

The Natural Gourmet Institute's Tasty (and Healthy) Top 10 U.S. Restaurants

Our Favorite Places to Enjoy a Wholesome and Delicious Meal from Coast to Coast

February 12, 2013—Traveling for work or play to a new city and looking for healthy meal? Or simply looking for a new wholesome dining option in your own backyard? Fortunately, the folks at the Natural Gourmet Institute (NGI), know that the combination of delicious and healthy can sometimes be hard to find, so they've taken the liberty of compiling a list of their favorite restaurants from all over the U.S. And since each of the following restaurants boasts an NGI graduate at its helm, you can be sure that you will enjoy a meal of healthy, whole foods cooked to perfection!

NGI's Top 10 restaurants in alphabetical order for 2013 are:

Portland, Oregon | Abby's Table | www.abbys-table.com

"We believe in the power of yum"—this is the manifesto of Abby's kitchen, and it perfectly describes the restaurant's commitment to food that is nourishing, natural, and absolutely scrumptious. Bi-weekly dinners are themed (Peruvian, Thai, Northwest) and require reservations, creating a uniquely cozy and communal atmosphere in the bright, open space of the restaurant. Cooking classes are also available.

Boulder, Colorado | Arugula Ristorante | www.arugularistorante.com

Elegance is the word for this Italian restaurant. Chandeliers hang from the ceiling, slender bottles of olive oil grace each table, and the service is perfection. The menu shows a commitment to classic Italian cuisine, local sourcing, and new-world diet demands, with markers denoting a variety of vegetarian—try the Pear and Gorgonzola Gnocchi—and gluten free—like the Black Seafood Risotto—options. Menu changes seasonally.

Oakland, California | Encuentro | www.encuentrooakland.com

Casual décor featuring a bamboo bar evokes island living; a glass of wine with the sunset, a slow meal of freshly gathered foods, lingering over conversation... is this a restaurant or vacation? With a focus on local food, the menu naturally changes seasonally, but favorites are the vegan Macadamia Nut Pate, the nutrient-packed Farro Salad, or any of the bruschetta options, topped with seasonal vegetables from local farms.

Red Bank, New Jersey | Good Karma Cafe | www.goodkarmacafenj.com

Ideal for a casual breakfast and lunch, this cozy cafe is vegan food for active people—the portions are large and satisfying even for a meat-eating weight lifter. Pop in after a run or a yoga class, absolutely famished, and feast on a Tempeh Reuben, the Live Nachos (raw nachos with cashew sour cream, guacamole and sunflower crumble), or an Elvis Smoothie (bananas, peanut butter and soymilk). They also have a great kids' menu.

Key West, Florida | Help Yourself | www.helpyourselffoods.com

This bright and cheerful cafe, with its grass-green walls and abundance of plants, is actually a reclaimed gas station—which is appropriate, since the foods are packed with nutrients that give even the drowsiest customer a boost of energy. Sit and enjoy the Indian Summer Salad—featuring chickpeas and quinoa—or the Wild Salmon—maple-soy glazed and served with avocado wasabi. On the go? Grab a refreshing smoothie.

New York, New York | Mihoko's 21 Grams | www.mihokos21grams.com

This elegant, white-tablecloth Franco-Japanese restaurant was conceptualized and designed by ballerina and philanthropist Mihoko Kiyokawa. Truly unique, the menu combines the fresh and local ethos of French food

with Japanese precision, resulting in delights such as a Turbot Beigne with yuzu kosho (a chili-based Japanese condiment) and Japanese Pot au Feu with black truffle and daikon. Try the tasting menu with sake pairing.

Brooklyn, New York | Palo Santo | www.palosanto.us

Named after a tropical evergreen found in South America, this restaurant has a Latin American focus in both food and décor, featuring mosaics, colorful local art and centuries-old wooden doors. Locally sourced foods—from beef to chicken to tomatoes—are central to their mission, so the menu changes daily. In warm months, produce and herbs are sourced from the rooftop garden, which also doubles as open-air dining space.

Asheville, North Carolina | Plant | www.plantisfood.com

From the houseplants in the windows of the dining room to the strings of lights that glow in the rafters of the outdoor seating area, Plant is designed to make the diner feel at home while enjoying some of the finest, freshest, and most sophisticated vegan cuisine in the country. Try the Smoked Portobello Steak, richly flavored and immensely satisfying, or choose the tantalizingly fresh and delicious Raw Enchiladas.

Phoenix, Arizona | Pomegranate Cafe | www.pomegranatecafe.com

All meals at this charming mother-daughter restaurant are divine—from the Raw Lasagna with zucchini noodles for dinner to the Greek Isle Quesadilla served with sunflower ranch dip for lunch—but their brunch deserves special praise. There's no better way to start the day than by sitting under an umbrella at one of the outside tables and feasting on tempeh bacon, egg or tofu scrambles with fresh veggies, and a side of harvest hash.

New Orleans, Louisiana | The Three Muses | www.thethreemuses.com

The immediate impression of The Three Muses is of a decade gone by: dark wood paneling, black and white photos, maybe even a jazz or blues band performing live. The menu is old-fashioned too, in the sense that it features classic, stick-to-your-ribs recipes the way grandma used to make them, featuring hand-selected ingredients. For a local classic done right, try the Grilled Shrimp and Polenta, served with a tangy Napa slaw.

...And for anyone living in or coming through New York City, please do come by and join us for one of our **Friday Night Dinners**, when our Chef Instructors and their students join forces to create a culinary masterpiece: a beautifully presented three-course vegetarian dinner—made, of course, from only fresh, seasonal market produce and whole, unprocessed foods. Call 212-645-5170 (ext 0) to make a reservation.

About Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Health

Founded in 1977 by Annemarie Colbin, Ph.D., the Natural Gourmet Institute (NGI) is the leader in teaching health-supportive cooking as well as elucidating the relationship between food and health. NGI believes that what we eat significantly affects our physical, mental and spiritual well being.

The Natural Gourmet Institute for Food and Health offers excellent learning opportunities to the general public. Through a combination of cooking classes and lectures, NGI teaches health-supportive food preparation, as well as an ever-expanding array of approaches to nutrition, including models from Western nutrition, Chinese medicine, macrobiotics, raw foods, fermentations, Ayurveda and more.

The Natural Gourmet Institute for Health & Culinary Arts Chef's Training Program was created in 1987 in response to the demand for culinary professionals skilled in the art of preparing beautiful, delicious health-supportive cuisine. This accredited, comprehensive, mostly-vegetarian program—the only one of its kind in the world—prepares students for careers in health spas, restaurants, bakeries, private cooking, catering, teaching, consulting, food writing and a variety of entrepreneurial pursuits.