

TWIN CITIES

THE ONLY EVENT CALENDAR
YOU'LL EVER NEED (P.18)

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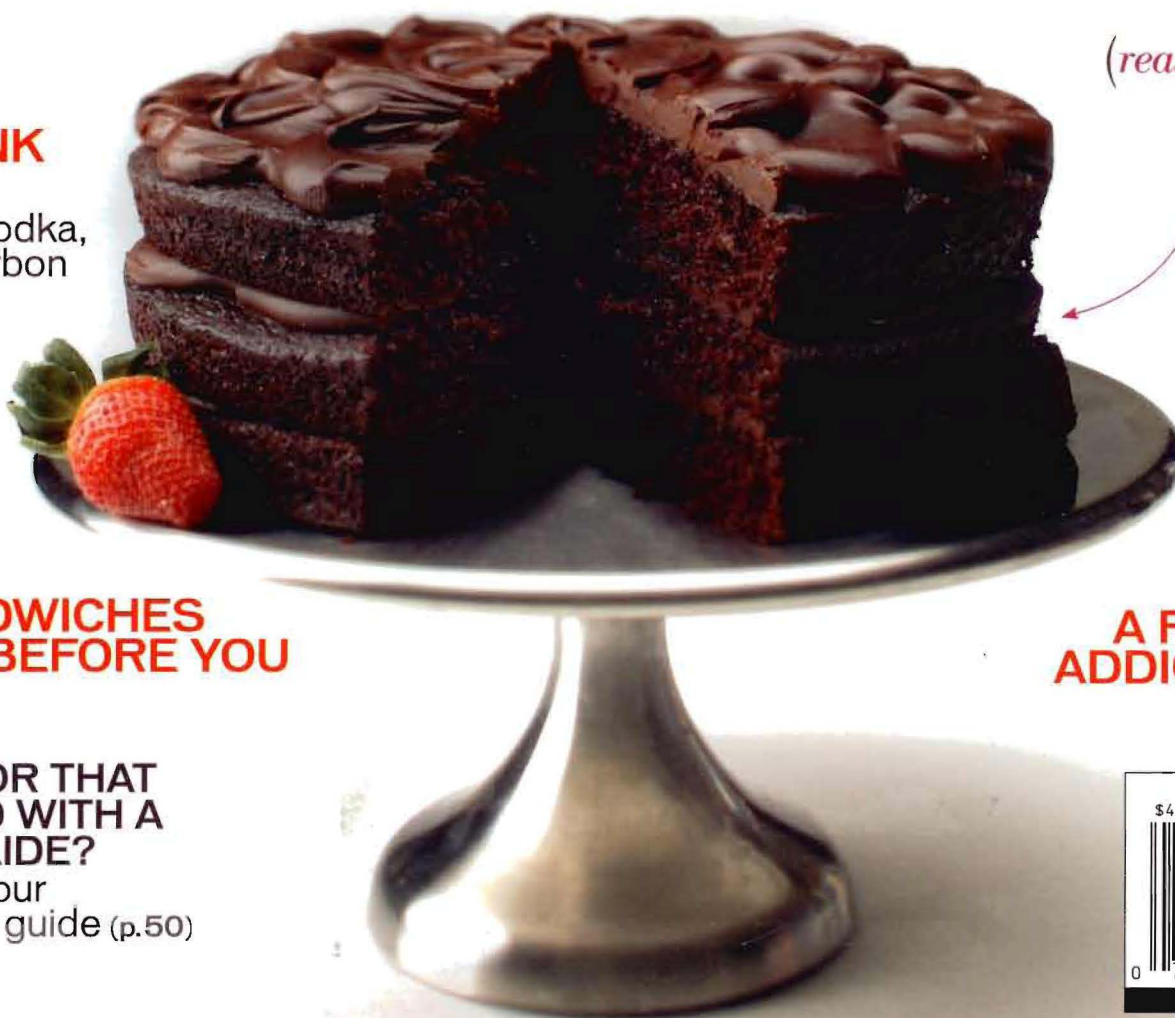
APRIL 2009

dessert.

53 reasons to be bad

HOW WE DRINK NOW

> Skittles vodka,
bacon bourbon
and more



(reason #17)

> 9 SANDWICHES
TO TRY BEFORE YOU
DIE (p.66)

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the tenth sandwich

Choosing **nine local favorites** was easy. That last one, on the other hand....

