The 10 Best Dishes on Earth and Where to Get Them Locally (Part 1)

This article may produce a puddle of drool on your laptop or desk. If you are on a diet and trying to lose weight, close this tab or better yet run away. You've been warned!

These are – in my opinion of course – the ten best dishes on mother earth. Well, ten is a neat number for articles, and it has to be cut off somewhere. If I had my way, it would be a top 1,000 best dishes on earth. Narrowing it down to ten was like picking two of your favorite children out of the five you have. It was slightly traumatizing. Yes, I'm a foodie. It's one of my few vices. No, I am not obese or even overweight. It's all about a love for textures, aromas, and presentation and NOT quantity. Food is something many of us are passionate about and conversation in the "real" world and on the internet usually spirals into a debate about which nation's cuisine is best or who creates the best version of a particular dish. It's not hyperbole to say that these debates escalate into a heated argument and even in rare occurences a phsyical row. An easy way to get people arguing is stating who makes the best pizza, wings, or burger. Someone in your group will think you are "Wicked stupid" or be amazed how clueless you are about the genuine article or how it's made in the "old country." Tell someone that Pizza Hut makes the best pizza ever and you may even get a punch in the face.

I'm not particularly into being punched in the face in my older age. When I was a bit younger it was a favorite past-time of mine. It got me a lot of ugly. A few more punches may be a tipping point into disfigurement. The point is that these best dishes on earth are the best dishes on earth in my opinion. I am not stating an objective fact. I'll admit I have

a bias and probably an Asian one. Being a foodie, I'd love to know how clueless I am about where to get the real deal. It means I get to feed my addiction. Get it? Feed? Food article? Addict….aw forget it. If you see me in public don't punch me in the face. Don't come at me bro. Or sis. I've dropped a disclaimer. I'm off the hook.

So, here are the ten best dishes on earth and more importantly where you can get your hands on them. I couldn't possibly place them in order. Again, that's like ordering your favorite children from the one you love the most, to the one you love the least.

1. Bibimbap

What? These silly sounding Korean words translate into extreme bliss. I have no idea what Bibimbap, Bibim Bop or Bibim Bap means in Korean, but it's probably along the lines of "Drool inducing madness." It comes in a bowl with moist, perfectly cooked rice as a centerpiece. The rice's best friends surround it and they are typically shredded carrots, shiitake mushrooms, sliced cucumber, cooked spinach, soybean sprouts, cooked beef, and topped -depending on where you go – with an egg. While this is a standard, I've seen the beef replaced with chicken or fish and some variation of other vegetables.



Bibimbap by Dartmouth's "From the Seoul!

It usually arrives at your table on a hot plate and sizzling but I have seen versions where the rice is warm, but the

ingredients room temperature or cool. I like the cooked versions because you get nailed instantly with all of the aromas of the meat and vegetables. It is typically accompanied with a red sauce, which I believe is called Gochujang. The first time I had Bibimbap, I used my chopsticks to navigate the bowl and randomly pick out ingredients. Big mistake. The Korean lady immediately set me straight for this violation and told me that I had to mix all the ingredients together to *really* do it properly. Ok, so I do that now. All about avoiding that punch in the face.

Where can you get Bibimbap? Ginger Grill that used to be in downtown used to be the premiere spot for it. I've had it too many times to count. That restaurant closed and From the Seoul opened up in Dartmouth next to the old Daddy Junky's Music and Texas Roadhouse. Their version is cooked and comes with all the obligatory condiments that typically accompany an outing at a Korean restaurant. The owner will bring out the Gochujang at any level of heat from wimpy to "You're dumb!" at request.

2. House Style Steak

Steak. Sorry vegetarians and vegans of the world. Steak. Mouth watering, mindbogglingly good steak. There is only one place to get this particular steak with this name and that is Novo Mundo. While I am a skeptic, I am convinced that there is magic, perhaps voodoo or black magic involved. It's honestly *that* good. Have you ever been to a restaurant where the table is so quiet that you can hear a pin drop because everyone is ravaging their food? That's Novo Mundo's House Style Steak. This is serious stuff.



House Style Steak from New Bedford’s Novo Mundo!

I’ve been out with a crew of buddies, chatting, laughing and generally having a blast and as soon as that first bite happens, no one else exists. Tunnel vision. It’s all about this steak drizzled in a Portuguese Au Jus and accompanied with a perfect batch of freshly made fries or rice. Anyone who has been to Novo Mundo knows that they have a”secret” red sauce that typically goes over their famous half roasted chicken, but also is perfect on their fries.

