

Food

WORTH THE DRIVE

Good food is essential to good travel, and in Oklahoma, some of the best reasons to get in the car are culinary. For the fourth year running, we've rounded up some of the state's best destinations for turning a full tank of gas into a full belly.

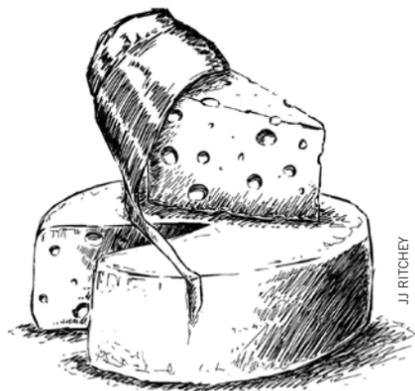
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LORI DUCKWORTH**



The Rock House in Talihina was created with date night in mind, and the nearly 100-year-old stone building has romantic views of the nearby Kiamichi Mountains (page 74).

CHEESE, CHEESE ME

Chouteau's Amish Cheese house sells nearly sixty varieties of cheese including Bermuda onion and mango fire cheddar.



JJ RITCHIEY

“Whenever people return to Alva, they’ve always got to go to the Taco Village first.”

—RESA HARRIS, *Taco Village*

KEY

The number of forks equates to the average cost of an entrée and beverage.

🍴 = \$10 and under

🍴🍴 = \$11 and up

ALVA
Taco Village

In 1972, if Alva residents wanted Mexican cuisine, they had to drive more than seventy miles out of town to find it—at least until Dudley Brown, who owned an accounting business at the time, decided to change that.

“We would go to Enid once a week for Mexican food,” says Resa Harris, Brown’s daughter and co-owner of **Taco Village**. “My mom could cook pretty good Mexican food, and my parents decided that’s what they wanted to do.”

Now, almost forty-five years later, Harris still uses the recipes her parents developed in their kitchen. From the large and satisfying Sancho plate—a huge tortilla filled with creamy refried beans and well-seasoned meat topped with chili and cheese—to the thin tortilla chips with molten cheese sauce, this menu makes Alva natives eager to come home.

“Whenever people return to Alva, they say they’ve always got to go to the Taco Village first,” Harris says.

—Leighona Bernstein

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 828 Oklahoma Boulevard, (580) 327-1357. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Visitors from as far away as Wisconsin have been known to stop at Taco Village and get an order of twenty or more frozen burritos to take home.

ATOKA
Luigi’s Italian Restaurant

For many, a thriving small-town downtown is a perfect symbol of America. And on the picturesque Court Street—Atoka’s main drag—the American dream is an everyday reality for Gezim and Adriana Mustafaraj, owners of **Luigi’s Italian Restaurant**. Gezim learned to cook Italian food

while living in Germany, and now the Albanian immigrants and their teenage children run one of southeastern Oklahoma’s best spots for delectable Italian dishes. It’s made them a lot of friends in this small town.

“In this community, everybody knows everybody, so people walk in and we say, ‘Do you want your usual?’” says Enxhi, Gezim and Adriana’s daughter. “We know their names, their kids’ names, their pets, their great-grandma.”

Those looking for a taste of the old country will do well to check out house specialties like Chicken Carchovi—artichoke hearts, grilled chicken, mushrooms, and spaghetti in creamy white sauce—or the Chef’s Favorite with grilled chicken, broccoli, bell peppers, and jalapeños sautéed in that same white sauce with penne pasta. But whether hunger calls for pizza, sandwich, salad, or any number of pasta dishes, lovers of Italian dining will find their cravings sated here.

—Nathan Gunter

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. 315 East Court Street, (580) 364-0221. 🍴🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Those hoping for a healthy option should look no further than the Roma Salad with lettuce, tomatoes, garlic, cheese, artichoke hearts, bell peppers, mushrooms, capers, and black olives in a lemon dressing. Add grilled chicken or shrimp for an extra bit of protein.

CHOUTEAU
Amish Cheese House

Defy food that trends toward the complex and revel in the simple goodness of a fresh homemade sandwich at the **Amish Cheese House** in Chouteau. Opened in 2000 as a deli and bulk foods market selling products sourced from Amish wholesalers, the Cheese House became a culinary



At Luigi’s Italian Restaurant in Atoka, owner and chef Gezim Mustafaraj creates dishes like the Chef’s Favorite with grilled chicken, broccoli, bell peppers, black olives, and jalapeños in a white sauce.



Curated cheese boards and dishes like shrimp skewers—not to mention a stunning view of the surrounding prairie—have made White Dog Hill one of western Oklahoma’s most popular date night attractions.

destination on the strength of its deli counter sandwiches. As its reputation grew, so did its space.

“Every time we added more tables, we filled them,” says owner Wes Miller.

