

HOW WE'RE

Smoked potato soup from Mercantile Café, at Sawmill Market, where outdoor dining can be found in the Yard.

Photographs by
Douglas Merriam



EATING NOW

The pandemic fundamentally changed the way we break bread—and we learned to like it. By turning to our kitchens, gardens, and heaping helpings of to-go meals (and drinks!), we found new ways to create community, get closer to our ingredients, and soothe our souls.

BY MARK OPPENHEIMER

ADDITIONAL STORIES BY GWYNETH DOLAND, MARIA MANUELA, ANDI MURPHY, AND JOHNNY VEE



Home-baked bread has made a resurgence over the past year.

Eor Eric Olson and his wife, Nancy, it started innocently enough.

One Sunday in May, they awoke in their Santa Fe home and embarked on making an indulgent brunch: crepes Maryland with a rich Nantua sauce, a summer salad of peas, haricots verts, candied walnuts, and a lemon vinaigrette dressing, plus a simple applesauce.

Before the pandemic, the couple had routinely dined out two or three times a week. Breakfast had always been more of an afterthought.

“Our new Sunday brunch ritual was a completely unanticipated development,” says Eric, a scarf designer. “We wanted to have some regularity and celebration in our lives, even though it was

just the two of us.”

Each week afterward, they planned a special meal, put on nice clothes, made Bloody Marys, and cooked up salmon Bennies or French toast with home-baked bread. “These brunches give us a treat, something to look forward to as we marked time on our way to a post-COVID world of freedom,” says Nancy.

Almost everything about our lives changed in the past year. As we craved both connection and comfort, the shift in where and with whom we ate sometimes felt like sliding into a sinkhole. Food has always brought people together, so we’ve been forced to find new ways, or revive older methods, to get closer to our food and one another.

With New Mexico restaurants at limited occupancy or

open for carryout only, home kitchens became our oases and a form of entertainment. We read cookbooks, bought new gadgets, and stocked our freezers. We visited farmers’ markets and specialty shops seeking fresh ingredients and moments of indulgence. We planted backyard gardens with lettuce, cucumbers, and kale to feel like we stood on solid ground.

On the days when it all got to be just ... too ... much, we ordered burgers, tacos, enchiladas, and other comforts wrapped and ready to eat.

IN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS of the pandemic, Santa Fe artist Gigi Mills found it difficult to work. She missed her friends. She struggled to make sense of things.

“Overwhelmed and bored at

the same time, I just sat in my studio looking out the window, staring at the birds,” she recalls. Then one day, almost without thinking, she baked a boule—a simple round loaf of bread—with einkorn flour, made from an ancient grain. “I buttered a slice, still hot, sat down with a cup of coffee, and watched the birds.”

Things didn’t change immediately for Mills. But it was a start. “I eventually found my way back to the easel,” she says. “Watching and feeding the birds are now a meaningful part of my morning ritual.”

Virtual cooking classes, online wine tastings, and Zoom happy hours helped lift our spirits. The same web connectedness also inspired *Corona Kitchen*, a daily Facebook Live and YouTube

cooking show featuring Santa Fe actors and writers Debianna Mansini and Lisa Lucas. The duo shared family recipes, told stories, and discussed the ups and downs of the pandemic. “We provided a place to be together when we couldn’t physically gather,” Mansini says. “People reacquainted themselves with old family recipes or tossed aside their fear of cooking and just began cooking.”

And baking—especially bread. No-knead, sourdough, or whole-grain, baking bread can feel fundamental, even primal. Flour, salt, yeast, water. A golden, warm sense of accomplishment. If a loaf falls flat, try again. “There are no baking failures,” says Eric Stillman, a web designer in Santa Fe. He made four loaves every other week, giving away three, before “COVID belly” forced him to cut back. “My friends were disappointed,” he says. But he didn’t quit. “Bread baking is a big part of my life now.”

Victory gardens proliferated. “During the pandemic, it comforted me,” says Penina Meisels, a food photographer in Santa Fe, who grew lettuces, squash, and broccoli. Then the strawberries she had planted a few years back came into their own. “I’d sit with my COVID pod in my backyard with a bowl of strawberries between us,” she says. “We’d laugh as the sweet juice dripped down our chins.”

RESTAURANTS, BREWERIES, and wineries have all suffered this year, but many have found ways to adapt by creating spe-

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PLATE WORTHY

These spots go beyond plastic containers with home-style meals, intimate dinners, and dishes from around the globe.

