

10 classic Boston dishes, and 5 places to find each one

Think pots of baked beans, pies of cream, and of course, plenty of lobster.



Summer Shack's clambake. —*Summer Shack*



By **Cheryl Fenton**

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With a rich colonial history, international influences (North End, we're talking to you), and a seaside locale, Boston certainly has a seat at the big-name dining table. Through the years, the city has morphed its simple local flavor into globally recognized and universally loved classic dishes.

Here's your essential guide to diving fork first into Boston's proudest moments in the kitchen.

1. Boston baked beans

They don't call it "beantown" for nothing. With a history



Boston baked beans from State Street Provisions. —*State Street Provisions*
of being served during Native American meals, beans slow-baked in molasses are not only a nod to times of yore, but also to when the city was awash in molasses during its part in the “triangular trade.” The dish is traditionally served in a small crock, with brown bread sitting sidecar.

Beantown Pub

When you’re located along Boston’s Freedom Trail, it’s a no-brainer to dish out a classic plate or two. The Beantown Baked Beans is a traditional recipe with brown bread on the side. *(100 Tremont St., Boston)*

Bukowski Tavern

If Chef Brian Poe could cook this Boston tradition in an old 1800s fireplace with a hanging pot, he said he would. He instead layers bacon, beans, molasses, and brown sugar, and bakes the casserole for four hours for his Frank ‘N Beans special. *(1281 Cambridge St., Cambridge)*

Rebel’s Guild

Chef Sean Dutson takes two days for this heirloom recipe, beginning with an overnight soak of dried beans. After six hours of simmering in molasses and brown sugar and an overnight rest, the North Country Smokehouse bacon flavor comes through like a rebel’s

yell. (200 Stuart St., Boston)

Marliave

This French-meets-Italian restaurant in Downtown Crossing cooks Great White Northern beans, short ribs, and ham hocks in veal stock, adds molasses for sweetness and that iconic mahogany color, and serves up a side dish that takes center stage. (10 Bosworth St., Boston)

State Street Provisions

Long Wharf's throwback tavern serves up Boston baked beans full of chunks of braised pork belly. The small plate is topped with brown sugar crumble. (255 State St., Boston)

2. Boston cream pie



Boston cream pie at Parker's Restaurant in the Omni Parker House hotel.
—Lane Turner/Globe Staff

As the story goes, Omni Parker House is the birthplace of this dessert, which identifies more as a cake than pie. Sweet custard is layered between yellow butter cake, and glazed with chocolate.

Flour Bakery & Café

Joanne Chang's Boston cream pie is moist sponge cake filled with a fluffy combo of vanilla pastry cream and

whipped cream, soaked in coffee syrup, and topped with glistening, pure chocolate ganache. Attempt your own with the recipe in her "Flour, Too" cookbook. *(locations in Boston and Cambridge)*

Magnolia's Bakery

When this New York sweet shop [added its first New England location in Faneuil Hall](#) in late March, the crowds came running for its exclusive Boston cream pie version of its famous banana pudding: vanilla pudding, vanilla wafers, bananas, and chocolate fudge. *(200-299 Faneuil Hall Marketplace, Boston)*

Oak Long Bar + Kitchen

This high-end restaurant traded in its original mason jar presentation for a more traditional plating of Boston cream pie. The sponge cake is soaked in rum, then layered with rich rum pastry cream, and topped with cocoa nib sauce and toasted cocoa nib almond crumble. *(138 St. James Ave., Boston)*

Omni Parker House

When legendary French chef and Parker House's chef de cuisine Augustine Francois Anezin drizzled chocolate ganache onto French sponge cake filled with vanilla custard, he created a slice of local history. *(60 School St., Boston)*

S&S Restaurant

This near-century-old deli known for piled-high sandwiches and "grandma's favorite" matzo ball soup also provides Inman Square with great desserts. Feast on the Boston cream, which features layered rich golden cake and sweet vanilla custard with chocolate ganache. *(1334 Cambridge St., Cambridge)*

3. Cannoli

With an Italian neighborhood like the North End within its city limits, it's no wonder Boston loves these pastry and cream masterpieces. And as home to one of the city's biggest culinary rivalries (Mike's versus Modern), Boston knows: Where you get them is just as important



A stack of cannoli from Mike's Pastry. —*GuruAmar Khalsa/Boston.com*
as what kind you get.