These sandwiches are made to order with Amish meats and cheeses and country-style bread baked daily at the onsite Nettie Ann’s Bakery. They are best paired with soup like creamy chicken with locally made Amish noodles. For dessert, try one of the sixteen flavors of homemade ice cream like Orange Pineapple or Purple Cow. And visitors can take a taste of this remarkable place away with more than 2,500 products from the adjoining market like Amish-made jams, cheese balls, and fudge.—**Brooke Adcox**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 101 South Chouteau Avenue, (918) 476-4811 or amishcheesehouse.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *The Amish speak Pennsylvania Dutch, a language owner Leah Miller speaks with her Amish staff members.*

CLINTON
White Dog Hill

A gravel road off Route 66 leads to the restaurant at the top of a rise with spectacular views of the surrounding prairie. First-timers may come to Clinton’s **White Dog Hill** for the vista, but their senses soon are drawn away from the window toward the food. Chef Jacqui Thunderbull keeps things interesting by changing the menu each week with popular entrée specials such as crab cakes, lamb chops, game hens in the winter, and sandwich specials like a jalapeño burger on a ciabatta bun.

Watching the sun set over the hill with a glass of wine and a cheese board with fruit, stuffed olives, nuts, and a rustic bâtard might be one of

the best delicacies western Oklahoma has to offer.

“The cheese boards are sort of my puppies,” says owner Nelson King. “I’m always looking for more cheeses.” —**Kristin Kenney**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Wednesday through Saturday, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. 22901 North Route 66 Service Road, (580) 323-6922. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *White Dog Hill is named for King’s dog, who passed away in 2016 and is buried on the property. The Beany Bar downstairs is named after King’s other dog, Beans.*

COLLINSVILLE
Scoops & Grinds

Hot or cold? Caffeine buzz or sugar rush? **Scoops & Grinds** on Collinsville’s quaint Main Street offers it all for those in need of a little nudge to get through the day. The small, sunny store serves café standards made from locally roasted coffee beans. Try the Caramel Steamer—steamed milk with caramel syrup—or a dirty chai latte with steamed milk, chai tea, and an espresso shot.

Scoops & Grinds also makes its own ice cream in-house weekly using an Italian gelato freezer. Varieties rotate, but the Mocha Amore, using house espresso, almonds, and dark chocolate ice cream, is a local favorite. The shop also features house-baked goods like Lemonies—iced lemon bars with a brownie-like texture—and delicate blueberry scones.—**Becky Carman**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Tuesday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. 1023 West Main Street, (918) 553-8010 or scoopsandgrinds.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *Owners Judy and Chris Broyles match customer donations to the local animal shelter.*



JAVIER BROGSHSHUTTERSTOCK

HAIR OF THE DOG
At White Dog Hill’s Beany Bar, diners waiting for a table can grab a drink in style.

“The cheese boards are sort of my puppies. I’m always looking for more cheeses.”
—NELSON KING, White Dog Hill



With items like Sicilian Nachos, right, and shrimp and grits, Abendigo's provides quality and variety to vacationers in the Beavers Bend State Park area (page 66).



JJ RITCHEY

ELK CITY
Simon's Catch

Throttle down on the country road leading to **Simon's Catch** near Elk City. Soak up the countryside, and maybe give an Okie wave to the farmers before seeing what brings more than a hundred people most nights to this neck of the prairie.

Aunt Tiny's coleslaw, thick hand-cut steaks, golden fried shrimp, and farm-fresh catfish with sides of chilled green tomatoes and slow-cooked pinto beans with bacon make diners go the distance. Save room for baked brownie pie sunk in a puddle of chocolate sauce, hot fudge, whipped cream, and ice cream.

"Our menu is exactly the same as when we opened in 1993," says Questa Williamson, manager and daughter-in-law of owner Elisha Simon. "Elisha

started by inviting family and friends. We don't even have a sign out front."
—Sheilah Bright

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Wednesday and Thursday, 5 to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m.; and Sunday, 12 to 9 p.m. From Interstate 40 west of Elk City, take Exit 34 and drive 1.5 miles south, turn right at the Simon's Catch sign, and then drive 1.5 miles west. (580) 225-8400 or facebook.com/simonscatch. 🍴🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *On the road to Simon's Catch, say hello to the donkeys, alpacas, and zebra at the neighbor's place.*

GUYMON
Naifeh's Steakhouse

On February 19, 1979, former World War II mess hall sergeant—

and son of Lebanese immigrants—Zeke Naifeh and his wife Dee first opened the doors at **Naifeh's Steakhouse** in Guymon. Now, their daughter Katrina Naifeh Akers and her family serve the same hand-cut, charbroiled steaks, seafood, and Mediterranean fare locals have loved for nearly four decades.

Akers and her son Eric Bauer switch off kitchen duty, making chicken-fried steak, honey-lime salmon, or juicy ribeyes served with baked potatoes, two pieces of crisp and buttery Texas toast, and a side of fresh tabbouleh. Most meals come with salad and a cup of Naifeh's famous tomato-based vegetable beef soup, which patrons also may purchase by the quart.

After four generations, this Panhandle institution treats its guests

like members of the family and still abides by Zeke Naifeh's day-one motto: good food, generous portions, and fair prices.—**Leighona Bernstein**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. 704 Northeast Twelfth Street, (580) 338-5355. 🍴🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *Regulars know to ask for Katrina's Salad. The big grilled lemon chicken salad on top of a baked potato isn't on the menu but sometimes will grace the specials board and is always just a polite inquiry away.*

HENRYETTA
Classic Diner

While many beloved small-town diners affectionately could be called greasy spoons, Henryetta's **Classic Diner** hits the spot without leaving guests feeling sluggish. Omelets and hash browns are light and fresh, and the diner achieves breakfast greatness with perfectly soft biscuits. The expansive menu also includes traditional lunch and dinner options with hard-to-find items such as liver and onions, fried zucchini, and three-way chili sure to conquer the cravings of Southern food fans.

