

BEST EATS 2008

Our new, from-scratch quest for mouthwatering, enticing and otherwise **amazing edibles** all across this Northern land.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
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LOBSTER CAKES

Chef Ted Cizma's luscious lobster meat cakes have a tantalizing, feather-light crunch.

AERIE, GRAND TRAVERSE
RESORT & SPA, 100 GRAND
TRAVERSE VILLAGE BLVD.,
ACME, 231-534-6000.



SCOTTISH SALMON BRIDIE

Meat pies of all description are eaten in Scotland, the most common being the bridie made out of meat and onions (ingins) and shortcrust, but Betsie Bay Inn's Scottish owner Lesley Perkins also loves the fresh salmon version in puff pastry, the way her mother made them. Order a pie and a pint at her Hotspur Pub. BETSIE BAY INN, 231 MAIN ST., FRANKFORT, 231-352-8090.

3: BUTTER TOFFEE PEANUT BUTTER

Handcrafted in Traverse City by a mom wanting a delicious natural peanut butter for her kids (and herself), this spread is smooth and rich, with just a hint of sweet and made with certified organic peanuts, flaxseed and hemp seed. Find it at Traverse City grocers. NATURALLY NUTTY, TRAVERSE CITY, 888-224-9988, NATURALLY NUTTY.COM.

4: CURRY CHICKEN SALAD

This aromatic mélange of pears, pecans, dried cherries and succulent roasted chicken meat in a light curry mayo is great on greens, even lovelier as a late night snack straight out of the takeout container. Look for it in the sleek deli case when Zaccaro's re-opens for summer. ZACCARO'S MARKET, 221 BRIDGE ST., CHARLEVOIX, 231-547-9230.

5: CHERRY CHEESE COFFEECAKE

A former National Cherry Festival queen and her husband run a cherry farm market and sell slices of buttery breakfast cake with nooks of luxurious cream cheese and bright tart cherries.

ROYAL FARMS, 10445 N. U.S. 31, ATWOOD, 231-599-3222.

6: STRAWBERRY JAM

Jars of brightly hued homemade jam on every table at Sweet Water Café means juicy, just-picked flavor even in the middle of March. The jam tastes just wonderful on their organic oatmeal wheat toast. SWEET WATER CAFÉ, 517 N. THIRD ST. MARQUETTE, 906-226-7009.

7: SMOKED BACON

Hand-trimmed, fresh Michigan pork bellies are maple sugar cured and then get a turn in the hickory hardwood smoker overnight for a rich, deep flavor.

HONOR FAMILY MARKET, 10625 MAIN ST., HONOR, 231-325-3360.

8: STUFFED BANANA PEPPERS

Be the hit of the party by arriving with an antipasto platter starring tangy-hot banana peppers stuffed with prosciutto-wrapped provolone.

BEST CHOICE MARKET, 222 W. LUDINGTON AVE., LUDINGTON, 231-843-6328.

9: PORK BUNS

Pillowy-soft steamed buns hold marinated, meltingly tender roasted pork kissed with authentic char siu sauce. RED GINGER, 237 E. FRONT ST., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-944-1733.

10: SEAFOOD LASAGNA

Sweet-spicy peppadew peppers give an intriguing edge to the decadent layers of crab meat, shrimp, fresh spinach, and delicate Alfredo. Love it paired with the cooling Snug Harbor breezes on the deck. GULL LANDING, 438 S. HANCOCK ST., PENTWATER, 231-869-4215.

11: PECAN PIE BAR

Wedding cake wizard Kelli Bly makes her pecan pie in a 9-by-13-inch pan by filling a buttery graham crust and studding it with dark chocolate chunks. LE SERVING SPOON, 130 W. LUDINGTON AVE., LUDINGTON, 231-843-6555.

12: RHUBARB PIE

Walk into this homey spot across from Crooked Lake the last weeks in May, and find the pie chefs washing and chopping tart rhubarb straight from nearby gardens. Tuck into the bumpy crust for that unmistakably Michigan-in-springtime sweet-tartness. THE HOUSE OF PIES, 4577 N. U.S. 31, ODEN, 231-347-6525.

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MIDDLE EASTERN BAKLAWA

Nadia Saco carries her sister-in-law's homemade baklawa—the Middle Eastern spelling—at the counter of the 14th Street Mobil Station. Nada Saco prepares pans of crackly, buttery phyllo layered with nuts, fragrant rose-water syrup and cardamom, cuts the pastry into diamond-shaped pieces and anoints each jewel with a dusting of finely ground pistachios. 429 WEST 14TH STREET, TRAVERSE CITY, 231-941-0909.





