

# DINING //

New restaurants, groundbreaking chefs and the latest food trends.



## Bobby Flay on 3 Inventive American Restaurants

The New York chef picks three restaurants that embody America's unique and diverse flavors.

Bobby Flay is recognized by foodies around the country for his on-air tips and techniques, thanks to his regular gigs on shows such as *America's Next Great Restaurant* and *Iron Chef America*. But Flay was a success in the kitchen long before he became a star of the small screen.

Flay, a lifelong New Yorker, spent his teen years working his way through the city's kitchens before finally settling on an education at The French Culinary Institute. After studying Southwestern cuisine under chef Jonathan Waxman, Flay started his own restaurant empire with the popular Mesa Grill in 1991. He's opened nearly a dozen more locations around the country since then, including Bar Americain, Bobby Flay Steak and Bobby's Burger Palace. Flay also has published multiple cookbooks over the course of his culinary career, showcasing signature recipes such as chili-rubbed short ribs and roast turkey with a pomegranate-black pepper glaze.

Just in time for Independence Day, we asked Flay to pick his top three classic American restaurants, with picks on both coasts and one in the middle: **Providence** in LA, **Michy's** in Miami and **Lola** in Cleveland.

—Jennifer Heigl



1

Los Angeles

Providence



1 Japanese freshwater eel, foie gras and buckwheat 2 Michael Cimarusti 3 Wild salmon belly, cherries, morels and ramps 4 Providence 5 Panna cotta, geoduck clam, abalone and flowers.

THE LOCALE: 5955 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles, providencela.com

THE CHEF: A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Michael Cimarusti made his way through the kitchens of Larry Forgione and Paul Bocuse, including stints at the world-famous Le Cirque and Wolfgang Puck's Spago, before opening Providence as an upscale seafood restaurant in 2005.



UN-LA: Located along trendy Melrose Avenue, the elegant white-tablecloth dining room of Providence is the perfect spot for a date-night dinner or special event celebration. "I went to Providence with my wife for our anniversary last year, since we were both working in Los Angeles," Flay says. "Providence surprised me, because I don't think of it as an LA-style restaurant. It's a little more buttoned-up. Chef Cimarusti's

PHOTOS: VANESSA STUMP



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food just hits the sweet spot as far as solid traditional technique with lots of modern touches, but he doesn't take it too far. He's not cooking for himself, he's cooking for his guests. It was one of the best restaurant experiences, and everything we had was just on point."

**MEMORABLE DISHES:** Providence boasts traditional seafood ingredients with a bit of SoCal influence, with a menu that includes an abalone and geoduck plate, foie gras with Japanese eel and wild salmon belly. "The dish I remember the most is a pasta dish that had California sea urchin and scallions," Flay says. "It was so incredibly simple, but the way he does it, it all makes perfect sense."

**WORLDLY KITCHEN:** "What makes our menu here at Providence an American classic is that we are anything but classical," says Chef Cimarusti. "Rather, we embrace influences, products and cuisines from all over the world. We limit ourselves only to what is fresh, seasonal, sustainable, delicious and inspiring. What could be more American?"

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# 2 Miami Michy's

**THE LOCALE:** 6927 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami, michysmiami.com

**THE CHEF:** A James Beard award-winner and author of *Cuisine a Latina*, Michelle Bernstein began her career as a ballerina before taking to the kitchen. Bernstein honed her Latin American culinary skills in local restaurants and in 2005 opened Michy's. "The thing I love about her food and this restaurant is that she has a lot of influence from her family as well as the Miami community," Flay says.



2

**1** Key lime tart with chocolate crust **2** Chef Michelle Bernstein **3** Michy's dining room.

**CULTURES UNITE:** Highlighting the best in local seafood, Michy's features dishes such as *Chupe de Mariscos* and Peruvian-style ceviche alongside classics ranging from seared foie gras to duck confit. "When I go to the restaurant, I tend to order a lot of half orders," Flay says, "and she has these amazing croquetas with Serrano ham and blue cheese."



3

**UNIQUE SPIN:** "The concept for Michy's was that of a 'neighborhood restaurant,' even if our 'neighbors' weren't the only ones eating there," Bernstein says. "I love to have fun in the kitchen and communicate that sense of fun to the customer, and for that, there's nothing better than to take good old American dishes and make them your own."

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MICHY'S (1 & 2); GIO ALMA (3)





# 3 Cleveland Lola

**THE LOCALE:** 2058 East 4th Street, Cleveland, lolabistro.com

**THE CHEF:** Lola is one of four restaurants manned by chef Michael Symon, who is “really proud of his Midwestern roots,” Flay says. “He’s not afraid to be about meat-and-potatoes, but he does it in a much bigger way.” An Iron Chef and author, Symon opened the original Lola in 1997 before converting it to what is now known as Lolita and establishing a new location for his flagship Lola.



**MEMORABLE DISHES:** Lola’s menu of classics pulls inspiration (and ingredients) from the farms throughout the Midwest. Guests are treated to house-made charcuterie, hanger steak and fries and calf heart with celery root. “The last time I was there, he did a smoked Berkshire pork chop, which was a nice way to do something classic but really bring a great flavor to it,” Flay says.



**KEEPING IT REAL:** “What makes Lola quintessentially American is that it is one of the few restaurants that truly embraces and celebrates the cuisine of the heartland,” Symon says. “Things like beef cheek pierogi, foie gras bratwurst and grilled Ohio rib eye with shaved radish salad.”

**1** The dining room of Lola  
**2** Chef Michael Symon  
**3** Hanger steak and fries.

PHOTOS: DONNA TURNER/ULMAN