

# The 100 Best Bakeries in America

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## Advertisement

There are so many strange things about our new normal, but on a recent Sunday in Los Gatos, California, a pleasant town hugging the sunny side of the Santa Cruz Mountains, little appeared out of the ordinary, with one notable exception. Manresa Bread, the best bakery in Los Gatos and also for some miles, seemed to be closed, but it was actually open. Anybody with their heart set on some of the Bay Area's finest bread could easily have it—so long as they learned the new rules.

And they are: You order online, days ahead, because everybody else is going to have the same idea, and they will sell out. Then, on your appointed pickup day, which will be Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, you head down, not to the cute little café across from David Kinch's Michelin three-star restaurant of the same name, but to the utilitarian commissary, a few blocks over. You park your car wherever, you put on your mask, and you line up behind everybody else on the west side of Industrial Way, a line that will often stretch out one, two, maybe even three auto body shops back.

And then you wait, shuffling six feet at a time, finally turning left at the dumpsters, and picking up what you came for. Hopefully, you'll have had the good sense to book yourself in for the \$30 bag of bread, filled with four of the most beautiful sourdough loaves you can buy with American money. By now, after weeks of eating too much supermarket bread, perhaps occasionally interrupted by your own admirable investments toward becoming the world's next top bread baker, you'd take almost anything, and be happy with it. Anything that will make you feel like everything is going to be alright, even if perhaps not today.

Across the country, similar versions of the scene in Los Gatos have been unfolding on a daily basis. There are the New Yorkers waiting in their own long lines, for bâtards and baguettes from cult-favorite She Wolf Bakery, diligently delivering their little works of art to greenmarkets throughout the grieving city. On any given morning in the Los Angeles suburbs, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people will wait in their cars for curbside pastelitos from Porto's, Southern California's treasured Cuban bakery, which is also now shipping nationwide

For the most part, the Kringle bakeries of Racine, Wisconsin, have yet to dim their lights; there has been no grave shortage of po' boy bread in New Orleans, of pan dulce in San Antonio. These simple, attainable things—a crackling baguette, a square of rosemary-scented focaccia, a loaf of soft milk bread, a scone slathered in fresh jam, that cascade of sugar crust as you bite into the perfect concha, the spider's web hidden inside a perfectly-

laminated croissant—they have seen entire civilizations through their share of dark times, and they lend great comfort to us now. Life may have been put on pause, but in so many of our towns and cities, the bakers have baked on.

Before everything became strange, baking was already enjoying a big, fat, butter-drenched moment, and simply because so many of us now have the time we always thought we wanted, America is now decidedly off of the competition show-binging sidelines and into the flour, providing we can find any. We are nursing starters, we are clearing the shells of baking chocolate, we are sometimes sitting down to eat too much cake, because there are no rules in quarantine, apart from making it through.

Out beyond our front doors, too, baking is bigger, and often better than ever. We are learning about grain, and the way it is grown, stored, and supplied. We are discovering just how much work goes into better bread, into the best breads, and how much things like labor, good butter, and new commercial ovens cost. Many of us are tasting truly great, naturally leavened breads for the first time in our lives. It's a beautiful thing, all of it—far from perfect, but that's progress, ever a mess.

This idea of trying to capture America's baking culture in list form was set in motion some time ago; it is a project that has pulled me back and forth across the country, from the forward-thinking flour mills of the Pacific Northwest to Florida's oldest Cuban bakery, from nearly every Little Italy back East to the seat of modern American bread, San Francisco, where I was fortunate enough to spend a good chunk of time last year.

I've learned that our country has a bread problem. We buy a lot of it, but for most of us, the product is compromised. Too often, the very best has become something akin to a luxury item, nearly the sole province of the privileged. This relatively new pursuit of perfection, of grain purity is certainly admirable, but have we asked ourselves, who really benefits? Does it matter that the bread is the best we've ever had, if nobody else can afford a loaf? Is there some middle ground to work toward—a better bread for everyone, rather than the best for a fortunate few? And how do we get there? What must give? History reminds us that wars have been fought over flour; perhaps we are about due for another one.

Consider us in a state of flux. The foremost question on our minds right now is what small, independent bakeries will be like, and how many will be sustained in future, but while we fret, there are also hopeful signs. While America stayed indoors, the bakers have been hard at work, often partnering with their generous customers to put bread in the hands of those who cannot afford to buy their own. Countless amateur home bakers are discovering the simple pleasures of their own breads, from simple no-knead to the long-fermented; wouldn't it be the craziest thing, if a wave of fresh talent emerges from the lockdown?