14-17

WILD BOAR WINGS

The shards of juicy Jamaican-jerk-rubbed pork are so delectable eaten right off the shank. SCOVIE'S WATERFRONT GRILLE, 230 FERRY AVE., CHARLEVOIX, 231-547-2960.

FOCCACIA

These delicious olive oil-bathed crusts look like kaleidoscopes patterned with fresh garlic, fresh rosemary, Parmigiano-Reggiano, pitted Kalamatas, and intensely tomato-y Romas. THE WINE SHOP, 100 RIVER ST., ELK RAPIDS, 231-264-9000.

MAPLE FROSTED APPLE WALNUT PIE

Five of our favorite words. The mini pies are perfectly tart-sweet with a little saltiness in the maple-glazed crust. Crunchy, bitter walnuts are the ultimate foil. SUZIE'S PIES, 8483 M-119 (HARBOR PLAZA), HARBOR SPRINGS, 231-881-6841.

CHERRY VANILLA CREAM SODA

This secret recipe, mixed-to-order tonic using tart cherry juice tastes like bubbly summertime. Look for it in bottles this summer. THE CHERRY STOP, 211 E. FRONT ST., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-929-3990.

22: MAPLE WALNUT BISCOTTI

Tender, buttery, cookie-like, with Michigan maple sugar and a maple syrup glaze. Get them at Up North gourmet markets or through Chef Perry Harmon. PROVISIONS, TRAVERSE CITY, PERRYSCREATIONS.COM.

23: QUICHE

Libby Reeves makes her aromatic, sky-high delights in a tender shortcrust. Try the sun-dried tomato, ham and fresh rosemary quiche, or her winter quiche with artichoke hearts, Swiss and—surprise!—dried cherries. LIBBY'S, 414 N. MAIN ST., CHEBOYGAN, 231-627-4780.

24: APPLE FRITTER DOUGHNUTS

My early-rising brother claims there is no better substitute for sleep than carbs, and no better place to find them than the Chuckwagon in Reed City, where the fritters made with dried apples and from-scratch dough are as big as your head, and ready at 6 a.m. H & D CHUCKWAGON, 20221 U.S. 10, REED CITY, 231-832-3983.

25: MICHIGAN REUBEN

Kraut and cole slaw plus hand-carved roasted turkey breast take this little number (almost) over the top. MARY ANN'S TAKE OUT, 1530 U.S. 31 S., CHARLEVOIX, 231-237-9700.

26: BLACK ANGUS BURGER

A crazy-good, sizzling cheddar burger on crusty, blue cheese-marbled baguette for \$5.99. Hard Luck Café owner Joe Pellar says it's not on the regular menu, but, if you want it, call the day before (ask for J.P.), and he'll pick up the fresh baked baguettes at Bay Bread in the morning on his way to work. HARD LUCK CAFÉ, 810 E. FRONT ST., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-946-1991.

27: INTRIGUING ICE CREAMS

Pictured on cover Chef Scott Schornak churns small batches of his beguiling ice cream flavors to sell in the to-go freezer at Feast Market. The delicate, fresh-tasting concoctions work all on their own, or try the basil ice cream with sliced tree-ripe peaches, the salt-and-pepper ice cream sandwiched between gingersnaps, or how 'bout the chocolate chipotle in a dish with a warm cinnamon-sugar doughnut? FEAST MARKET & CAFÉ, 410 HOWARD ST., PETOSKEY, 231-439-9400.

18: SAUTÉED LAKE PERCH

The candy of the Great Lakes rolled in seasoned dry batter and sautéed in butter and garlic. THE MANITOU, 4349 SCENIC HWY., M-22, NEAR FRANKFORT, 231-882-4761.

19: SHRIMP SALAD

Green and gorgeous, with cilantro and curls of lime zest, shrimp, avocado and a spiky citrus vinaigrette. AFTERNOON DELIGHTS, 9110 HELENA RD., ALDEN, 231-331-4431.

20: ROASTED APPLE BUTTERNUT BISQUE

A smooth, mellow ladle of autumn with a dollop of maple-tinged crème fraîche. SAGE, ODAWA CASINO RESORT, 1760 LEARS RD., PETOSKEY, 231-344-4420.

21: POTATO-LEEK CHOWDER

Brimming with Yukon gold potatoes and Plath's bacon. YANKEE REBEL TAVERN, 101 ASTOR ST., MACKINAC ISLAND, 906-847-6249.



PORTABELLA RAVIOLI WITH ACORN SQUASH CREAM SAUCE

Chef Tom Reay was inspired by the Italians' love of squashes, nuts and mushrooms for this dish, which stars a very simple sauce made with roasted acorn squash, cream, nutmeg and toasted pecans. FUNISTRADA, 4566 MACFARLANE, BURDICKVILLE, 231-334-3900.

