhode Island bite that has to be mentioned is the Allitalia™ at the Sandwich Hut, in Providence. Yes, it is trademarked. This signature sandwich is overfilled with capocollo, pepperoni, prosciutto, salami, provolone, tomatoes and hot peppers. This is a real-American old-fashioned sub. Large enough to equal two daily meals, there are some things that make it perfect—the bread, for one. It is toothsome but soft. The meats are sliced to order. The hot peppers are classic (I get mine with extra hots). Ask for it toasted. It doesn't get any better than that.

[Best Sandwiches in the U.S.](#)

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## Mr. Lemon; Providence

In this state, there is as stark a divide between devotees of Mr. Lemon and Del's Lemonade as there is between the Red Sox and Yankees fans. I prefer Mr. Lemon to Del's because I don't like chunks of lemon pith in my ice. At Mr. Lemon, you get the buttery smooth, fresh fallen snow kind of ice. Ask for a lemon-melon ice—small if you're a first timer, large if you know what you're doing, and an extra-large if you're in need of a sugar overdose. Inside the kitschy, clown-clad room, the brothers and sisters who own the institution scoop the ice from a vintage chest freezer into a waxed cup. You pay your four bucks and you walk away. No spoons. No napkins. So don't ask for one.

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