

Mean treats

Burgers, pizzas, 'shakes... New York's signature snacks are easy to come by, but this lot are the top (hot) dogs, reckons **Laura Goodman**

BURGER

Which one? The hamburger with cheese at Shake Shack.

Why? If you want a convoluted burger, with fancy aioli and farmshop cheeses, New York's got plenty – but not here. Shake Shack is the American roadside burger ideal, reinvented for the discerning New Yorker – all-natural beef patties, squishy buns, American cheese, lettuce, tomato and crinkle-cut chips that are a triumph of potato: crisp on the outside, fluffy on the inside. You know what you're getting, and what you're getting is so good that the queues refuse to fade, despite the choice of six city locations – the original is in Madison Square Park. Get in line (shake-shack.com; burger around £4) – and hope that the London outpost, set to open in Covent Garden this summer, will be just as good.





BAGEL

Which one? Lox (cured salmon) and cream cheese on pumpernickel at Brooklyn Bagel & Coffee Company.

Why? Getting your bagel straight from the source is the key if you want it how it should be: chewy with a crisp shell. The hand-rolled, kettle-boiled specimens at this plain cream-coloured joint are swiped from their baskets so quickly that they're always fresh. Choose your weapon (pumpernickel or poppy seed perhaps) and have them load it with lox and spring onion, plus either 'regular' cream cheese or a 'flavoured' one (tiramisu or wasabi). Get a coffee, too – it wouldn't taste right without (various locations; 00 1 212 924 2824, bkbagel.com; bagel around £4).

COFFEE

Which one? Single-origin drip-brewed coffee at Gimme!

Why? In the Big Apple, as in every city, coffee drinkers are adding hazelnut syrup to their lattes and caramel to their mochas. This can't be helped, but a real New York coffee should be straightforward – swiftly made, and then guzzled on the way to wherever it is you're going. Gimme! is 'a no-nonsense espresso bar' mini-chain with the best baristas in town, so don't expect any syrup or silliness – the decor is simple bare bricks and the cappuccinos are silky. The single-origin drip stuff is the New Yorker's choice – straight up and black (228 Mott St, Manhattan; 00 1 212 226 4011, gimmecoffee.com; coffee around £1.50).



PIZZA

Which one? The pepperoni-topped at Motorino.

Why? New York has been honing its pizza for some time now and this place in the East Village has attained the 2013 standard we should all expect. At Mr Palombino's stripey-walled pizzeria, his puffed-up, nicely charred discs of dough come to the trad marble tabletops smothered with rich red sauce and creamy mozzarella. And that's before you consider his clever toppings – go for juicy little clams, pepperoni or sautéed sprouts. There are excellent wines and appetisers, too, so get comfy – the 21st-century pizza is a leisurely affair (349 East 12th St; 00 1 212 777 2644, motorinopizza.com; pizza around £10).

PANCAKES

Which one? Buttermilk pancakes at the Buttermilk Channel.

Why? The Buttermilk Channel is a little tidal strait in Upper New York Bay; legend suggests the dairy farmers who crossed it would find the water so rough that it churned their milk. This brick-walled restaurant in Brooklyn, with its wooden tables and butcher-block bar, has appropriated the name to turn a crucial pancake ingredient into an object of adoration. The short and tall stacks are satisfyingly cakey, with a thick slick of butter and maple syrup. There are four varieties of Bloody Mary to wash them down (524 Court St; 00 1 718 852 8490, buttermilkchannelnyc.com; pancakes around £5). >



DOUGHNUT

Which one? Jam-and-custard-filled at Bouchon Bakery.

Why? Those gaudily glazed iced rings have their place but Thomas Keller's sugary spheres elevate the humble doughnut to another level. The bakery's glass cabinets are filled carefully with pretty *viennoiseries* and macarons – it's the most civilised stop you can make if you're near the Time Warner or Rockefeller Centers – but look beyond the fancy pastries to the doughnuts. They're gigantic and generously injected with the fillings of your (sweet) dreams: glossy, spiced-apple butter, or dark raspberry jam and vanilla custard (One Rockefeller Plaza; 00 1 212 782 3890, bouchonbakery.com; doughnuts £2.70).



HOT DOG

Which one? The original franks with 'kraut at Papaya King.

Why? Since the '30s, regulars at this gaudy red-and-yellow fast-food station have been taking the papaya thing in their stride. But it's not so obvious to the outsider: hot dogs are as New York as it gets, and papaya juice ain't. But go with it, because the dawgs (all-beef frankfurters inside toasted buns with sauerkraut, mustard and special red onion sauce) are mighty, and they go down much better with a freshly squeezed tropical juice at their side. The combination is addictive; you'll shun soda for ever more (179 East 86th St; 00 1 212 369 0648, papayaking.com; original combo £3.30).