By Mark Oppenheimer

315 Restaurant & Wine Bar

Down the street from the New Mexico State Capitol, chef and owner Louis Moskow serves traditional French food and a stellar assortment of wines. When health measures forced him to revamp 315’s takeout menu, he created several two-person dinner options, such as a cassoulet with braised endive salad and pumpkin parfait. He also launched a variety of cook-at-home frozen dumplings, inspired by styles from around the world. “It’s something I always wanted to do,” Moskow says. **315 Old Santa Fe Trail, Santa Fe; 505-986-9190, 315santafe.com**

Del’s Restaurant and Market

Del’s has been a brick-and-neon fixture along Route 66 in Tucumcari since 1956, serving homestyle meals to hungry travelers. Sisters Yvette Braziel-Peacock and Yvonne Braziel bought the business 25 years ago from their mother, Jessica Braziel, “so she’d stop bossing us around,” quips Yvette. “As if that would ever happen!” On any given day, you’ll still find one of the sisters cooking steaks, catfish, and New Mexican favorites. Place an order for delivery, and the other might bring the heaping helping of local comfort to your door. **1202 E. Historic Route 66, Tucumcari; 575-461-1740, delsrestaurant.com**

Frenchish

In 2016, Chef Jennifer James and her partner, Nelle Bauer, opened their Albuquerque love letter to French cuisine, and they’ve felt the warm embrace of the community

ever since. “This love goes both ways,” says James. That includes adding a weekly DIY dinner to the seasonal menu. The make-at-home meal for two has everything for favorites such as bison au poivre. Customers also appreciate the Nob Hill eatery’s handy market. **3509 Central Ave. NE, Albuquerque; 505-433-5911, frenchish.co**

PeeWee’s Kitchen

While running the trading post in Tohlokai, near Gallup, PeeWee Ulibarri turned the store’s overripe bananas into a banana bread business out of her home kitchen. That operation evolved into PeeWee’s Kitchen, where locals gather over breakfast burritos, lamb stew, and the weekly roast beef special. “When you set a plate of food in front of people, they’re happy,” says Ulibarri. “It’s instant gratification both ways.” **1644 S. 2nd St., Gallup; 505-863-9039, peeweekitchen.com**

Revel

There’s a joyfulness about the food at Revel—maybe because the Silver City spot grew out of the campfire revelry between husband-and-wife owners Brian and Kelsey Patterson and their partner, Jesse Westenberg. “We believe that our food should be fun and that you should have fun eating it,” says Kelsey. That’s not difficult with farm-to-table fare such as apple-cider-braised pork shoulder. Revel’s take-and-bake meals and pizza kits showcase its “play with your food” mentality. **304 N. Bullard St., Silver City; 575-388-4920, eatdrinkrevel.com**

cial takeout menus, family-style meals, and creative, intimate dinners.

"We're a family restaurant," says PeeWee Ulibarri, chef and owner of PeeWee's Restaurant, in Gallup. The breakfast and lunch spot offered its full menu for carryout over the past year, but business still dropped 80 percent.

"I miss my friends," Ulibarri says. "The restaurant is my social life, where we love on each other, hug on each other. I just want to do something worthwhile. Feeding people is worthwhile."

When Santa Fe's Cowgirl BBQ closed for three months to start the year, chef and owner Patrick Lambert took time to reevaluate more than his menu. Life in the hospitality industry can be grueling, so Lambert spent more time with family and close friends hiking and picnicking in the mountains. "It was a respite from all the restrictions and chaos," he says. "We were able to connect and enjoy one another's company."

The time for reflection has changed his approach moving forward, now that the Cowgirl has reopened. "I want to work smarter, not harder," he says.

Even after the vaccine does its work and restrictions loosen, our relationship with food and one another will likely have changed for good. Alexis Vourvoulis, an estate jewelry appraiser raising her 1-year-old son, has embraced her own vulnerability and feelings of isolation. "I learned to adapt and found comfort where I thought none existed," she says. "I found the little kindnesses we shared around cooking and eating to be the cure for my weariness."

WEB EXCLUSIVE

Chef Robin Valdez, owner of La Luna Eatery, in Albuquerque, shares his recipes for beef birria and vegan hibiscus flower birria. nmmag.us/birria



Quesa tacos from Birrieria y Tacos food truck in Albuquerque.

Taco Star

Fueled by social media, birria has become a menu sensation.

BY ANDI MURPHY

Thanks, Instagram. When birria tacos began trending on social media last year, I salivated over the succulent meat, often embedded in oozing white cheese and topped with onions and cilantro. Accompanied by a cup of deep red consommé, each taco dip was oddly exciting.

Birria, a slow-cooked, mildly spicy meat—originally goat or lamb, but also beef—is nothing new. It started out as a celebratory stew in Jalisco, Mexico, but became a breakout internet star in the U.S. and inspiration for a host of New Mexico chefs over the past year.

"It's that bright red color," Dominic Valenzuela, owner and chef of Albuquerque's Tako Ten, says of the attraction. He added birria ramen and "Birria TaKos and Consumé" to Tako Ten's menu in January.

Slightly smoky and mild in heat, birria gets its distinctive flavor from charred guajillo chiles and a combination of fresh and dry aromatics such

as onion, cumin, and cinnamon. But the social clamor comes from the consommé, made from the simmering juices, as much as the meat.

Ivon Ruiz and Refugio Chairez Rodriguez, owners of the Birrieria y Tacos Alex Tijuana Style food truck, helped bring it to Albuquerque. Ruiz's birria recipes—which include hefty amounts of guajillos, onions, and garlic—come from her mother and grandmother, both of whom made and sold tacos and birria in Tijuana for more than 25 years. "We wanted to give Albuquerque something spicy, something new," Ruiz says in Spanish, through a translator.

