

Liz Johns and Danielle Whren Johnson

Beyond crab cakes—Charm City’s culinary culture

Baltimore’s restaurants, breweries, and bars

Baltimore is well-known for its steamed crabs and crab cakes. We’re also not shy about putting Old Bay on everything, even in our ice cream. We’re not just about crabs anymore, though. We have restaurants that foodies should not miss by James Beard finalists and award winners Spike Gjerde, Cindy Wolf, and Bryan Voltaggio. Baltimore is also home to a wide array of ethnic cuisine including Afghan, Indian, Turkish, and Lebanese.

For those a little less adventurous, you can still get a good burger or enjoy some delicious Italian food in our Little Italy neighborhood (don’t forget the amazing Italian desserts). Open since 1782, Baltimore also boasts one of the longest running food markets in the country. You’ll never want for something delicious to eat during your visit to Charm City. (Each \$ represents \$10, and price ranges indicate what you can expect to pay for an entrée.)

Near the Convention Center/Inner Harbor

Restaurants near the Convention Center and the Inner Harbor are within a short walk of the Convention Center. Phillips Seafood and Aggio may also be reached on the Orange Line of the Charm City Circulator.

- **Aggio (\$\$-\$\$\$).** Bryan Voltaggio, *Top Chef* and James Beard Foundation Award

finalist, serves up a locally sourced, seasonal Italian menu with a focus on pasta.

- **AleWife (\$-\$\$).** A gastropub serving upscale bar food, AleWife also boasts 40 craft beers on tap. Try to get the table in the “vault,” for a different dining experience in this building that once served as a bank.

- **Lexington Market (\$-\$\$).** Lexington Market, open since 1782, bills itself as America’s oldest market. With more than 100 vendors, there is a wide variety of food options, including Faidley’s Seafood,

which is consistently voted Baltimore’s best crab cakes, and the Berger Bakery serving up Baltimore’s famous Berger cookies, a shortbread cookie

piled high with fudge frosting. (Open 6:30 a.m.–6 p.m.)

- **Phillips Seafood (\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$).** Serving up seafood since 1914, Phillips is a well-known Maryland chain. Their Inner Harbor location is a popular destination for tourists looking to enjoy a delicious Maryland crab cake. If you need a souvenir, you can even



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have some of their crab cakes shipped to you.

Quick lunch spots

If you want to get out of the Convention Center and grab a quick lunch nearby, there are a number of well-known chain restaurants within walking distance, including Potbelly, Chipotle, Panera, and Nando's Peri-Peri. Shake Shack, Chick-fil-A, and Nalley Fresh are a little bit farther away.

Harbor East/Little Italy

Restaurants in Harbor East and Little Italy can be easily reached via the Orange Line of the Charm City Circulator.

- **Amicci's (\$\$).** A casual Italian restaurant in Little Italy serving up traditional Italian food. Don't miss their signature appetizer, the Pane Rotundo, a round Italian loaf of bread, brushed with garlic butter, toasted, and topped with shrimp in a creamy scampi sauce.

- **Cinghiale (\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$).**

James Beard

Foundation Award nominated chef Cindy Wolf presents traditional Italian food. Also known for its award-winning wine list.

- **Lebanese Taverna (\$\$).** Traditional Lebanese food served in a modern setting overlooking the water.

- **Sabatino's (\$\$-\$\$\$).** A classic Italian restaurant in Baltimore's Little Italy neighborhood. Known for their Bookmaker salad, featuring their signature homemade salad dressing.

- **Vaccaro's (\$).** No night out in Little Italy would be complete without a stop at Vaccaro's for dessert. Indulge with Vaccaro's decadent Italian cookies, pastries, cakes, and gelato. Beware portion sizes, many desserts are best shared between two or three people.

Fell's Point

Fell's Point is the place to go if you're looking for a late night out with a lot of history. Take a water taxi from Harbor Place to Fell's Point, or hop on the Charm City Circulator Orange or Green lines.

- **Alexander's Tavern (\$\$).** When you're in the mood for tater tots, get them at Alexander's Tavern to get in your carb

fix with your crab fix in one bite. Their extensive menu (including a gluten-free option menu) makes this a great place for anyone for lunch, dinner, and brunch.

- **Max's Taphouse (\$\$).**

With more than 1,000 different bottles, 102 taps, and five casks, Max's Taphouse has a beer for everyone. Casual

pub fare makes Max's a good anytime choice, but it does get more crowded the later it gets.

- **The Horse You Came in On Saloon (\$\$).** Established in 1775, The Horse You Came in On is America's oldest continually operated saloon. Enjoy live music starting at 1 p.m. while sitting in a saddle at the bar enjoying casual pub fare and specialty Jack Daniels cocktails. Stay late enough, and you may even catch a glimpse of the ghost of Edgar Allan Poe.



Italian cookies at Vaccaro's. Credit: Danielle Whren Johnson

• **Todd Conner's (\$\$)**. This is a no-frills bar serving up good food at a reasonable price. It's ideal for unwinding at the bar with a drink and appetizers.

Federal Hill

Restaurants in Federal Hill are mostly within a mile walk of the Convention Center or can also be reached via the Purple route of the Charm City Circulator.