Eataly

This mega maze of Italian delicacies can be intimidating, but its cannoli selection is worth it. Think raspberry, pistachio, tiramisu, chocolate, and ricotta. A mini trio makes the decision less stressful. (800 Boylston St., Boston)

Mike's Pastry

Diehard loyalists know the signature white box with bright blue font and string bow. These cannolis are legendary, with Nutella, peanut butter, amaretto, strawberry, mint chocolate, and more sitting in the huge case alongside traditional. (300 Hanover St., Boston; 11 Dunster St., Cambridge; 445 Revolution Dr., Somerville)

Modern Pastry

The other Boston cannoli king. Team Modern Pastry finds themselves noshing on the crisp, deep-fried pastry tubes filled with delicious yellow or chocolate cream or ricotta. Flavors can be chocolate-dipped with chocolate chips, almond, or pistachio. (263 Hanover St., Boston; 20 Salem Street, Medford)

Nebo Cucina and Enoteca

There's no tunnel vision at Nebo when it comes to this Italian confection. Instead of a tube, the dessert is a deconstructed layering of the cannoli shell and ricotta crème topped with powdered sugar. (520 Atlantic Ave., Boston)

Stella

The classic cannoli at chef Evan Deluty's restaurant is exactly what you want it to be: crispy and flaky with just the right amount of ricotta filling. Enjoy three minis with a cappuccino (or vino) and a seat at the bar overlooking the park. (1525 Washington St., Boston)

4. Clam chowder



Clam chowder at Legal Sea Foods. —Legal Sea Foods

True New England clam chowder (pronounced *chowdah*, if you please) is a rich and thick concoction of shellfish, salt pork or bacon, potatoes, and cream. Don't forget the oyster crackers.

Island Creek Oyster Bar

A chilled raw oyster [award-winner](#), ICOB warms things up with a chowder made with house-cured bacon. It's served with buttermilk biscuits. (500 Commonwealth Ave., Boston; 300 District Ave., Burlington)

Legal Sea Foods

No chowder list is complete without this seafood giant's. Salt pork and cracklings up the ante and combine with rich cream and clams. It's so celebrated, the chowder is available online. Mug not included. *(several locations in the Boston area)*

Mooncusser Fish House

Mooncusser adds smoked scallops and skate in with fresh clams. The piping hot bowl is accompanied by bobbing, house-made moon crackers. *(304 Stuart St., Boston)*

Puritan and Company

Chef Will Gilson uses mussels and clams to impart a deeper flavor to his chowder at this historical Inman Square spot. He also blends in pinches of herbs from his family's Herb Lyceum in Groton. *(1166 Cambridge St., Cambridge)*

Saltie Girl

Among the crudo, caviar, and tinned fish at this seafood-centric Back Bay restaurant sits a steaming bowl of the Holy Trinity of Clam Chowder: clams with a trifecta of marble potato, salsify, and bacon. *(281 Dartmouth St., Boston)*

5. Frappes

Milk and syrup make up a milkshake, but add ice cream, and it miraculously becomes a frappe. Thick and filling, this dessert drink is an exercise in living your best life.

Boston Burger Company

The Freak Frappe menu is no joke. A gasp-inducing example of these blended monstrosities is the S'More Than You Can Handle, a frozen hot chocolate frappe with graham cracker rim, chocolate syrup, and a wicked big s'more. *(locations in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville)*

Friendly's

First taking on the name Fribble in the '60s, Friendly's beloved concoctions can now be made in any of the



The S'more Than You Can Handle Freak Frappe at Boston Burger Company.

—Christina Orso

chains 20-plus Friendly's ice cream flavors. They're popular: Friendly's serves nearly 1.8 million a year. *(locations in Stoneham, Waltham, and Watertown)*

King's Dining and Entertainment

The bowling and video game destination's over-the-top concoctions are available in cookie dough, strawberry, Oreo cookie, and Reese's peanut butter cup with accompanying treats like shortcake and cookie-wiches. Adult up and order them the boozy way. *(50 Dalton St., Boston; 60 Seaport Blvd., Suite 225, Boston; 52 Second Ave., Burlington)*

Sullivan's Castle Island

[Sully's seasonal opening](#) brings the masses for its hot dogs, but the thick shakes have their own fan base. Grab a frosty frappe in vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, coffee, mocha, or black and white from this Castle Island concession stand, and head for a walk by Pleasure Bay. Or order them out of the Hood Milk Bottle at the Children's Museum. *(2080 William J. Day Blvd., Boston; Hood Milk Bottle at the Boston Children's Museum, 308 Congress St., Boston)*

Wahlburgers

At Wahlberg-owned restaurants, milk and ice cream are the base for shakes. Kiddos sip on chocolate, strawberry, chocolate mint, and mocha, while the over-21 crowd can order frappes like the Fluffanuttahh with vanilla ice cream, marshmallow vodka, banana liqueur, and peanut butter topped with marshmallow fluff and whipped cream. (132 Brookline Ave., Boston)

6. Lobster mac 'n cheese



Lobster mac and cheese at The Local. —*The Local*

While we wouldn't call this American classic a Boston original, adding lobster to its melty goodness is a recent New England tradition that's sure to stick around. Because lobster and cheese.