Many Mexican restaurants now serve birria, including La Guelaguetza Mexican Restaurant, in Albuquerque, and Taqueria Adelitas, in Santa Fe, as do food trucks like La Pichorrita and El Michoacano: Birria, Barbacoa y Carnitas.

"You know how it is in America," says Valenzuela. "It takes a long time for things to catch on, and when it does it spreads like wildfire."

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

These patios are worth visiting for the setting alone—but you'll love the food, too! **By Maria Manuela**

Dining alfresco makes everything taste better. (Good thing, since it's the only way most of us have eaten at a restaurant in the past year.) Hidden behind historic adobe walls and nestled in verdant landscapes, these outdoor dining spots are some of our favorites.

Farm and Table

Forgetting you're in a restaurant while on Farm and Table's patio is understandable. With soft wooden tables, a canopy of garden lights, pale adobe walls, and rounded entryways, the ambience feels intimate, like a stunning dinner party. Owner Cherie Montoya spent her childhood farming with her father, David, in Albuquerque's North Valley and developed a deep appreciation for the land and its gifts. Farm and Table cherishes every ingredient—80 percent of them from local growers—creating a romance you can taste. **8917 4th St., Albuquerque; 505-503-7124, farmandtablenm.com**

Santacafé

Just a shake of one lamb's tail away from the Santa Fe Plaza, a stone courtyard, white tablecloths, gurgling fountain, and some of New Mexico's most exquisite cuisine await on the historic patio at Santacafé. "It's one of the oldest buildings and courtyards in Santa Fe," says Elisa Garcia, manager since owner Quinn Stephenson took the reins two years ago. Built between 1857 and 1862, the structure was originally the home of Padre José Manuel Gallegos,

an eccentric priest defrocked by Bishop Lamy. "We have apricot trees that have been here for decades," says Garcia. "It feels like you step back in time into an old hacienda." **231 Washington Ave., Santa Fe; 505-984-1788, santacafe.com**

D.H. Lescombes Winery & Bistro

Tucked behind two massive wooden doors, the main patio at the Las Cruces bistro feels like you've wandered into a secret courtyard garden. Adorned with planters, flowers, and other greenery, the space gets covered in sunshades and decorated with twinkly garden lights. It's the perfect spot to relax with a flight of wine and the Signature Nosh, an aesthetically pleasing platter of meats, cheeses, mustard, artichoke hearts, olives, and chocolate. "The plants are special," says Daniel Gonzales, creative content manager at Lescombes. "The live music is great when we get to have it." **1720 Avenida de Mesilla, Las Cruces; 575-524-2408, lescombeswinery.com**

Turtleback Taphouse and Grill

The 360-degree views from the sprawling patio at Turtleback Taphouse and Grill at Sierra del Rio Golf Course, in Elephant Butte, will make you feel like a pro no matter your handicap. "It has picture-perfect views of the golf course and Turtleback Mountain," says Janine Holcomb, marketing director at Spirit Golf Man-

agement. You don't even have to swing a club. Just set your sights on the menu of appetizers, steaks, and sandwiches for a trophy-worthy good time. **101 Clubhouse Road, Elephant Butte; 575-744-4653, sdrfgolf.com/pub-restaurant**

Farmhouse Cafe and Bakery

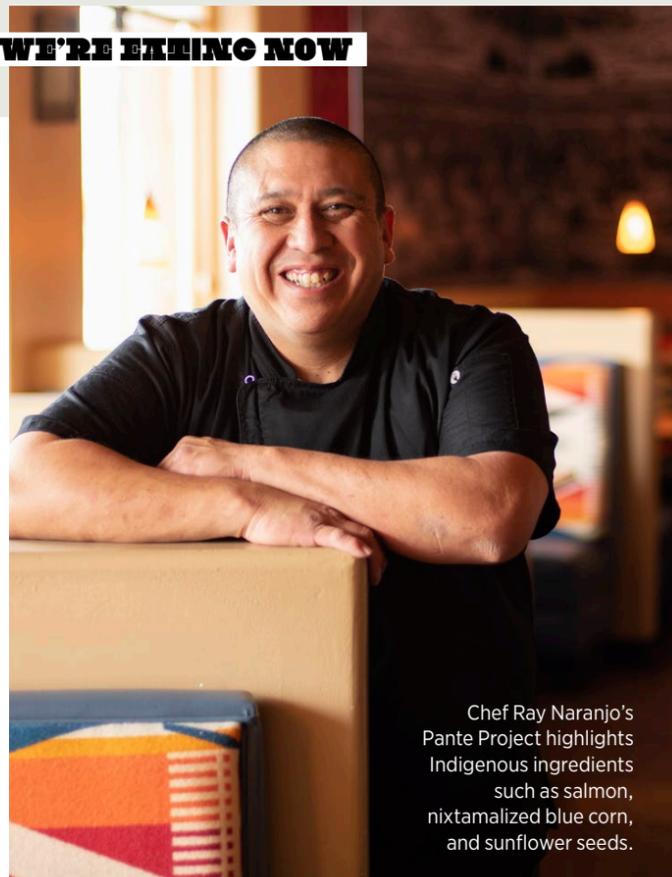
Dine under the cottonwoods at Farmhouse Café, where the menu supports a network of more than 20 Taos-area farmers and growers. A garden just 200 yards from the patio

supplies fresh greens for salads, and the Three Sisters: corn (including the blue kind), squash, and beans. "We are right in the shadow of Taos Mountain, next to the buffalo pasture on Taos Pueblo," says owner Micah Roseberry. "We have an expansive view and a beautiful sculpture garden filled with about 50 wind sculptures." And don't miss the koi pond. "Kids love to feed the fish." **1405 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Taos; 575-758-5683, farmhousetaos.com**



Santacafé's patio complements its fare.