Humble yet kingly, the sandwich is as elemental a food as there is. When you're hungry—stomach sucking on your ribs, lightheaded as a Housewife of Orange County, cranky-as-a-stuck-pig hungry—only a sandwich will do. And so I present this: an opinioned, abridged, incomplete list of 10 (OK, nine) of the best in town. The 10th sandwich is an elusive beast. The first five, that was easy enough. Nine was a challenge, but surmountable. But that 10th great sandwich—how do you choose? I scratched and I dug, crumbs slipped through my fingers and I often wanted to just get on my knees and cry. In other words, I ate a lot of sandwiches. And I think I've finally determined what the 10th sandwich is. Now, aren't you getting hungry?

>1. Bacon, Egg and Harissa, 112 Eatery

There are still people who insist on touting the Jucy Lucy as Minnesota's own sandwich, as the cheesesteak is to Philly. For my money—specifically, for my measly seven bucks—I'd rather tuck

into the bacon, egg and harissa sandwich at 112 Eatery. It has all the precise balance a sandwich ought: the heft of meat, richness of egg, heat of hot pepper, crunch of toast and nothing more to fuss it up. It's a sandwich for any moment of any day, and also a sandwich for the ages. [112 N. 3rd St., Mpls.; 612.343.7696; 112eatery.com]

>2. Croque Madame, Vincent A Restaurant

If I told you there were hardly words to describe the precision of this sandwich, you might accuse me of shirking my responsibilities. But it is hard. When you've got a mouthful of sweet ham and mornay sauce (think béchamel with more and then more cheese tossed in) toasted bread (darkened on one side only) and yet more melted cheese atop a perfectly fried egg... well, why even try to speak? If there's one sandwich I'd recommend you eat in perfect solitude, just you and the sandwich, this is it. [1100 Nicollet Mall, Mpls.; 612.630.1189; vincentarestaurant.com]

>3. Friday Chicken Gyros, Holy Land

If there's a sandwich worth driving across town for, worth standing in line for, worth ruining your best shirt (think globs of sauce dripping on you while you're stuck in traffic), it is the chicken gyro at Holy Land. Whole chicken (not that pressed stuff that comes on a cone) is griddled beneath an iron on the grill, then tossed in a tandoor-yogurt sauce so rich and fragrant you'll want to eat it with a spoon. And then—trust me on this one—choose tahini and lavash for your accompaniments (you'll have a choice of other sauces and other breads, but I'm ordering for you today). Available on Friday and Saturday only; arrive before 1 p.m. if you want one. [2513 Central Ave. N.E., Mpls; 612.781.2627; holylandbrand.com]

>4. Lamb and Bacon BLT, Saffron

The BLT at Saffron is a perfect example of the ingenuity of this Middle Eastern kitchen. Is chef Sameh Wadi going to go through life without a

IF THERE'S ONE SANDWICH I'D RECOMMEND YOU EAT IN PERFECT SOLITUDE, IT IS THE CROQUE MADAME AT VINCENT.

BLT, just because his diet is pork-free halal? Hell no. The "B" is house-cured lamb bacon; "L" is haughty arugula rather than its dull cousin iceberg; and "T" is sweet tomato jam, standing in for insipid winter tomatoes. Also: Forget mayo. Vanilla egg bread is smeared with lamb fat before grilling. How sexy is that? [123 N. 3rd St., Mpls.; 612.746.5533; saffronmpls.com]

>5. Philly Cheesesteak, Golooney's East Coast Pizza
Ah, Golooney's. Sweet, goofy, confusing Golooney's. It's the slacker little brother of pizza cafés, and while you might love to hate it, the love always tips the balance. The pie is good, but when you want something even more gut-busting, look no further than the solid Philly cheesesteak. I'm not concerned with authenticity here, only flavor, and this cheesesteak has it in truckloads. Layers and layers of beef topped with a swipe of white cheesy goo—for only goo will do—and then tangy banana peppers and hot pepper relish. [2329 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.; 612.377.8555]

>6. Cubano, Victor's 1959 Café
No girly sandwich, this. Even fat uncle Freddie will be hard pressed to finish it. Sweet ham is paired with pork loin in a classic homage to the oink, and if that's too rich for your blood, don't worry, because mustard and pickles come to the rescue with clarity and crunch. Before it's all pressed and griddled, soft, white Cuban-style bread (traditionally made with lard) is blanketed in Swiss cheese. Add Spanish-style chorizo for a dollar. Overkill? Maybe. But I like the sentiment: Excess is barely enough. [3756 Grand Ave. S., Mpls.; 612.827.8948; victors1959cafe.com]

