

THE GOURMET ISSUE

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voyeur

FIELD TO FORK
FORAGED FOOD IS
BACK ON THE MENU

AMERICAN HEROES
THE SIGNATURE DISHES
THAT HAVE SHAPED THE US

Marvels of MONTREAL

STROLL THE CITY'S MULTICULTURAL FOODSCAPE



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IN THE POPULAR imagination, the US is the fast food nation, the spiritual home of super-sizing and pioneer of drive-thru everything and takeaway anything. Conjure the idea of American food and what most readily comes to mind is gargantuan portions either smothered by processed cheese, glistening in fat or glazed with sugar. It is a vision of meals made with produce from factory farms, delivered through a car window via a damaging detour in the deep freeze and fryer. The kind that has been exported globally and doesn't demand that you travel for it.

Yet, like most stereotypes, this characterisation is misleading. The US is a complex patchwork quilt of cultures, climates and idiosyncrasies, and its food often reflects that. Of course, in their relentless pursuit of excellence, the Americans have systemised and homogenised fast food but, at the same time, their mad and vast approach has initiated plenty of brave 'only in America' fare. Here are the best of the best.



LOBSTER ROLL, MAINE

Maine, New England, is famed for its rugged coastline dotted with harbours and charming historic resort towns. And then there's the state's crowd-pleasing lobster roll. Locals know that when it comes to this classic, it would be foolish to bend the rules, so the original recipe remains largely unadulterated. Put simply, chilled lobster meat dressed lightly in mayonnaise is generously packed into a warm, buttered bun.

Ironically, the now covetable meat was once shunned by locals, who were underwhelmed by its overabundance. Native Americans used lobster as fertiliser and bait and, soon after the colonists arrived, it was relegated to prisoner food.

These days it's considered a delicacy, yet although lobster rolls are served in the hippest restaurants, they are also still available in petrol stations and seafood shacks along the Maine coastline. Mainers pride themselves on using local seafood, ensuring that New England remains the place to get the best quality and best value lobster roll. Bob's Clam Hut, which has been serving rolls since 1956, is as good as it gets in these parts.



DETAILS

Bob's Clam Hut 315 US Route 1, Kittery, Maine; +1 207 439 4233; www.bobsclamhut.com. **Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que** 3002 West 47th Ave, Kansas City, Kansas; +1 913 722 3366; www.joeskc.com.



BARBECUE, KANSAS CITY

Mention barbecue and most people think of Texas but, deep in the heart of the US, Kansas City has been building its culinary reputation in the same style as a great barbecue is cooked — with patience and purpose. Kansas City is a standout in the somewhat underappreciated region that is the Great Plains. The city's smooth jazz soundtrack adds soul to the 100-plus barbecue joints that serve the area's trademark dry-rubbed meat drenched in a shirt-staining tomato- and molasses-based sauce.

Unlike in Texas (where beef is king), any Kansas City establishment with a smoker will smother its sticky barbecue sauce on hickory-smoked ribs, tender brisket or pulled pork. Sausage, chicken, and even turkey are fair game, but every spot has its own speciality, which it proudly serves along with sides such as potato salad, coleslaw, beans or corn.

Folk in the know head to the old Oklahoma Joe's, now known as Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que. The legendary barbecue outlet has queues spilling out the door for its Z-Man sandwich — brisket with smoked provolone cheese and a pair of crisp golden onion rings on a kaiser roll.