This steak is a large portion. It’s cooked over high heat so you get that char on the outside and if you are like me and prefer your steak in the neighborhood of medium rare, the inside is not cooked all the way through. This is a special treat and when I want to feel like a king, I have Novo Mundo’s steak. Served by the best waitress on earth as well. I’ve never seen her use a pad and write anything down. By the time she has gotten halfway through the order, someone inevitably interrupts and alters their order, adds something or changes it altogether. You can try all you want, Carla will remember every detail and nuance.

3. Pho



Healing directly to the soul with Apsara’s Pho!

What the Pho is Pho? It’s Vietnamese soup. Possibly one of the best things made on earth. Anthony Bourdain swears that Pho is healing. It heals your hangover, it heals the soul. Pho is so good that you’ll feel like you are doing something wrong. You can’t have something this good without being punished for it. The Universe doesn’t work that way. Pho can be found in a variety of ways, and everyone claims to have the best. One thing they all have in common is a steaming hot, beef broth with noodles, usually vermicelli and a choice of meat. The meat could be rare steak, brisket, liver, tripe, meatball, or flank. Some places even slice the beef paper thin and serve it raw. Once it drops into the hot broth it cooks within a minute.

With this bowl of simmering goodness you get a plate of ingredients on the side. This allows you to customize your soup base. This plate is usually bean sprouts, culantro – not to be confused with cilantro – Thai Basil, lime, slices of hot pepper and Hoisin sauce. If you’re having a bad day, have some

Pho and it vanishes. There are a LOT of places to get great Pho. My personal favorite was a spot in the South End that went out of business. These days I get my Pho from Sivalai on Sconticut Neck Road and sometimes travel to Apsara in Fall River (This has since closed as well). It’s worth the trip.

4. Cioppino

Living in New England means most of us are experts on seafood and devour it on a regular basis. We eat seafood more often than most of the other states. We love our seafood and living in the world’s highest grossing seafood port surely contributes. While most people equate Italian food with pasta, there is a dish that many Americans -unless they are Italian – haven’t heard of: Cioppino. Fortunately, I grew up in an Italian household so have had the pleasure of eating this aplenty. Cioppino could be said to be the Italian version of the French bouillabaisse. Some restaurants call it by its alternate name: Zuppa Di Pesce.



One of Italian-America’s Most Beloved Dishes: Cioppino!!

Picture all of your favorite seafood – lobster, shrimp, Dungeness crab, clams, squid, mussels, scallops, and fish – stewed in a broth of tomato and wine yumminess with a slice of toasted Italian bread in the corner. Because this dish is considered an ethnic specialty, restaurants seem to feel that

they can charge the proverbial arm and a leg for it. For that reason I say the best place to get Cioppino is at home. It's SIMPLE to make. If you don't want to take the chance or have the odor of seafood stuck to the walls of your house then the next best thing (outside of heading of Federal Hill) is to head to the Pasta House or Cafe Italia. If you like seafood and like Italian food, then you'll love the collision of the two!

5. Tikka Masala

I'll have to make a confession to make. While I grew up in an Italian household, it's Indian cuisine that is my favorite on earth. Call me Benedicto Arnaldo. I won't delve into the variety of regional cuisine that make up Indian food, because it would take a book to do that. India is after all a sub-continent and there are too many regions to cover. Suffice it say, that Tikka Masala is the dish that converts the terrified. Terrified? Many Americans are afraid to try anything that doesn't resemble a hot dog, hamburger or pizza. They are usually are also afraid that if they try another nation's cuisine it will be so spicy that the experience will be a painful one. This is the dish that I have my scared, unadventurous friends try and it wins them over every time. It has zero spice in terms of heat, but it has lots of other spices that is typical of many dishes in Indian cuisine.

This orange, creamy sauce is usually served with gobs of chicken breast, but I have seen shrimp, fish or lamb as an alternatives. The sauce is a blend of tomato (lightly), yogurt, coriander, coconut (very subtle), turmeric, and paprika then baked in a Tandoori or clay pot oven. As is the custom in Indian restaurants, it is accompanied with Basmati or house rice and fresh baked to order Naan bread. Indian breads are used as a utensil and pieces are torn off and used to scoop of the food….always with the right hand!



Chicken Tikka Masala from North Dartmouth’s Ayur-Shri.

As with many dishes around the world every family or restaurant claims to make the genuine article or best version. The best I’ve ever had was in West Yorkshire, England, but since this article is about how to get these dishes locally, Old England won’t do. The nearest spot to get this delectable dish is at North Dartmouth’s Ayur-Shri restaurant. While it has become a popular destination as a buffet, and the Tikka Masala is always on the buffet as chicken, you can get some of the other alternate meat choices from the regular menu. If you have been thinking about venturing into Indian Cuisine, but perhaps a bit intimidated, Tikka Masala is a safe bet. After you have it a few times, the aromas of the other dishes will tempt you to continue to venture further.

In part two we’ll round out the second half of the best dishes and even a few honorary ones. Can’t just pick 10 to share!