>7. Salami on Sour Rye, Kiev Foods
Kiev Foods isn't the biggest, best-known or sleekest Eastern European deli in town, and that's why I love it. All the little details of a true ethnic grocery are here: a television blaring foreign soaps, a deep freeze filled with mystery goods and a language barrier as thick as the Iron Curtain at checkout. But today, concern yourself only with the deli case, filled with a dozen or so imported salamis—fatty, smoky, sweet. Ask to pair any one (or two, or three) with two slices of imported sour rye. What you'll receive is something so elegant, so fundamental, it defines the very essence of the thing you've been searching for. [2509 W. 7th St., St. Paul; 651.690.5655]

>8. Sandwich Thursdays, First Course
Every Thursday at the darling Diamond Lake bistro



First Course, all the restaurant is a stage, the sandwich the star. You could go with the solid croque-monsieur, all smoky ham and satisfying, caramelized bits of baby swiss; or you could go the way of the sophisticated vegetarian: hen of the woods mushrooms, grilled frisée and caramelized onions with yet more gruyere. Better idea: Your chef has given the sandwich the spotlight, so ask him what's performing well tonight. [5607 Chicago Ave., Mpls.; 612.825.6900; firstcoursebistro.com]

>9. Mort's Reuben, Mort's Delicatessen
As you wait for your Reuban at Mort's, observing as servers deliver groaning platters of meat, a question comes to mind: How many pounds of meat does this place go through in a day? (Answer: 1,700!) But then comes your own sandwich—grilled rye, house-made Russian dressing, kraut, horseradish cheese and, most importantly, something like two pounds of sweet, juicy corned beef. Beautifully pink, meltingly tender, somehow lighter than the sum of its parts. Suddenly the tonnage doesn't seem so absurd. [525 Winnetka Ave. N., Golden Valley; 763.544.2900; morts-deli.com]

>10. Your sandwich, your world
What makes a sandwich just so? Is it freshly baked bread with a toothsome, crackling crust? Is it slow-braised meat with so much juice it turns your bread into a delectable pink sponge? A ripe summer tomato sliced thin as paper, then sprinkled with fleur de sel? Is it a Manny's torta? A B'Witched pastrami? A Saigon Banh Mi? A PB&J on Wonder? Only you know your perfect sandwich. And we want to hear about it. Show us that sparkling jewel of sand in a field of mere grains. Tell us what it is, tell us why, show us the way: letters@metromag.com. +

Mecca admires the croque madame at Vincent. You can admire it yourself on the opposite page.

mecca's foodie notes

→ Get your farm shares now.
For years you've been curious, and I'm here to tell you: Now is the time to try a farm share.

Many farms offer weekly or biweekly shares, or half-shares if you're worried about too much food. An every-other-week share is perfect for my husband and me. The expense? Less than you'd spend at a co-op. The main drawback is that you gamble along with your farmer. If his fields get flooded and his strawberries don't come in, then no berries for you. But that's what farm-to-fork is all about: the connection between your kitchen table and your farmer and the land.

For more information on farm shares, and to choose one that's right for you, visit landstewardshipproject.org or check out the Seward Co-op CSA Fair on April 25. [2823 E. Franklin Ave., Mpls.; 612.338.2465; seward.coop]

→ Where's the Beef?
I got a call from Bob, who has just relocated back to the area. He had one burning question: "Where can I find a good steak tartar?" I was tickled pink as a tenderloin at this inquiry, and I instantly knew that Bob and I were two capers in an egg garnish. The answer is 112 Eatery, where the dish in question is hulking—about a half pound of beef bound with a raw egg. [112 N. 3rd St., Mpls.; 612.343.7693; 112eatery.com]

→ Chef's Chow
Chefs don't have time to eat out and they're usually only intimately acquainted with their own food, so they are rarely good authorities on where to eat. As a result, I perked up my ears when superstar chef Steven Brown volunteered this bit over a recent cocktail: "Cathay Chow Mein is the best chow mein in the world." Huh? Steven Brown eats chow mein? Now you know, and now you know where to get it. [5457 Nicollet Ave., Mpls.; 612.824.3358]