Outlook Kitchen

This trendy restaurant within the waterfront Envoy Hotel takes the simple dish to the next level. With lobster as an add-in, the smoked gouda, aged cheddar, and cognac create a decadent entrée. (70 Sleeper St., Boston)

The Local

The Local's lobster mac 'n cheese is made with a three-cheese sauce, tossed with cavatappi pasta and lobster claw and knuckle meat. The restaurant tops it with

buttery bread crumbs and serves it in a crock. (1391 Washington St., West Newton; 350 Cambridge St., Woburn)

Chopps American Bar and Grill

Executive chef Stefano Zimei mixes rotini pasta with four-cheese béchamel (cheddar, mascarpone, Monterey Jack, Parmesan), shallot, garlic, heavy cream, and thyme. He lays on lobster meat, then adds shredded cheddar and bread crumbs. (1 Burlington Mall Road, Burlington)

JM Curley

Part of this Downtown Crossing haunt's popular Extra Cheesy Macs menu, the Lobstah Mac boasts fresh lobster, a rich cheese medley, scallions, and tomatoes. The panko crust is a toasty ending. (21 Temple Place, Boston)

Yankee Lobster Co.

Counter service, a harbor patio, and disposable dishes are the super casual speed of this waterfront staple. The lobster mac and cheese has huge chunks of succulent lobster and a seasoned bread crumb topping. Grab a live lobster from the market for DIY at home. (300 Northern Ave., Boston)

7. Lobster roll

This seemingly simple Boston favorite sparks huge debate: Should the lobster be mixed in mayo or melted butter?

B&G Oysters

Barbara Lynch's Maine lobster roll is piled high with freshly-shucked meat. It comes with french fries, coleslaw, and a heap of butter pickles that cut through all that richness. (550 Tremont St., Boston)

Eventide

When Eventide brought its famous name down from Maine to Fenway, with it came its highly acclaimed lobster roll. The steamed bun is mildly sweet, and it's



The warm buttered lobster roll at Row 34. —*Morgan Ione Yeagar*
stuffed with pieces of brown butter lobster. (1321
Boylston St., Boston)

James Hook and Co.

When you've been trapping your own lobsters since 1925, your lobster rolls are epic. Note that this feast on a bun is made with lobster blended with mayo. (15-17
Northern Ave., Boston)

Pauli's

This North End nook plays it safe with both variations — hot with drawn butter and cold with mayo — in seven, 14, and 25 ("the Lobstitution") ounces. The smallest comes on a New England-style buttered hot dog bun, while the larger ones are piled onto sub rolls to accommodate all that meat. (65 *Salem St., Boston*)

Row 34

Chef Jeremy Sewall's cousin Mark Sewall, who helms his own lobster boat in Maine, sources the lobster at Row 34. The warm buttered lobster roll is just that, while Ethel's creamy lobster roll (named for the chef's grandmother) is traditional cold mayo prep. (383
Congress St., Boston)

8. Roast beef sandwich



Roast beef sandwiches at Cusser's. —*Brian Samuels Photography*

Not for the faint of appetite, the area's roast beef sandwiches are stacked with heaps upon heaps of roast beef. Tradition dictates slices are sandwiched into an onion roll, but rules are made to be broken.

Cusser's Roast Beef and Seafood

Wagyu eye round is roasted to medium-rare daily and served on fluffy house-made buns out of an old-school lunchtime takeout window. Try the North Shore Three-Way (barbecue sauce, mayo, and cheese) or Thoreau (with cheddar, pickled red onions, and spicy aioli). (304 Stuart St., Boston)

Cutty's

This diminutive Brookline Village sandwich shop hits its big with the Roast Beef 1000 — a meaty masterpiece packed with slow-roasted beef, crispy shallots, Thousand Island, and sharp cheddar on brioche from Iggy's. (284 Washington St., Brookline)

Harrison's Roast Beef

The specialty sandwich at this family-owned spot is shredded Grade A prime beef served on a toasted onion roll with a zesty barbecue sauce. Add a dollop of the hot pepper relish for an extra kick. (80 Chickering Road, North Andover)