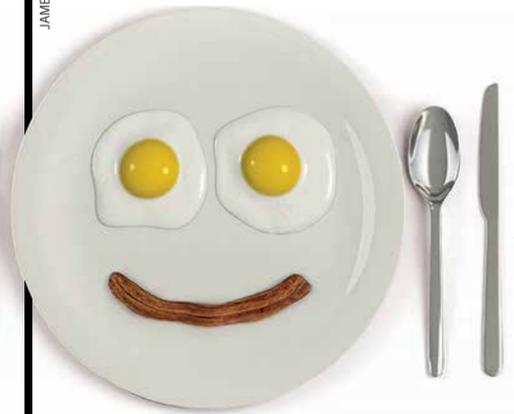
Frankie McKay-Robertson, the Classic Diner's manager, says the Deep Fried Granny Cake—a slice of Texas toast with powdered sugar, whipped cream, and a choice of fruit toppings that edges into State Fair-food territory—is a recipe from co-owner Wayne Williams' grandmother. With concoctions like this, it's no surprise that this place is a local treasure.

"We have regulars that come in every day like clockwork," McKay-Robertson says.—**Sara Cowan**

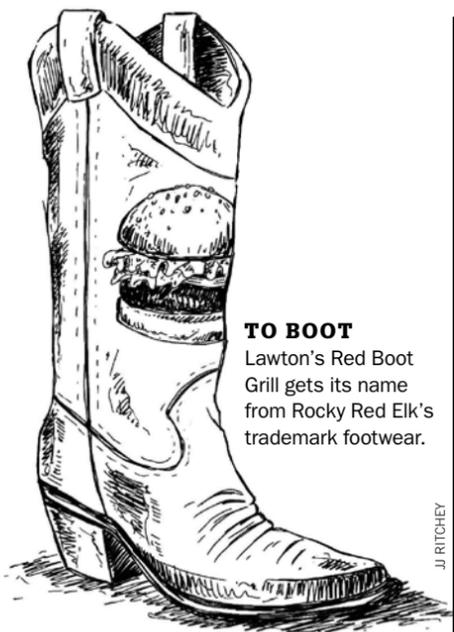
WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Saturday, 6:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. 105 East Main Street, (918) 652-4000. 🍴

JAMES STEIDSHUTTERSTOCK

MORNING GOOD
Classic Diner in Henryetta is Main Street's go-to spot for breakfast.



"We don't even have a sign out front."
—QUESTA WILLIAMSON, *Simon's Catch*



TO BOOT
Lawton's Red Boot Grill gets its name from Rocky Red Elk's trademark footwear.

J. RITCHIE

"The shrimp and grits are the best you're going to get north of New Orleans."
—CHAD SARGENT, *Abendigo's*

DID YOU KNOW: Local businesses rent ad space on the menu at *Classic Diner*, a reliable sign of a worthwhile stop.

HOCHATOWN
Abendigo's

"The shrimp and grits are the best you're going to get north of New Orleans," says *Abendigo's* chef and partner Chad Sargent. It's a bold assertion, and the supporting evidence is persuasive. Pan-seared blackened shrimp in Creole tomato glaze are buoyed up in white cheddar jalapeño grits with smoky bacon and mushrooms. Creative comfort food and steaks are what this Hochatown staple has been known for since 2002.

Other customer favorites are the Sicilian Nachos—a hefty portion of house-made chips topped with Alfredo sauce, black olives, peperoncinos, and jalapeños—along with classics like fried calamari, catfish, salmon, and crême brûlée. A full bar serves beers on tap and cocktails like the salted caramel martini and Sex in a Cabin. And starting in March, the expansive outdoor patio will host live music every weekend, making *Abendigo's* a top entertainment spot in this southeastern Oklahoma resort town.—Megan Rossman

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Saturday, 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. The bar is open until 11. U.S. Highway 259 and Stevens Gap Road, (580) 494-7222 or abendigos.com. 🍴🍷

DID YOU KNOW: Looking for a secret menu item? Order the sautéed mushrooms served in a garlic cream sauce with toast.

LAWTON
Red Boot Grill

Christy Red Elk wasn't raised exclusively on hamburgers, but when she was growing up in Mangum, the Hamburger Inn hosted some of her fondest memories.

"After my mom died, my dad would take me there, and I'd sit on the bar stools," she says. "Hamburgers are in my blood."

So when Red Elk realized her dream of owning a restaurant, she looked to her roots. The result is the **Red Boot Grill's** old-fashioned lineup of homemade soups, cookies, and, of course, made-to-order burgers.