HOW WE'RE EATING NOW



Chef Ray Naranjo's Pante Project highlights Indigenous ingredients such as salmon, nixtamalized blue corn, and sunflower seeds.

Native Roots

A new chef launches a take-home tour of Indigenous foods.

BY ANDI MURPHY

When Ray Naranjo took over as executive chef at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center's Pueblo Harvest Restaurant in January 2020, he had grand plans. "I was going to roll out the new menu in February," he says. "We rolled it out for one day."

When the pandemic slowed the restaurant industry to a near stop, everyone was forced to find new ways to serve food safely and keep their business afloat. At the Albuquerque restaurant, Naranjo (Santa Clara Pueblo and Odawa) got busy developing the Pante Project, a once-a-month culinary adventure showcasing the depth of his Indigenous food knowledge. Each carryout, finish-at-home dinner, which he calls "a prayer," focuses on a direction or region of the country, a corresponding corn color, and precontact Indigenous ingredients.

In an accompanying video, Naranjo ex-

plains the cooking methods and cultural significance of the ingredients. "Food is the first being that you're introduced to in a culture," he says.

The project launched in November with a three-course dinner featuring blue corn and the Pacific Northwest—home to tribes like the Hupa, Suquamish, and Tualip—where salmon is an important part of life and culture. And you bet, I bit.

The first course, a smooth squash bisque topped with toasted pumpkin seeds, was one of the best squash dishes I've ever tasted. "What I focus on doing is letting that ingredient be the ingredient,"

MOTHER'S DAY
The Indian Pueblo Kitchen is planning a Mother's Day Indigenous Experience on May 9, with limited seat-

ings at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Reservations are needed. 2401 12th St. NW, Albuquerque; 505-843-7270, indianpueblo.org



says Naranjo. "I'm highlighting rather than overspicing." Cedar-smoked salmon with crispy skin and a blueberry-maple gastrique was accompanied by nutty, sweet, and savory nixtamalized blue corn and truffle-scented roasted mushrooms. For dessert, Naranjo served wild berry compote with an acorn flour crumble that added texture and nuttiness to the subtly sweet mix.

In 2013, Naranjo and 14 other Pueblo volunteers took part in the Pueblo Food Experience, an "experiment" led by Santa Clara Pueblo sculptor Roxanne Swentzell that resulted in *The Pueblo Food Experience Cookbook: Whole Food of Our Ancestors*. Volunteers ate a precontact Pueblo diet for three months and documented their health changes. It was a turning point for Naranjo. "That's what pretty much sparked the interest to work with Native foods," he says. "A lot of it was realizing that this area, this part of New Mexico, is really more part of Mexico."

His perspective of global cuisine changed, too. He realized that many important ingredients in traditional and contemporary fare around the world—like potatoes, chile, corn, beans, squash, and chocolate—have Indigenous roots. "I look at a plate of Italian food," he says. "That's

not Italian food when I look at it. That's Native American fusion. The reality is, it's fusion because it has Indigenous ingredients in it. I think the real stories of these foods need to be told."

In the reimagined restaurant—now called the Indian Pueblo Kitchen, with a goal of opening this spring—Naranjo plans to better align the cuisine with the cultural center itself. "Some of the dishes will have historical aspects and will tie in with the story," he says.

An open, modern kitchen will feature fresh produce from the center's Resilience Garden and showcase feast day goodies like red chile stew, tamales, and Pueblo bread. By October, Naranjo hopes to share his culinary knowledge at a new commercial teaching kitchen in the nearby Indian Pueblo Opportunity Center.

"The goal of the opportunity center is to create a space for artisans and small-scale farmers," says Beverlee McClure, vice president of cultural and community engagement for the IPCC. "The whole thing is to really create more Native entrepreneurs and break down any barriers they may have."

Food entrepreneurs will have access to the commercial kitchen, greenhouse, garden, and seed bank, as well as culinary training, all supported by proceeds from the Indian Pueblo Kitchen. "I think it's important to show there are other career paths for Native people," Naranjo says. "I'm humbled and honored to have this role. Leading the way also comes with a lot of hard work."



M'Tucci's serves up family faves.

HOME COOKIN'

Win the weekday with a take-home family-style meal.

By Gwyneth Doland

CORNER KITCHEN

When chef Howard Richardson had to move his five small tables to the chilly back patio, he doubled down on takeout, adding frozen "common table" dinners. Customers call in their orders, pay by phone, and pull up to the curb, and Richardson delivers the food. The chef creates a different three-course menu (\$15 for one, \$28 for two) every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night, each orbiting around a theme of global comfort food. "Asian, Cajun, Italian, Indian—you name it, we do it," he says. A recent Friday offered leek-and-asparagus soup followed by cilantro-garlic shrimp, saffron rice, and curried vegetables, topped off with honey-lemon pound cake.