Kelly's Roast Beef

This shop has carved out its place as one with, arguably, Boston's most famous roast beef sandwiches. Thin slices are piled on a grilled sesame seed roll. Head to Revere Beach to visit the original location. (*locations in Danvers, Medford, Revere, and Saugus*)

Roast Beast

Order top-round piled on a butter-griddled onion roll with barbecue sauce, mayo, and American cheese, or get creative (and messy) with the Terrier, dripping in honey barbecue, sautéed onions, and chipotle and horseradish mayos. Ask to take the Thermonuclear challenge for a T-shirt and bragging rights. (*1080 Commonwealth Ave., Boston*)

9. Traditional clambake



Summer Shack's clambake. —*Summer Shack*

Coastal and casual, a typical clambake includes lobster, clams, corn, and red potatoes wrapped together and steamed over a fire. Consider it beach time minus the sand.

The Barking Crab

This Boston Harbor institution easily fits the bill for waterfront dining. Picnic tables and buoys set the scene,

and when you pair a Cucumber Cooler cocktail with the 1.25-pound lobster, clams, corn, and potato salad combo, this is what summer on the water is all about. *(88 Sleeper St., Boston)*

Neptune Oyster

The N.O.B. Clambake boasts a whole two-pound Maine lobster, clams, chorizo, and sweet summer corn. The North End spot doesn't take reservations and, as it has gobbled up its share of awards for seafood, be prepared for a wait. *(63 Salem St., Boston)*

North Square Oyster

Just a few doors down from the Paul Revere House and overlooking North Square, you can order a clambake with lobster, clams, chorizo, potatoes, and corn. *(5 North Square, Boston)*

Precinct

This clambake's Wellfleet Cape Cod clams, PEI mussels, and red potatoes are also mixed with local kielbasa and shrimp. *(154 Berkeley St., Boston)*

Summer Shack

The legendary New England chef Jasper White pairs lobster with mussels and clams, corn, potatoes, an egg, and chorizo. The spread is served in a netting bag to increase the at-the-beach feel. *(10 Scotia St./50 Dalton St., Boston; 149 Alewife Brook Parkway, Cambridge)*

10. Yankee pot roast

Popular in frugal New England kitchens, Yankee pot roast of yesteryear included tough cuts of beef roasted for hours to tenderize, and was served with root vegetables (think: carrots, potatoes, parsnip, and turnip).

Durgin-Park

Faneuil Hall's oldest restaurant (est. 1827) serves pot roast with from-scratch mashed potatoes, butternut squash, and natural gravy. Prime rib flank is slowly cooked with stewed vegetables for five hours, then cut



Durgin-Park's Yankee pot roast. —*Durgin-Park*
for pull-apart slices. (340 N. Market St., Boston)

Henrietta's Table

A simmer in veal stock gives this pot roast its fork-tender appeal. In the wintertime, order with a side of locally grown roasted parsnips, rutabaga, purple top turnip, and celeriac to complete the hearty meal. (1 Bennett St., Cambridge)

Merchants Row

This Yankee pot roast comes with braised carrots, Cipollini onions, roasted potatoes, and Revolutionary War stories that took place minutes from the 300-year-old Colonial Inn's door. Also of note are the [tales of British and colonial soldiers' spirits said to roam its rooms](#). (48 Monument St., Concord)

Park

OK, this isn't *technically* a Yankee pot roast. But chef Mark Goldberg gets playful at his Harvard Square spot, regularly tweaking his meat pie of the day to feature classic Yankee pot roast ingredients such as beef, peas, and carrots. Settle in with a Mayflower IPA or a South Boston Irish Whiskey. (59 JFK St., Cambridge)

Pleasant Café

Tuesday night is Yankee pot roast night at this Parkway original. It's all about simple simmering and hand slicing, creamy, homemade mashed potatoes, seasoned, sliced carrots, and gravy. Bonus: The old-school vibe translates to being called "honey" when you order. (4515 Washington St., Roslindale)

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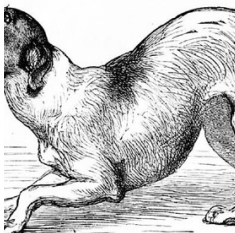
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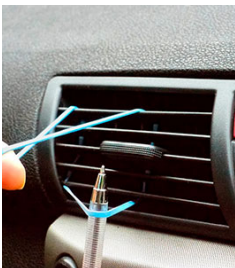
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