It's that last item in particular that's helped grow the cash-only customer base since Red Boot opened in January 2016. The gargantuan namesake burger features two third-pound patties covered in grilled onions, mac and cheese, and chili. Specials—like Frito chili pie or a burger with fried onions and jalapeños—appear daily on Red Boot's Facebook page.—Karlie Tipton

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. 1916 Southwest Lee Boulevard, (580) 713-5335 or facebook.com/redbootgrill. 🍴🍷

DID YOU KNOW: *Red Boot Grill* got its name from Christy Red Elk's husband Rocky, who wore red boots when the couple first started dating. When he proposed to her, Rocky put the ring in his boot for her to find.

MIDWEST CITY
C'est Si Bon Catfish & Po-Boys

Behold the catfish, often wrapped in an armor of cornmeal, a bottom-feeder that tastes like a diner would imagine a bottom-feeder would. Then there's catfish à la Ken Mills, owner of **C'est Si Bon** in Midwest City and Del City. Mills—known as Chef Ken—operated New Orleans kitchens, and he knows catfish. His emerge in a light, fluffy coating full of flavor and crunch. Each plate comes with Tiger Sauce, which adds sweet, tangy notes. For those looking for Cajun classics, the menu also features po-boys and red beans and rice.

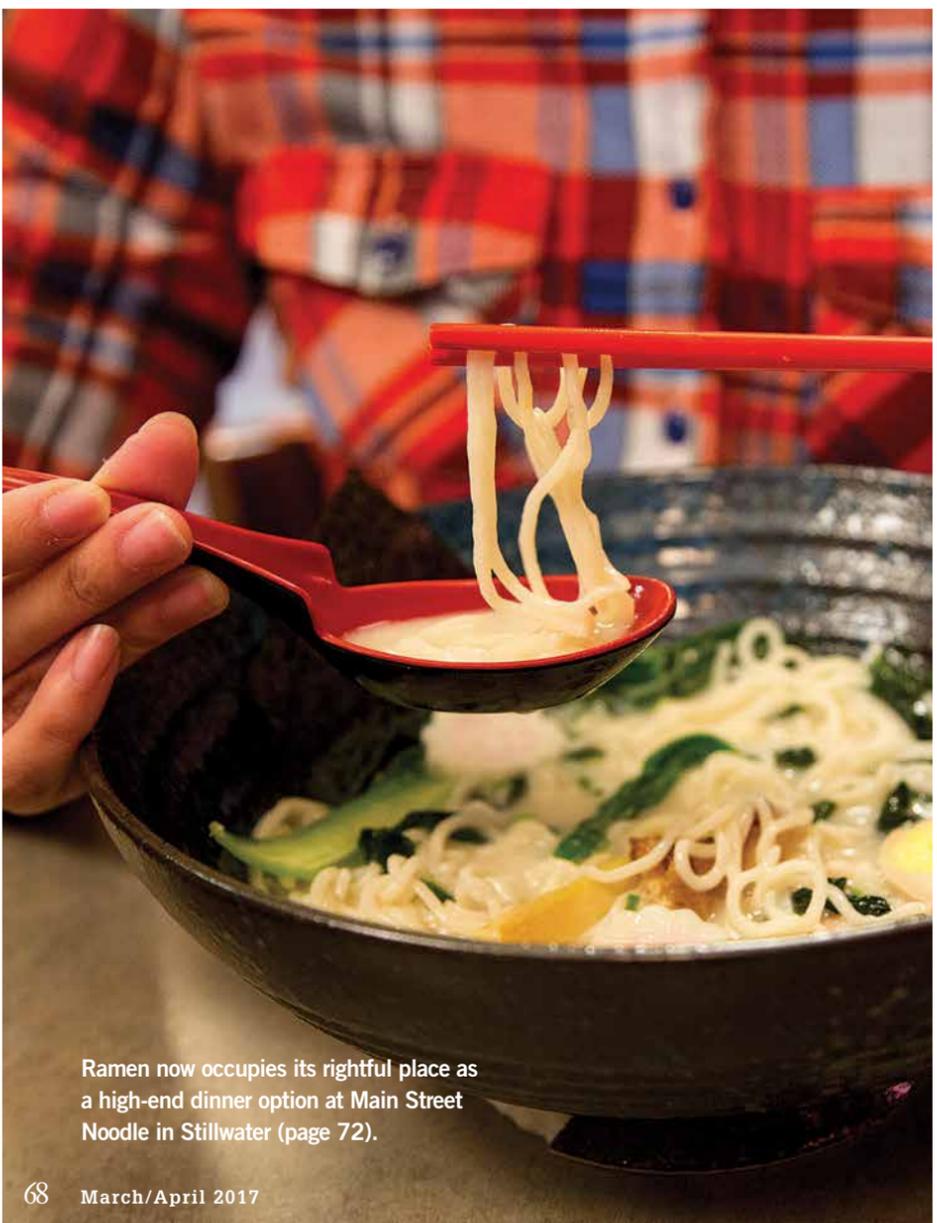


For a quarter century, Miss Addie's Café & Pub has been popular with Muskogee locals and travelers for its quiches, salads, soups, and desserts (page 68).

"I'm just the guy keeping the tradition alive."
 —RON BENNET, Bobo's

But whatever the choice, a word to the wise: Get a second bottle of Tiger Sauce when picking up an order to go.
 —Dyrinda Tyson

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 101 North Douglas Boulevard in Midwest City, (405) 610-2555. Monday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 5501 Main Street in Del City, (405) 601-8822. cajuncatfishandpoboys.com. 🍴🍴



Ramen now occupies its rightful place as a high-end dinner option at Main Street Noodle in Stillwater (page 72).