MILKSHAKE

Which one? An old-school malt with two straws at Brooklyn Pharmacy & Soda Fountain.

Why? Brooklyn has gone bananas for this frozen-in-time spot run by a nostalgic brother-and-sister combo. Big oak shelving units are lined with old medicine bottles, antique scales and vintage candy, and the floor is made of '20s tiles. The shakes are thick and rich, in seasonal flavours such as black raspberry, pumpkin pie or pistachio-cardamom. And the rest of the menu reads like a technicolour, cream-topped dream, too, with a delicious new spin on Coke floats (513 Henry St; 00 1 718 522 6260, brooklynpharmacy.blogspot.com; thick shake around £5).



HOAGIE

Which one? Meatball Parm at Parm.

Why? At this Little Italy bar, owned by Mr Torrisi and Mr Carbone, round sesame rolls and substantial submarine ('subs') and 'hero' sandwiches are stuffed with meatballs, fried chicken or roast turkey, plus all the trimmings and spoonfuls of sauce. They're served in red baskets on sheets of greaseproof paper. Beyond the sarnies, there's also Tony Soprano's beloved baked *ziti* (penne, tomato sauce, a thick crust of cheese). Spot Parm from the street by its stripey red-and-white awning, grab a pillarbox-red stool at the bar, and make your all-American mess (248 Mulberry St; 00 1 212 993 7189, parmny.com; sub around £6).



5 FRESH FINDS

What's hot right now in the city's hippest kitchens

OYSTERS

Which one? Raw with horseradish sauce and a squeeze of lemon at Grand Central Oyster Bar.
Why? Grand Central Station is so striking that if you're there to catch a train, you may well arrive late at your destination. The concourse is a lofty, lovely space (see page 56), and down below, beneath fairy-lit vaulted tile ceilings, you can pick from an overwhelming assortment of east- and west-coast oysters in an energetic, cafeteria-like space. The menu is vast, broken into categories including 'cold buffet', 'shellfish platters' and 'shrimp, crab and scallops'. Focus your attention on 'raw bar' and 'beer' (89 East 42nd St; 00 1 212 490 6650, oysterbarny.com; around £1.60 an oyster).

What? Takoyaki at Otafuku

Why? This kind of Japanese food (ie, not sushi or soup) is hard to find, and New Yorkers are making special trips to the East Village to get it. Devotees sit on the rickety bench at the front of this tiny takeaway cradling their *takoyaki* – golden fritters like savoury doughnuts, crisp on the outside, and filled with octopus, ginger and spring onions (00 1 212 353 8503, otafukunyc.com; £3.30 each).

What? Kale salad at Battersby

Why? Leafy greens are all the rage at this inventive new restaurant in Brooklyn, with its exposed brickwork, dangling lightbulbs and open kitchen. The kale salad is a clever combo of the raw (Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi) and the cooked (sautéed kale), finished with a zingy dressing (255 Smith St; 00 1 718 852 8321, battersbybrooklyn.com; kale salad £7.90).

What? Ramen at Ippudo

Why? A steaming bowl of Japanese ramen (below) is now such a New York staple, it'll soon be up there with burgers and bagels. Ippudo's broths are intoxicatingly rich, deeply satisfying and ever so authentic, which is why there's always a waiting list. Put your name down at 6pm, and drink happy-hour Sapporo while you wait. Go for akamaru modern – liquid pork (65 4th Ave; 00 1 212 388 0088, ippudony.com; £10).

What? Negroni at Amor y Amargo

Why? In the East Village, tiny, dimly lit, semi-secret drinking dens are having a moment. At this one, which translates as 'Love and Bitters', the Negronis are made however your (very capable) bartender fancies, but they always include a vermouth, a spirit and a strong bitter (443 East 6th St, 00 1 212 614 6817; £8).

What? Pork belly Benedict at Prospect

Why? Brunch is nothing new, but this place has cranked it up a notch: begin with oysters, order Mimosas and drip coffee, then dig into Prospect Benedict (pork belly, spinach and slow-boiled eggs on English muffins with hollandaise sauce). The New York strip steak comes with eggs and a black-truffle hash. Doughnuts for dessert, obviously (773 Fulton St, Brooklyn; 00 1 718 596 6826, prospectbk.com; £9). ■

