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The Best New Restaurants in America, 2023

From New York to San Diego, here are the fifty places that we couldn't stop dreaming about.

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Realness can be thrilling. And fortunately, radical authenticity is surging in the world of American dining. Perhaps chefs are becoming braver and more willing to put their personal stories on the plate. Or maybe there's an unconscious impulse afoot to fend off the existential threat of artificial intelligence and virtual worlds. Whatever the reason, we're all the beneficiaries of a culinary moment that revels in raw honesty. The collective dining experience right now is visceral, vulnerable, downright weird at times—and so very human.

Nothing is more real than a whole fish, a dish that makes an appearance, in various forms, on many of the menus featured in the forty-first edition of our Best New Restaurants—reported, as always, by real humans: Jeff Gordinier, Joshua David Stein, Omar Mamoon, and yours truly. Over the past year, we crisscrossed the nation, sampling some two hundred new dining establishments that serve almost every conceivable type of cuisine. After a series of spirited debates, we settled on fifty restaurants that stood out from the rest, below, in alphabetical order by state.

At our Restaurant of the Year, Ilis in Brooklyn, which kicks off our list below, they prepared the fish as it would have been done centuries ago, wrapped in bark and cooked over flames. Across the country at Poltergeist in Los Angeles, they gave us a wild, experimental take on the fish taco, which was dipped in masa and fried. Both felt genuine, and each was delicious.

Honest innovation doesn't always work in the kitchen, but when it does, it's like rocket fuel for the soul. You leave not just full, not just filled with delight, but with a spark. It's a rare thing, but it's worth chasing. Consider this your map. —Kevin Sintumuang

RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR



CHEZ NOIR

Carmel, California



Abalone skewers Joseph Weaver

It's one thing when chefs tell you they want you to feel at home when dining at their restaurants; it's an entirely different thing when you literally are. Chef Jonny Black and his wife Monique Black live on the second floor above their restaurant, located in a charming old Craftsman home just off the edge of downtown Carmel-by-the-Sea. They're throwing a dinner party every night, and you're invited. The sea-centric, French-meets-Spanish menu changes often and with the season, but skewers of grilled abalone smothered in a funky rich sauce made from its liver, and gildas, with the addition of grilled squid, are two bites that'll never leave the menu or your memory. It's as romantic as it sounds. —O.M.