DID YOU KNOW: *C'est Si Bon* is one of the most popular food options at Oklahoma City's Festival of the Arts every April.

MUSKOGEE
Miss Addie's Café & Pub

In 1915, people rushed to the tall brick building on West Broadway Street in Muskogee for elixirs to fix what ailed them. Since 1992, the remedies from the former Smith's Drug Store—now **Miss Addie's Café & Pub**—center on quiches in flavors like turkey bacon and tomato or green chile with ham.

Owners Toby and Bernadette Feickert transformed the former drug store into a restaurant and added a pub-style dining room—all named in honor of the original druggist's wife, Addie Smith.

"I wanted to do something where businesspeople can entertain clients and families can come in for a relaxed meal," says Toby. "My thought was to have an adult hangout with that tiny niche—white tablecloths with a pub feel."

Don't overlook the unique daily specials or featured salads like Addie's Salad with grilled chicken breast, sugared pecans, mandarin oranges, sliced red onion, and poppy seed dressing. All Miss Addie's soups and desserts are made from scratch, though customers gravitate toward the Baked Fudge, which is cooked in a water bath, giving it a crunchy top and gooey insides.—**Sheilah Bright**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. 821 West Broadway Street, (918) 682-1506 or missaddies.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *The poppy seed dressing at Miss Addie's is so popular with customers that the Feickerts offer it for sale by the bottle along with a cookbook featuring three hundred of the restaurant's recipes.*

NORMAN
Das Boot Camp

Platter-sized soft Bavarian pretzels, crunchy golden schnitzel, and German draft beer served in boots: Every day takes on the festive spirit of Oktoberfest at **Das Boot Camp** in downtown Norman, a German eatery dreamed up by Andy and Laura Gmeiner in 2012.

"It's home-cooked comfort food from scratch," says Andy, a native of Munich. "It's not just sausage and sauerkraut."

Das Boot Camp innovates by serving affordable German-flavored American dishes—such as burgers made with bratwurst patties or hand-cut fries topped with goulash—in addition to hearty, traditional German foods like Wienerschnitzel and homemade *spätzle* egg noodles. Andy brews up to eight lagers and ales at his other restaurant, Royal Bavaria, each of which is a perfect complement to Das Boot Camp's food.

"We brew the beer, and then during the fermenting and aging process, we sample it every day," says Andy, who abides by strict German beer purity laws when creating his brews. "It's nice to watch the beer unfold its flavor and characteristics."

The best part? All entrées are ten dollars or less.—**Brooke Adcox**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Open daily, 11 a.m. to 12 a.m. 229 East Main Street, (405) 701-3748 or das-bootcamp.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *There's a trick to drinking beer out of a boot-shaped mug. "When the bubble comes, turn the boot," says Laura, who advises rotating the glass to prevent a clothes-soaking surge of beer that happens when air gets trapped in the toe.*

NORMAN
Gaberino's Homestyle Italian Restaurant

Laura and Mitch Duprez met while students at the University of Okla-

homa in Norman when, as fate would have it, they both worked at a local pasta shop. Laura's great-grandparents immigrated from Turin, Italy, and she has a lifetime of practice in Italian cooking, which is why the fresh, toothsome pasta at **Gaberino's Homestyle Italian Restaurant** is made locally and serves as the perfect bed for the tangy, classic marinara made in-house daily.

Don't miss the tender handmade meatballs—from a family recipe—available with fettuccine or on a messy, melty sandwich topped with smoked provolone on a crusty baguette. Save room for the heavenly Italian cream cake with coconut and cream cheese frosting, or finish the feast with an unusual digestif: Italian Coffee, a cup of java made boozy with a bit of chocolate dessert wine.—**Becky Carman**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Daily, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. 283 Thirty-fourth Avenue Southwest. (405) 310-2229 or gaberinos.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *In June 2014, Gaberino's began serving Sunday brunch with a special menu that includes breakfast pizza and carbonara topped with a fried egg.*

OKLAHOMA CITY
Bobo's

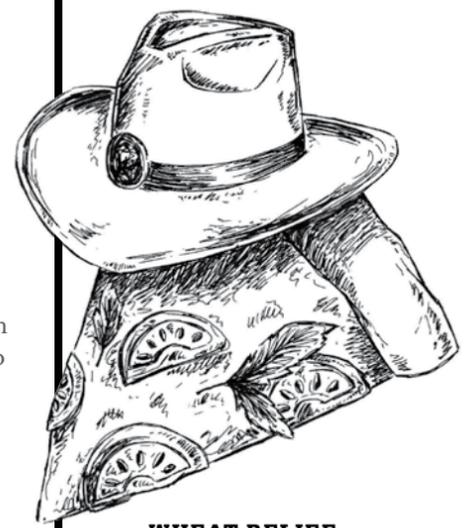
For anyone who doesn't know where it is, **Bobo's** can be hard to spot. The truck sits in a parking lot in northeast Oklahoma City. There's no sign, so most people just follow the smoke, says proprietor Ron Bennet.