Before all of this, and hopefully after, there was and will be the project based out of the important Bread Lab at Washington State University, challenging the industry to offer at least one simple, affordable, high-quality loaf to their customers, every single day. There's more good stuff, too—a demand for in-house milling capabilities is putting even more makers to work, while a renewed focus on regional and heritage grains is helping smaller farms thrive, keeping more money local. Of course, there are the bakeries themselves, so often more than a place to buy bread, or cakes, or pies—at their best, they are focal points, touchstones, gathering places, improving the quality of life in their respective communities. These last few years, more and more towns, cities, and neighborhoods have been fortunate enough to discover this for themselves. Hopefully, every one of them will be back, and soon. And we'll get better at everything in time. For now, there is much to get out there and celebrate, even if we do so with masks on.

While compiling this list, a great deal of attention was paid to the newer bakeries, typically the ones that have had the benefit of a few years on the job, during which they had hopefully been able to make themselves indispensable. Then again, good baking wasn't invented yesterday, so we also aimed to be mindful of the greats that got us to where we are now, so long as they are still inspiring us today, almost as much as, if not more, than they did back then.

Also, nearly all Americans eat bread and pastry, and for this list to be worthwhile, it had to accurately reflect America, rather than one, relatively small segment of our baking culture. There was no automatic bias against larger operations, either, but the question was always asked—is this unique? Is the work still important? At any age, and at any size, we wanted the places that feel and act as if they matter, deeply, to their regional food heritage, to their communities, disregarding entirely their decision to stay open or shut down, during this most difficult moment. (To avoid confusion, we've noted the places on the list that are temporarily closed.)

And so, here, a generously-sized sampling of the best of the old and new, a glimpse of what makes America's wildly diverse baking culture so exciting, even right now.

## **Allez Bakery (Cincinnati, OH)**

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Casually capturing the energy of a modern French boulangerie with a studied (but not too closely) simplicity, quality workmanship, and daily inventory that can disappear quite quickly, this curiously magnetic sliver of Over-The-Rhine storefront deserves to be one of your first stops in Cincinnati

## **Apple Pie Bakery Cafe (Hyde Park, NY)**

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Great for joy-sparking retro desserts, precise croissants, colorful macarons, and a lively all-day energy, this student-run bakery at the Culinary Institute of America has long been the perfect place to watch the country's next top pastry chefs in action. A recent expansion has only cemented its status as one of the best hangs on campus ***Temporarily closed.***

## **As Kneaded Bakery (San Leandro, CA)**

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Long ago saturated with good bread options, Iliana Berkowitz has lately been reminding the Bay Area that there's always room for one more pro. Get your happy hands on a loaf of the perfectly formed, generously shellacked challah; the simply classic baguette is a work of everyday beauty.

## **Arsicault Bakery (San Francisco, CA)**

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In a city where some better-known bakeries have painted themselves into corners trying to do (and have) it all, Armando Locayo contents himself with doing just a few things, very well. As in croissants, for starters, the available everywhere (and, typically, much better here) kouign amann, and one of the city's finest morning buns. ***Temporarily closed.***

## **Avalon International Breads (Detroit, MI)**

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Back in the 1990s, closing up shop and leaving Detroit was a lot more fashionable than the opposite, but Ann Perrault and Jackie Victor took a chance, and they're still there today, plying you with Leelanau cherry bread, crunchy with walnuts. The \$5 fill-a-bag Friday tradition ensures a high-quality product remains accessible to all. ***Currently wholesale only.***

## **Aya Pastry (Chicago, IL)**

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Ever wonder what Samoas—only the best Girl Scout cookie ever, let's not fight—would be like if they were cake? Pastry chef-turned-bakery owner Aya Fukai went there, and the results are incredible. Brown butter, chocolate, dulce de leche buttercream, toasted coconut, and the requisite drizzle of chocolate add up to one of the most smile-making sweets in Chicago right now.