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29: ASIAN FISH RUB

Lori LaClair (of Lori's Salsa del Sol fame) mixed up this endlessly versatile rub with roasted sesame seeds, lemon peel, parsley, sea salt, garlic, raw sugar and ginger. The concoction dazzles as the crust on juicy chicken breast and ahi tuna on the grill, or dashed across a bowl of bright green beans. Find LaClair at the T.C. farmers market, or check her website for gourmet shops that carry her rubs. SALSA OFTHESUN.NET.

30: COOKIE DOUGH FROSTED BROWNIE

A nice lady in Cadillac brought brownies slathered with a layer of raw chocolate-chip-cookie dough to a church gathering, giving Blue Heron Café chef-owner Brian Williams the dream to scheme up a dense, chewy brownie with cookie dough (made, brilliantly, without egg) as frosting. Why did we not think of that? BLUE HERON CAFÉ AND BAKERY, 304 N. MITCHELL ST., CADILLAC, 231-775-5461.

31: FRIED CHICKEN SALAD

The combination of a crunchy buttermilk fried chicken breast, sharp cheddar, radishes, cucumber, black-eyed pea relish, pickled carrots and a sousing of honey jalapeño dressing makes for a very comforting dish. PEARL'S NEW ORLEANS KITCHEN, 617 AMES ST., 231-264-0530.

32: KRAUT DOGS

Can eating a hot dog be an ethereal experience? When it's a sauerkraut-laced homemade link from Bunting's, warm out of the smoker (try weekends, early afternoon), yes. BUNTING'S CEDAR MARKET, 9054 KASSON, CEDAR, 231-228-7460.

33: CHOCOLATE CAKE WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

The cheesecake mavens blanket deep, chocolaty, from-scratch cake with tangy cream cheese frosting for special order birthday and shower cakes. THE UNDERGROUND CHEESECAKE COMPANY, 1333 YELLOW DR., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-929-4418.

34: NAUGHTY GIRL STOUT

It's on tap right now at Right Brain Brewery, crafted with Leelanau-grown, organic peppermint that gives an understated, cooling sensation to the caramel and bittersweet chocolate flavor in the beer. Brewmaster John Niedermaier first liked to brew this at home to slip in his backpack for snowshoeing expeditions. RIGHT BRAIN BREWERY, 221 GARLAND ST., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-942-1239.

35: PEACH BLUEBERRY BRANDY CONSERVE

Boozy, beautiful and mixed by monks at the Keweenaw Peninsula's Poor Rock Abbey. HOLY TRANSFIGURATION SKETE, 6559 M-26, EAGLE HARBOR, SOCIETYSTJOHN.COM.

36: TOMATO-COCONUT-CURRY SOUP

A childhood favorite is transformed into a sweet, silky, spicy potage with the surprise of cool coconut milk and a nice bite of curry at the end. THE DISH, 108 S. UNION ST., TRAVERSE CITY, 231-932-2233.

37: VANILLA LATTE

The baristas steep a homemade vanilla syrup with whole organic fair-trade vanilla beans for a deep, not-too-sweet complement to their fair-trade coffee espresso and perfectly steamed milk. HIGHER GROUNDS TRADING CO., 806 RED DR., TRAVERSE CITY, 877-825-2262.

38: SCOTCH EGGS

The crew at Lake Superior Brewing Co. coats a hard-boiled egg in Italian sausage, then honey beer mustard made with their own puddingstone wheat beer, rolls it in raw egg and Japanese bread crumbs, fries it up and serves it up with more honey beer mustard. LAKE SUPERIOR BREWING CO. AT DUNES SALOON, GRAND LAKE AVE., GRAND MARAIS, 906-494-2337.

39: APPLE YUM SALAD

A luscious combo of sliced green apple, mel-low cashews, roasted onions, coconut and a homemade Thai dressing. THAI ORCHID CUISINE, 433 E. MITCHELL ST., PETOSKEY, 231-487-9900.

40: TURKEY JERKY SANDWICH

Get this: Oven-roasted turkey, corned beef brisket, homemade slaw, Swiss and shoe-string potatoes grilled on rye with Thousand Island. JAN'S NORTHSIDE DELI & MARKET, 902 N. CENTER AVE., GAYLORD, 989-705-7200.

41: COVERED WAGON

Pastry chef Magdalena Bagi bakes a bitty chocolate cake, pipes a healthy (!) puff of buttercream frosting on top, then coats the whole lot in chocolate ganache, in the semblance of a cute little pioneer-mobile. SILVER TREE DELI & CAFÉ, 119 N. SAINT JOSEPH'S, SUTTONS BAY, 231-271-2271.

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