300 S. Bullard St., Silver City; 575-590-2603, corner-kitchen-american-restaurant.business.site

PIG + FIG

A destination for foodies near Los Alamos, this cozy café serves breakfast pastries, elegant lunches, and early dinners. Chef and owner Laura Crucet already had a strong takeout business, especially with her boxed lunch

specials. But she moved quickly to add family dinners (approximately \$60; serves four) on Wednesday nights that have included smothered pork chops and tagliatelle Bolognese. "A lot of people were cooking for themselves at home," says Crucet, who added a delivery service just for the dinners. "We wanted to give them some relief."

11 Sherwood Blvd., White Rock; 505-672-2742, pigandfigcafe.com

M'TUCCI'S

The upscale Italian favorite's three Albuquerque-area locations sell six varieties of fresh Gourmet TV Dinners (\$9) to go and for delivery through DoorDash. "I'm not a vegetarian, but the cannelloni is fantastic," says managing partner John Haas. So is the bacon-chicken mac and cheese, which is studded with chunks of roasted chicken and shards of house-smoked bacon that cling to the noodles with the help of melted Gouda. (The offerings change slightly with the seasons.) Add a loaf of house-made sourdough and salad for an ample dinner for two. Various locations, mtuccis.com



Food Hall—elujah!

Gather around for eclectic collective dining.
BY GWYNETH DOLAND

Over the past few years, a national trend of food halls has breezed into New Mexico, injecting new life into neighborhoods, restoring overlooked architectural gems, and providing fertile ground for entrepreneurs to launch food businesses. They've become some of the hottest not-restaurants in town.

Maybe you've wandered into one in another state: Usually tucked into some former train station or renovated building with architectural sex appeal, a food hall beckons with a sampling of the city's fare all under one roof. Communal seating means the two—or twelve—of you can arrive at different times, and separate

counter service at each eatery allows everyone to nosh exactly what they want and pay their own tab.

And it's more communal than a traditional restaurant, says Lauren Green, the creative force behind Albuquerque's Sawmill Market, near Old Town. "We wanted people to feel like this is a place you can go every day to grab coffee, have a date night, or celebrate your son's birthday."

Built in a former lumber warehouse, the 30,000-square-foot Sawmill Market opened in the spring of 2020 as an Instagram-perfect hot spot. The rustic industrial building's front patio faces the swanky Hotel Chaco and draws a stylish crowd of visitors and locals. "It was impor-

tant to us that it was modern, fresh, and new but still honoring the bones of its sawmill roots," Green says. Inside, the local merchants were chosen to showcase the city's culinary diversity. Yes, you can get a Frito pie (Red & Green), but also Venezuelan food (Cacho's Bistro), barbecue (135° BBQ), and Asian (Naruto Ramen).

In November, 505 Central Food Hall followed, breathing new life into a long-overlooked John Gaw Meem-designed Deco Moderne building at Fifth Street and Central Avenue in downtown Albuquerque. "The inspiration for me was to reactivate downtown and make a food hall that is accessible to everyone," says architect-owner Mark Baker.

The ground floor's high ceiling allows space for loft seating above nine distinct stalls serving burgers, tacos, pizza, and more. "Aesthetically, we wanted each restaurant to have its own identity, rather than be plugged into a module and look

like a food court at the mall," he says.

No one would mistake Albuquerque's original food hall, Green Jeans Farmery, for a food court. (The owners recently changed its name to Green Jeans Food Hall.) This rainbow-colored jumble of shipping containers tapped into several urban design and food movements when it opened in 2016 near Carlisle Boulevard and I-40. The containers house and connect the food stalls, creating pockets of indoor seating around a common patio anchored by a Santa Fe Brewing taproom. The splashy paint and nontraditional architecture make it fun, funky, accessible, and family-friendly.

Its success inspired Tin Can Alley, built by the same developer on the city's far northeast side. The even more colorful shipping containers are covered with murals inside and out and surround a covered glass-walled dining area with uniquely stunning views of the Sandía Mountains. Both capture Albuquerque's spirit of not playing by the rules.

Meanwhile, Santa Fe got its first taste of the food hall craze when Chomp opened in late February at Cerrillos Road and Paseo de Peralta. Although the city's dense core has always provided plenty of restaurants and bars near the Plaza, Chomp owner Ken Joseph says he wanted to bring more reasonably priced options to the area. Joseph took an underappreciated Art Deco-style building, originally a DeSoto car dealership, and transformed it into a bright, open space with small vendors.

Joseph says he modeled Chomp after similar projects he admired, including Oxbow Public Market, in Napa, California, and Reading Terminal Market, in Philadelphia. But the food and atmosphere here reflect Santa Fe's sophisticated and unique character, ranging from Southeast Asian fusion at Nath's Inspired Khmer Cuisine to homemade soup at Yes, Soup for You. Alongside its neighbors Ohori's Coffee, Radish & Rye, and New Mexico Hard Cider Taproom, Chomp adds to the communal feel of the block.