Bobo's chicken wings are hickory smoked then breaded and fried. The result is a smoky, crispy marriage of two Southern institutions: fried chicken and barbecue. A drizzle of honey, available on request, gives the dish an extra sticky sweetness. It's the same recipe that's kept late-night crowds coming to Bobo's for more than twenty years.



IRINA DANYLUKSHUTTERSTOCK

BOOT SCOOT
 Das Boot Camp visitors looking for a bit of a kick know to order the Buffalo Sausage made from spicy smoked buffalo meat, beef sausage, fresh jalapeños, and cheddar cheese.



JJ RITCHEY

WHEAT RELIEF
 For an extra dollar, Gaberino's chefs will make any pizza on the menu with a gluten-free crust.

“We’ve been doing it the same way for a couple of decades,” Bennet says. “I’m just the guy keeping the tradition alive.”—**Silas Allen**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Friday and Saturday, 6 p.m. to 3 a.m. Northeast Twenty-third Street and Missouri Avenue. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: In 2005, Mike Bone, a Native American Christian rap duo from Oklahoma City, released a song titled “Bobo’s Chicken,” in which they say the food truck’s offerings “taste so good make me call it first class.”

OKLAHOMA CITY
Grill on the Hill

The line stretching out the front door is a testament to the goods inside **Grill on the Hill**. Named for its location in Oklahoma City’s Capitol Hill area, this diner’s been bustling since it opened in June 2008. Big hits include catfish, chicken-fried steak, burgers, and Cajun chicken and mushrooms. Owners Norma Ericson and Rory Carver tout fish tacos as a dish of choice: Enrobed in fresh flour tortillas, crispy hand-breaded slices of catfish come with coleslaw, red onions, and a drizzle of homemade chipotle cream sauce.

Breakfast options are just as enticing: Strawberry pineapple fritters, crispy haystack hash browns, omelets, and French toast will conquer any hunger, but save room for breakfast burritos and fluffy biscuits served with the restaurant’s made-in-house chorizo gravy.—**Megan Rossman**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Thursday, 6:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. 324 Southwest Twenty-fifth Street, (405) 634-9866 or grillonthehillokc.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Carb-conscious beef and chicken plates no longer are on the menu, but ask, and you shall receive.

OKLAHOMA CITY
Istanbul Turkish Cuisine

Located in a shopping center on a busy stretch of North May Avenue in Oklahoma City, **Istanbul Turkish Cuisine** serves a mix of meat and vegetarian dishes that are both exotic and accessible. Turkish food doesn’t use a large number of spices, so the flavors are relatively mild and may remind diners of Italian or Greek dishes, says co-owner Rachid Ayare.

The menu’s standout is the Chef’s Special, *bursa iskender*. Blended sirloin and lamb vertically roasted and sliced on top of Turkish *pide* bread and smothered with a tomato sauce, the dish is rich and satisfying. A handful of traditional Turkish desserts also are available, but Ayare suggests the *burma*, a homemade butter dough with pistachio and syrup, a close relative of Greek baklava. Order Turkish coffee or tea, or *ayran*, a salted yogurt drink, to round out the meal.—**Sara Cowan**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. 3604 North May Avenue in Oklahoma City, (405) 943-4000. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Thunder player Enes Kanter—himself a native of Turkey—is a big fan of Istanbul Turkish Cuisine’s signature dish *bursa iskender*, says Ayare.

POTEAU
The Coffee Cup

As the saying goes, if you want something done right, do it yourself. That’s why, when Tammie Johnson couldn’t find a good coffee shop in her hometown of Poteau, she decided she would take the initiative and open one of her own.

“We didn’t have a place like this in our small town,” says Johnson. “We kept waiting for someone to open one up, and when they didn’t do it, we finally did.”



Grill on the Hill in Oklahoma City is a comfort-food haven where breakfast—like fried haystack hashbrowns, eggs, and toast—draws pre-workday crowds.

“With Italian, you can do anything.”
 —JENI HINKLE, *Gusto’s*

Though **The Coffee Cup** began as a coffee spot, it has grown into much more in this southeastern Oklahoma community, with breakfast, lunch, dinner, and even live music on weekends. Customers can start the day here with coffee from Oklahoma suppliers like Tulsa’s Topeca Coffee Roasters and Elemental Coffee in Oklahoma City, as well as a selection of omelet sandwiches or sweet treats (try the stacked Specialty French Toast with cream cheese and choice of jelly). Lunch brings a selection of fresh-cut salads and filling sandwiches including the ever-popular Reuben or the healthier turkey pesto.—**Nathan Gunter**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 401 North Broadway Street, (918) 647-2622. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *It’s not on the menu, but regulars know to show up at breakfast for the Wild Bill sandwich, named for a loyal customer. It’s a ham omelet on Texas toast with sautéed bell peppers, onions, jalapeños, cheese, fresh tomato, chipotle mayonnaise, and a side of salsa.*

SHATTUCK
Gusto’s Italian Grill & Pizza

The site of a former gas station on the east side of the street now is home to **Gusto’s Italian Grill & Pizza**, where owners Jeni and Jeff Hinkle provide their customers with delicious Italian dishes and a welcoming place to get together and enjoy a meal. After moving back to Jeni’s hometown of Shattuck from Kansas City, the couple followed Jeff’s dream to open a restaurant and built *Gusto’s* from the ground up. Jeff is the head chef, and Jeni makes desserts. “We felt like there was a niche,” Jeni says. “With Italian, you can do anything: steaks, pasta, pork chops.”