• **Abbey Burger Bistro (\$-\$\$)**. Abbey Burger Bistro's original location (second location in Fell's Point) features a wide range of custom burger creations or, if you're not feeling adventurous, build your own. Both vegetarian and meat options are available. Also indulge yourself with one of their spiked milkshakes.

• **Blue Moon Too (\$ - \$\$\$)**.

Wildly popular restaurant serving up brunch daily from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Blue Moon Too and their original location, also open in Fell's Point, are known for their Cap'n Crunch French Toast and biscuits and gravy.

• **L. P. Steamers (\$\$-\$\$\$\$)**. If you don't want to leave Baltimore without the full Maryland crab experience, L. P. Steamers is for you. One of Baltimore's best crab houses serving up Maryland crab cakes and steamed crabs year round.

• **Metropolitan (\$-\$\$)**. Metropolitan Coffee House and Wine Bar serves up a large menu of delicious food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

• **Mi & Yu Noodle Bar (\$\$)**. A fast, casual restaurant open for lunch and din-

ner for dine in or carryout. Build your own noodle bowl with your choice of protein, noodle, and broth or enjoy one of their delicious bao (Chinese steam bun sandwiches).

• **Regi's American Bistro (\$-\$\$)**. Serving up American food since 1978 in a cozy rowhouse, Regi's is a South Baltimore staple. They are best known for their weekend brunches, but their crab cakes have also won multiple awards.

• **Spoons (\$-\$\$)**. Another favorite breakfast/lunch spot serving breakfast all day, Spoons has been voted best biscuits in Maryland and

best coffee house in Baltimore. (Open 7 a.m. - 2 p.m.)



Cap'n Crunch French Toast at Blue Moon Too. Credit: Danielle Whren Johnson

Mt. Vernon

Take the Charm City Circulator Purple Route to catch a glimpse of the original

Washington Monument in Baltimore's cultural center, which is both a National Landmark Historic District and a city Cultural District.

• **Akbar (\$\$-\$\$\$\$)**. Don't let its basement location fool you. Akbar serves up some of Baltimore's tastiest Indian food. Try out their lunch buffet or dine on traditional Indian dishes for dinner.

• **Brewer's Art (\$\$-\$\$\$\$)**. Just north of Mount Vernon, this brewpub serves bar fare such as baked mac and cheese, corned beef and beer brats, as well as pasta, fish, and other comfort food, but they're probably best known for their rosemary garlic fries. Make a reservation for the dining room, or grab a seat in the bar for drinks and dinner. If you can't stop by for the full experience,

you'll find their brews at many other Baltimore establishments.

- **Brew House No. 16 (\$-\$-\$-\$).** This hot spot often needs reservations, even on weeknights, but even if you don't have one, take a seat at the bar for a drink while waiting. This former fire-house serves beer brewed on site and farm to table cuisine.

- **Cazbar (\$-\$-\$-\$).** If you're looking for authentic Turkish cuisine, including a large variety of kebab (try one or try a variety in one of their combo platters), Cazbar is for you. There are plenty of options for vegetarians, too. If you want a little entertainment with your meal, there are belly dancing



Steamed crabs with Old Bay, a Baltimore staple. Credit: Danielle Whren Johnson

Friday and Saturday nights (reservations recommended on show nights).

- **The Helmand (\$\$).** Make a reservation to try fine Afghan cuisine in the mid-Atlantic. Middle Eastern spices flavor beef, lamb, and chicken dishes, and the vegetarian platter gives you a full range of Afghan cooking and flavors.

Hampden

The Charm City Circulator Purple Route will get you most of the way to Hampden (pronounced "Ham-den"), but it ends at Johns Hopkins Homewood Campus. You can also take the Light Rail to the Woodberry stop. Woodberry Kitchen is near the stop, but the remaining restaurants are about a mile walk. The best way to

get to Hampden is via Uber or taxi. Be sure to leave some time to pop into some local shops before dinner.

- **13.5% Wine Bar (\$-\$-\$-\$).** This cozy wine bar offers flights of wine and excellent cheese and charcuterie boards. If you're looking for a full meal, share a few small plates with colleagues or get an entree for dinner.

- **Charmery (\$).** Finish up your evening in Hampden with a scoop (or three) of local ice cream. Flavors change

daily, so try something adventurous such as Old Bay Caramel, Thai Tea, or Black Sesame.

- **De Kleine Duivel (\$-\$-\$).** This Belgian beer bar offers an extensive list of beers, each served

in the properly shaped glass for each style. No food here, though, drinks only.

- **Golden West (\$\$).** Vegans, vegetarians, Tex-Mex lovers, and waffle enthusiasts alike will all find something at Golden West. Stop in for brunch, or head down for a handcrafted cocktail before dinner after a long day at the conference. Or, grab a taco to go from the take-out window as you stroll along The Avenue.

- **Woodberry Kitchen (\$-\$-\$-\$).** James Beard award-winning chef, Spike Gjerde, dishes up his own take on Chesapeake Bay favorites with as many locally sourced ingredients as possible. Woodberry Kitchen often shows up on lists of the country's best restaurants as well as local Baltimore best of lists. *ZZ*