We may have been a bit late to the party, but our food hall fiesta shows no signs of slowing down.

GRUB HUBS

Some essentials on the state's food halls.

505 CENTRAL FOOD HALL

505 Central Ave. NW, Albuquerque; 505-503-8777, 505central.com

FOOD STALLS: 9

HOURS: Sunday–Thursday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m.–8 p.m.

TRY THIS: Stop in just to pick up a gift or souvenir from Moonwalk, which stocks more locally made beer, wine, and spirits than many liquor stores.

CHOMP FOOD HALL

505 Cerrillos Road, B101, Santa Fe; 505-772-0946, chompsantafe.com

FOOD STALLS: Up to 5 (more coming soon)

HOURS: Sunday–Thursday, 11:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m.

TRY THIS: Keep an eye out for matzo ball soup at Yes, Soup for You.

GREEN JEANS FOOD HALL

3600 Cutler Ave. NE, Albuquerque; 505-313-0042, greenjeansabq.com

FOOD STALLS: 9

HOURS: 7:30 a.m.–8 p.m. daily

TRY THIS: Watch your ice cream come together like magic at Nitro Fog Creamery.

SAWMILL MARKET

1909 Bellamah Ave. NW, Albuquerque; 505-563-4473, sawmillmarket.com

FOOD STALLS: About 20

HOURS: 8 a.m.–10 p.m. daily

TRY THIS: Neko Neko's Japanese soft-serve in a fish-shaped cake cone and covered in sprinkles.

TIN CAN ALLEY

6110 Alameda Blvd. NE, Albuquerque; 505-208-0508, tincanalleyabq.com

FOOD STALLS: 9

HOURS: 7:30 a.m.–8 p.m. daily

TRY THIS: Take a trip to South America with a plate of arepas, meat-filled corn-cake pockets, from Guava Tree Cafe.

Sweet and Sour

Raise your at-home beverage game with shrubs from Spellbound Syrups.

BY MARIA MANUELA

The morning sun warms the bosque near Albuquerque, catching the ruby-red skins of wild currants, ripe and juicy for the picking. Monique Carr smiles as she reaches for the fruit. “Foraging is peaceful and playful,” she says. “It’s romantic. It’s sensory. You hear birds singing, you hear crunching. It’s not rushed.”

The owner of Spellbound Syrups, which she started in 2015, Carr brings that magic to her small-batch shrubs with mostly foraged, seasonal ingredients. She spends hours in the mountains near Mora, along the river in Abiquiú, and wandering orchards in Tesuque to find elderflowers, cherries, apricots, pomegranates, prickly pears, apples, and wild currants.

She returns home to blend her concentrated syrups, made with vinegar and sugar, a technique that goes back as far as ancient Greece and Persia. Carr extracts the juice and pulp, then macerates them with sugar. She adds vinegar and refrigerates the mixtures to prevent ambient yeasts, which can cause carbonation.

As a Black Mestiza woman, Carr prac-

tices a deep reverence for the land, knowing her resources are precious. “You can’t overtake,” she says. “There is so much responsibility that comes with it. You don’t want to take more than you can use.”

Experience in coffee shops and breweries in college introduced Carr to the culinary world. A book about shrubs that she received as a gift deepened her interest. It’s a time she often references when talking about the genesis of Spellbound, but she’s coming to realize that her connection to the timeless practice of shrub making is deeper than that.

“The seasonal nature of what I do means I work with something, and then it’s released and I come back to it later,” she says. “There is forgetting involved, and then the joy of remembering. Remembering the smells and tastes, remembering to poach a peach to remove the skin. There’s joy in getting to re-meet those experiences.”

Her syrups can be added to sparkling water or used to make a cocktail with your favorite spirit. Carr suggests trying shrubs as dressings, over yogurt, or to make popsicles. “Be playful,” she says.

📍 [facebook.com/spellboundtonicsyrups](https://www.facebook.com/spellboundtonicsyrups)

Fruity flavors zest up Monique Carr’s concoctions.



Rolling Still's Frontier Old Fashioned.

STIR CRAZY

Rolling Still Distillery’s pre-made craft cocktails are like having your favorite bartender in your living room.

Mixologist Chris Milligan put his 31 years of bar knowledge into the lineup of artistic take-home cocktails at Rolling Still Distillery and Lounge, in Taos. Offerings range from the classic Frontier Old Fashioned, with Sidewinder whiskey and house-made cherry liqueur, to the Lavender Honey Drop, a mix of Rolling Still lavender vodka, butterfly pea blossom, honey syrup, and fresh lemon juice.

“I liked that I could connect with people when our bar couldn’t be open,” says Milligan, who makes the drinks to order. The fresh cocktails come ready to drink, with garnish and instructions to best prepare your beverage—no shaker skills required.

“Now that we are open, people can come in for one drink and take another home,” Mulligan says. “They don’t have to worry about overconsumption.” —*Maria Manuela*

📍 110 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Taos; 575-613-0326, [rollingstill.com](https://www.rollingstill.com)



Summer Crush

You’ll swoon over these New Mexico-made hard seltzers.