Anything includes ham and cheese calzones with *Gusto’s* five-cheese sauce; marinated pork chops with mac and cheese; or *Pasta Gusto* with cuts of ribeye, fresh spinach and tomatoes, caramelized onions, grilled artichokes, roasted garlic, and penne pasta tossed in a five-cheese bacon sauce. Thanks to a fire pit, patrons can enjoy the western Oklahoma view on the patio year-round.—**Leighona Bernstein**

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. 720 South Main Street, (580) 938-5488. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: *The sign outside of *Gusto’s* pays homage to its roots. The “full-service” gas station sign features the prices of sausage meatballs, the strawberry spinach salad, and the lunchtime pizza buffet.*

STILLWATER
Main Street Noodle

In a college town, the idea of having ramen for lunch might call to mind bricks of instant noodles that come in bright plastic packaging. But at Stillwater’s **Main Street Noodle**, ramen is leagues ahead of the packaged kind made in a dorm lounge microwave—even if it takes longer to cook. Each bowl of steaming noodles, meat, vegetables, and broth is the result of hours of work, says owner Lee Stice. The restaurant takes inspiration from the cuisines of Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and other Asian countries. One of the most popular dishes, *tonkotsu* ramen, hails from the Japanese island of Kyushu and comes with roast pork, vegetables, and a boiled egg in a creamy broth. For those looking to try something different, Stice recommends the Taiwanese beef, a richly spiced beef and noodle stew served with chilies and limes.—**Silas Allen**



FABIO BERTI/SHUTTERSTOCK

MOLTO BENE
Gusto’s Italian Grill & Pizza in Shattuck offers a wide selection of sandwiches, including a chicken alfredo sub.



Whether visitors are looking for a slice of pizza, a hearty calzone, or a rich pasta dish like the *Pasta Gusto*, *Gusto’s* in Shattuck has it on the menu.

ALL ECLAIR

Though its sandwiches make for a satisfying lunch, Red Rock Bakery & Deli in Stillwater is best known for sweet treats and pastries.



MEGAN ROSSMAN

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Daily, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5 to 9 p.m. 622 South Main Street, (405) 564-0435. 🍴 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: In addition to its popular Taiwanese beef, Main Street Noodle serves authentic pho, Vietnamese noodle soup.

STILLWATER
Red Rock Bakery & Deli

With more than a dozen kinds of sandwiches, Red Rock Bakery & Deli's three locations have something to fit nearly anyone's taste. But every item here has at least one thing in common: the bread. This popular Stillwater spot makes its loaves from scratch every day starting as early as midnight the night before, says owner Brad Essary.

It's freshness that elevates this menu to something special. Red Rock's chicken salad sandwich combines a simple chicken salad with two slices of pillowy homemade bread. It's become one of the restaurant's most popular offerings.

"It's simple," Essary says. "It has no preservatives, and people aren't used to fresh bread."—Silas Allen

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday, 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. 910 North Boomer Road, (405) 377-3633; 3942 West Sixth Street, (405) 533-2025; and 702 South Main Street, (405) 564-0336. redrockbakery.com. 🍴 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Those who time their visits properly might find themselves in line with OSU quarterback Mason Rudolph, who is a regular customer.

TALIHINA
The Rock House

"We owe our marriage to date night," says Tami Balzanna.

So in April 2012, when Tami and her husband Sam—both natives of the Baltimore area—opened The

Rock House in the Kiamichi Mountains near Talihina, they created the perfect spot for a date. They renovated an old stone house on their 280-acre property with stunning views across the nearby valley, added on a kitchen, and began driving once a week to Oklahoma City or Dallas for fresh, high-quality ingredients.

And while the view is a stunner, it's easy to look away once the meal arrives. Each reservation is for an hour and a half to two hours depending on the season, meaning diners are able to take their time to enjoy authentic Maryland crab cakes, melt-in-your-mouth Angus steaks, house-made rolls with honey butter, an extensive wine list, and a rotating selection of dessert specials made from scratch—as is all the Balzannas' food. So like any good romance, The Rock House is an experience at once high-quality and low-pressure.—Nathan Gunter

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Thursday through Sunday, 4 to 9 p.m. or by reservation. 52060 Blackjack Ridge Drive northeast of Talihina, (918) 567-3577 or therockhouse.us. 🍴 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: GPS has been known to lead visitors astray in finding the Rock House, so when calling to make a reservation, be sure to ask for directions as well.

TULSA
Chimera

The namesake lion/goat/snake beast painted on the sign over the front entrance is the perfect introduction to Chimera in Tulsa. Whereas many restaurants struggle to define themselves—upscale coffee shop, taqueria, vegetarian hotspot, vintage cocktail bar—Chimera does it all well.