BY GWYNETH DOLAND

When Marble Brewery canned its first two hard seltzers in 2019, I went to the release party on the patio at the downtown Albuquerque taproom. It was a hot July evening, and an epic DJ battle got me out on the dance floor to shake and shimmy.

Sweaty and out of breath, I plopped down at a picnic table and reached for the can of honor, a cucumber-and-key-lime hard seltzer. It was like: *Boom*. Everything about hard seltzer suddenly made sense. It tasted like a new flavor of LaCroix sparkling water with about the same kick as a Coors Light. Cold, refreshing, crushable. I was back out on the dance floor in a minute.

You may have noticed the adult beverage market has been overrun by hard seltzer,

made by Truly, White Claw, Budweiser, Corona, and other big names looking to attract health-conscious customers to the low-calorie, gluten-free, often sugar-free beverages.

For New Mexico brewery fans, Marble, Santa Fe Brewing, Bosque Brewing, and Bow & Arrow Brewing have claimed their seltzer stake.

Moving into seltzer was strategic but also a bit of a gamble, says Barbie Gonzalez, Marble’s co-president. “Our foundation is craft beer, but like any company we want to evolve and stay relevant,” she says. In addition to a dozen craft beers, Marble now cans four hard seltzers, including tangerine, passion fruit, and raspberry-key lime. The brewer has also experimented with new flavors released in small batches through the taprooms.

One might think that

seltzer is only a summer drink, but sales have consistently grown, with only slight seasonal dips in the colder months, according to Tasha Zonski-Armijo, at Jubilation Wine & Spirits, in Albuquerque. And don’t assume that because it tastes like mango or pineapple, seltzer is a girly drink. The low sugar keeps craft seltzers crisp and offers broad appeal. “Really it’s more men buying seltzer,” she says. “They can be social for longer periods of time, and more people are going to friends’ houses to be outside” as the weather warms and the pandemic slows.

As far as this summer goes, if I’m in a bathing suit, there’s a good chance I’ll be drinking a hard seltzer. A can of Bow & Arrow’s prickly-pear-and-juniper-infused Desert Water fits just right in my inner tube’s cupholder.

NM HARD SELTZERS

Buy directly from the taprooms or ask for these hard seltzers at retail shops throughout the state.

Santa Fe Brewing

Look for Santa Fe’s yellow or green cans of lemon- or lime-flavored hard seltzer. Bright, fizzy, and tangy, they’re made with real fruit juice. [santafebrewing.com](https://www.santafebrewing.com)

Bosque Brewing

New Leaf hard seltzer comes in a mixed 12-pack of lemon-lime, tangerine, pineapple, and mango. Look for new cocktail-inspired flavors Moscow Mule and Paloma, available only at the taprooms. [bosquebrewing.com](https://www.bosquebrewing.com)

Marble Brewery

Passion fruit is the most popular flavor, but you can try raspberry, tangerine, and cucumber-key lime in new party packs coming this summer. [marblebrewery.com](https://www.marblebrewery.com)

Bow & Arrow Brewing

Desert Water’s blue-and-pink design is worth buying just for the can. But with notes of prickly pear, juniper, and lemon, this sparkler won’t last long in your hand. [bowandarrowbrewing.com](https://www.bowandarrowbrewing.com)



Whole Hog

Beck & Bulow's new butcher shop features bison, poultry, beef, and a wild kingdom of specialty items.

BY MARK OPPENHEIMER

The freezer cases at Beck & Bulow's butcher shop brim with cuts of bison, chicken, and wild game. A huge buffalo skull, buffalo skins, and ancient butchering tools made from bison bones adorn the walls of the new Santa Fe storefront, which opened in March. On the exterior, two striking murals by local artist Sebastian "Vela" Velasquez beckon customers to check it out.

The old-world shop is an elk-size leap for owners Tony Beck and J.P. Bulow, who have operated the business primarily as a wholesaler, shipping cuts of wild game and buffalo to approximately 250 restaurant clients in New Mexico and to thousands of homes across the United States.

When store shelves emptied as a result of supply chain disruption in late March 2020, however, people began showing up to Beck & Bulow's 2,500-square-foot distribution center on Jorgensen Lane, hoping to stock their freezers. As their online business increased over the summer, they began developing an expansion plan.

"People know all good food starts with



Beck & Bulow owners Tony Beck (left) and J.P. Bulow.

good ingredients," says Bulow. "We believe people will support an old-style neighborhood butcher where they can get the cuts exactly the way they like them."

The owners met at a sweat lodge in 2015 and quickly discovered they had a lot in common, including an affinity for the land and honoring Native ways. "Our partnership grew out of our shared principles and values, reverence for the buffalo, and stewardship of the land," Beck adds.

Behind the fresh meat counter, a drying cabinet showcases buffalo steaks.

While known for its wild boar, beef, and wild-caught seafood, Beck & Bulow also sells locally made specialty items such as fresh pasta, olive oils, raw milk, and artisanal cheeses. The partners also raise buffalo and other livestock on 20,000 acres south of Madrid and have added 660 acres in San Miguel County. "We can better control the quality," says Bulow. "We see ourselves as an old-world butcher with a digital distribution center."

📍 1934 Cerrillos Road; 800-674-8426, beckandbulow.com

SPECIAL SOMETHINGS

Indulge your inner gourmand at these three shops.