Diners can start the morning with a specialty coffee—a latte with house-made marshmallow syrup, perhaps—and a Teenage Riot breakfast taco, with so many goodies like eggs,

fauxrizo, and avocado crema that no one misses the meat. Lunch brings salads, wraps, and sandwiches like the Bluebird, a light but satisfying combination of chicken, bacon, brie, and pickled blueberry smash. And afternoon treats like crispy cauliflower Buffalo "wings" and the Gin Gin cocktail—with black tea and red chai-infused gin and ginger beer prepared behind Chimera's bar—come together for a dining experience that could best be described as legendary.—Karlie Tipton

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Sunday and Monday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Tuesday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. 212 North Main Street in Tulsa, (918) 779-4303 or chimeratulsa.com. 🍴 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Chimera shares its birthday with owner Robert Stuart's son, Harvey. The now four-year-old was born on the same day the restaurant opened its doors in January 2013.

WEATHERFORD
Casa Soto

Since it opened in July 1985, Casa Soto has attracted an especially dedicated and loyal customer base in this Custer County town. Founded by Elva Soto and her children Teresa and Arcenio—and now run by Elva's daughter Carmen Esparza—Casa Soto's thirty-two-year history has made this restaurant almost like another member of the family for many locals.

"Since my mother started the business, she would always tell us, 'Never change your product or quality,'"

Esparza says. "We make sure the food is consistent."

Patrons favor the enchiladas, which come with a choice of cheese, chicken, or ground beef filling and rich sauces like queso blanco, ranchera, chili con carne, and suiza, a green tomatillo sauce. The street tacos, one of Esparza's personal favorites, are made with two corn tortillas filled with tender steak and chorizo, blanketed with melted cheese, and served with cilantro, onions, and avocado salad.—Kristin Kenney

Chimera in Tulsa is a popular breakfast spot for vegetarians and carnivores alike. The Daydream Nation combines tofu scramble with potatoes, black beans, greens, smoked adzuki strips, avocado, salsa, and chipotle crema.





Indian tacos are among the many hearty choices at Miller Grill in Yukon. The restaurant also is known for its hamburgers and breakfast items.

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Thursday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. 115 Southwest Main Street, (580) 772-0232. 🍴🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Every day from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Casa Soto hosts a lunch buffet of traditional Mexican foods like mole with chicken, posole with hominy, and caldo de rez, a brisket stew with vegetables.

WOODWARD
Sweet Surprises Bakery

Through a set of doors in downtown Woodward, past some interior shops, the sweet smell of cookies and fresh-baked bread welcomes customers to Sweet Surprises Bakery, where owner Kelle Robinson creates some of northwestern Oklahoma's favorite delicacies.

Robinson says her specialty is decorated sugar cookies. She turns out seasonal shapes like Valentine's Day hearts and Christmas Santas as well as everyday delights like nurse's scrubs and tractors. Then she glazes and meticulously decorates the baked cookies with buttercream frosting in every color and stocks the display case with the tasty works of art. But dessert isn't the only thing the bakery does well. Deli-style sandwiches, Bierox—German rolls stuffed with savory fillings—made with Robinson's homemade bread, and soups that change daily are lunch favorites.

Ninety-year-old Woodward native Cloeta Miller, a Sweet Surprises regular, says her favorite thing at the bakery is the Thursday special—a grilled-cheese sandwich with a warm bowl of homemade tomato soup.
—Leighona Bernstein

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. 1107 Main Street inside The Village Mall in downtown Woodward, (580) 254-2980 or woodwardbakery.com. 🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Sweet Surprises will bake, decorate, and even airbrush custom cakes for weddings, birthday parties, or any get-together deserving an above-and-beyond dessert.

YUKON
Miller Grill

"We don't mess around with small portions here," says Miller Grill owner Jason McCormack.

While many chefs claim their dishes are satisfying, McCormack knows with mathematic precision how full diners will be when they leave his Yukon eatery.

"Our chicken-fried steak is half a pound," he says. "The Kitchen Sink Burger comes with four pieces of bacon, six slices of American cheese, a fried egg, and three six-ounce beef patties. And we have had very few finish our large Indian taco, which is twelve inches around and weighs four and a half pounds."

Indulgence isn't just for lunch and dinner at Miller Grill. On weekend mornings, try the Garbage Breakfast—sausage, bacon, or ham and gravy on fry bread, hash browns or home fries, egg, and cheese—or breakfast enchiladas covered in McCormack's special sour cream gravy sauce.—Karlie Tipton

WHEN, WHERE, HOW MUCH: Tuesday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. 326 Elm Avenue, (405) 265-2775 or millergrill.com. 🍴🍴

DID YOU KNOW: Miller Grill offers an Indian taco challenge. With at least twenty-four hours' notice, McCormack's chefs will cook a piece of fry bread the size of a sheet pan and top it with ten pounds of beef, beans, lettuce, tomatoes, cheese, onion, sour cream, and homemade salsa. No one has ever finished the challenge, so McCormack isn't sure what the prize will be when that time comes. 🍴



ALENA ROZDWA/SHUTTERSTOCK

FORTUNATE COOKIE
Woodward residents know to visit Sweet Surprises Bakery for cookies befitting any holiday or celebration.

"We don't mess around with small portions here."
—JASON MCCORMACK, Miller Grill