Chokola

Chokola uses single-origin beans that are roasted, shelled, and then ground for 72 hours before the chocolate is aged and molded into bars. The cozy Taos café and storefront serves up mousse, sipping chocolate, and single-origin chocolate tasting plates. "Not

only is chocolate an expression of love," owner Debi Vincent says, "it is a visceral experience of love." 📍 106-B Juan Largo Lane, Taos; 575-779-6163, chokolabeantobar.com

Quattro Mani Pasta

Doug Hesselgesser and Charles Dampf want to bring handmade pasta straight to your casa. The Santa Fe partners, who spent 15 years working in East Coast hospitality, make a variety

of tagliatelle (including their wildly popular tomato), ricotta cavatelli, and two kinds of ravioli. "Few dishes excite the palate more than a perfectly made ravioli," says Dampf. While the duo is four hands on-deck filling online orders, Quattro Mani has plans for a walk-up shop. 📍 505-303-0816, quattromanipasta.com

Diane's Bakery & Deli

For 25 years, Diane's Bakery, in Silver City, has served up

tasty old-world pastries, cakes, pies, and fresh-baked breads. "I cook Haute Grandma," says baker and owner Diane Barrett. "I make serious soups, stews, and gravies. But I'm a baker in my heart." While you'd get no arguments from anyone who has tried her four-layer chocolate ganache cake, don't skip her rosemary kalamata bread or green chile Alfredo. —Mark Oppenheimer 📍 510 N. Bullard, Silver City; 575-534-9229, dianesrestaurant.com/bakery



Farmers' markets are a great place to find new ingredients.

Fear Not

Choose an unfamiliar ingredient on your next farmers' market trip.

BY MARK OPPENHEIMER

Over the past year, many of us have found ways to get closer to our food, including at the excellent farmers' markets throughout the state. But even the most ardent foodie has spied an unfamiliar ingredient and frozen. *What is that?* You can either move on or—and we highly recommend this option—take a brave step forward, smile, and ask, "What can I make?"

Black Garlic

Founded on a 19th-century farm in the Pojoaque Valley, Avery's Farm grows a variety of organic fruits, herbs, and shallots. But husband-and-wife owners and Santa Fe Farmers' Market regulars Gloria Coequyt and Christopher Selser specialize in heirloom garlic. They use hard- and soft-necked varieties to make black garlic by subjecting the bulbs to low heat for several weeks in a special processor. With a more delicate fragrance than regular garlic, the sticky date-like cloves impart a hint of umami and soft molasses-like flavor to pastas, roast chicken, or mashed potatoes. 📍 averysfarm.com

Jerusalem Artichoke

Also known as sunchoke or sunroots,

Jerusalem artichokes stump even some seasoned chefs. A species of sunflower whose roots look like oversize ginger, they can be a great low-carb potato alternative. "I love their crunchiness," says Jennifer Fresquez, president of Monte Vista Organic Farm, in La Mesilla. The second-generation farm, with a booth at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market, grows 80 varieties of tomatoes, heirloom corn, and the knobby tubers among its crops. Try them raw in salads or "roasted like potatoes in olive oil until crispy on the outside and softened on the inside, with a mild taste of artichokes." 📍 montevistaorganicfarm.com

Bitter Melon

Monroe Seibel became fascinated with gourds while serving in the Navy throughout Southeast Asia and the Philippines. When he retired, Seibel began growing and selling Chinese water spinach, calabaza squash, bitter melon, and other gourds at the Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces. Although the thin, pickle-like bitter melon has a unique texture and taste, it's one of Seibel's favorites. "Just peel it, cut it in half, scrape out the seeds, and sauté it with chicken, garlic, and onions, then serve over rice," he says. 📍 farmersandcraftsmarketoflascruces.com

GARDEN CLUB

Rest easy with a raised-bed garden to grow your own produce.

When stores ran short on yeast, flour, and other kitchen essentials at the onset of the pandemic, many folks reevaluated how they get their food. Shortening the supply chain from farm to table—or even garden to belly—suddenly became a priority. Yet even as a trained chef, I rarely grew more than a pot of basil on the kitchen windowsill.

I turned to Ken Kuhne, a friend who owns Grow Y'Own, in Santa Fe. After a career designing and building custom homes, Kuhne helps novice farmers channel their inner green thumbs by building raised-bed gardens for their yards.

The Santa Fe company supplies virtually everything you need. Kuhne builds the structure—available in sizes ranging from a 2-by-4-foot mobile garden cart to a 4-by-8-foot raised bed with built-in hoops and cover—fills it with soil, offers vegetable suggestions, buys your picks, and plants them. He even installs a watering system and regularly drops by to check on your progress. "It's no-brainer gardening," says Kuhne.

In my first season, I had more cucumbers, lettuce, chard, sorrel, and kale than I could use, so neighbors and friends benefited. (One neighbor even christened me Farmer John!) And as the Pinterest-worthy saying goes, "Gardening is cheaper than therapy, and you get tomatoes." —Johnny Vee

📍 505-466-0393, raisedbed.biz NM



Grow Y'Own makes gardening easy.