## **Back in the Day Bakery (Savannah, GA)**

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For nearly two decades, Cheryl and Griff Day have been turning out some of the South's finest biscuits (and cakes and pies and what have you) in a part of town that needed the sort of respite the bakery has so faithfully provided. Some of the best mornings in Savannah start here. ***Temporarily closed.***

## **Bakeshop (Portland, OR)**

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Those playful, snail-shaped scones at Kim Boyce's precision-oriented operation stand out for their creativity (and their deliciousness), but it's almost impossible to go wrong here—an absolute standout in a city embarrassed with riches, so maybe don't tell the food tourist crowds. *Temporarily closed.*

## **Bakery Lorraine (San Antonio, TX)**

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Anne Ng and Jeremy Mandell met working for Thomas Keller in California's wine country, which explains the sunny Cal-French energy (and excellent pastry work) at their mini-chain of bakeries scattered around town. Try the tarts, macarons, or one of the best croissants in Texas.

## **Balthazar Bakery (New York, NY)**

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Smartly-priced baguettes (and all the breads, come to think of it) at the next-door offshoot of the fabled, still-got-it brasserie are some of the most desirable in New York. A retail outlet at the wholesale bakery, located over the George Washington Bridge, is the commuter's secret weapon. *Temporarily closed.*

## **Barrio Bread (Tucson, AZ)**

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There's all sorts of fascinating things you probably don't know about Arizona yet, and one of them is that the state has its own heirloom grain traditions going back as far as the 1600s. Don Guerra, who started out baking in his garage before becoming Tucson's high priest of pan, is on a mission to revive them; he's also baking some of the Southwest's most exciting bread.

## **Bea's Ho-Made (Ellison Bay, WI)**

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You will come to the beautiful Door Peninsula, and then you will keep driving and driving and driving, through some of the Midwest's best-loved countryside, and then, finally, after all the other cherry pie come-ons, you will find yourself at the humble home of one of the very best in the state, the one with the lardy crust. Bea's Ho-Made has been an essential part of the Door County experience for roughly half a century.

## **Beiler's Bakery (Philadelphia, PA)**

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Beiler's Bakery is probably the second most famous Pennsylvania Dutch bakery (the first being Martin's, home of those potato rolls), thanks to a flagship location just inside the Reading Terminal Market. Get a simple, affordable taste of a very specific style of baking,

one that Philadelphians can't get enough of. Much like the market, the Beiler's donut stand across the aisle is kind of a national treasure.

## **Bella's Italian Bakery (Portland, OR)**

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Michelle Vernier's lovely tribute to the classic pepperoni roll might not be thoroughly authentic, but like the [West Virginia](#) original, you'll find yourself wanting it again and again. That's become something of a theme at [this standout modern Italian-American bakery](#)—if there's sfogliatelle, or rainbow cookies, snap them up before somebody else does.

## **Belle's Bread (Columbus, OH)**

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Back in Before Times, when West Coasters were standing in line for hours to try Japanese-style cheesecake, instead of a gallon of milk and some hand soap at the supermarket, lucky dessert-havers in Ohio's capital city had unfettered access to [one of the finest examples of the genre this side of the Pacific](#)—wonderfully light, but never too light, and packed with flavor. If you live nearby and are not in the habit of keeping their classic milk breads on your kitchen counter for casual, everyday use, it's never too late to do the right thing.

## **Belleville (Portland, ME)**

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The [littler Portland](#) already had more great bakeries than a city of 65,000 deserved, not that we're mad, but right out of the gate in 2017, Paris-trained Chris Deutsch and Amy Fuller [made a name for themselves](#) by doing what so many bakeries do not, which is being good at everything, from pastry to bread to some of the nicest pizza in town.

## **Bendtsen's (Racine, WI)**

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The Danish Kringle is a [Wisconsin thing](#) more than a Denmark thing (sorry to Denmark, honestly). Butter-rich and filled with everything from almond to cherry to pecan, these wax paper-wrapped rings are a common sight on kitchen tables throughout the region. This [standout source](#) has been at it since the 1930s.

## **Bien Cuit (Brooklyn, NY)**

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Looking for the very [best croissants](#) and baguettes in New York? For almost a decade, Zachary Golper's have been considered top of the list material, and for good reason. All of his breads are excellent, and typically excellent value, as well; if available, snag yourself that rye ficelle, and vow to never eat supermarket rye again.

## **Boulted Bread (Raleigh, NC)**

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One of the coolest things about one of the most happening bakeries in the country happens mostly behind the scenes—from the start, back in 2014, co-founder [Fulton Forde](#) wanted the finest grains only, regional if possible, milled right on the premises. Not only is the latter happening for the majority of their bread flour, but Forde also partnered with New England major player Andrew Heyn on a project to build [mills from Vermont granite](#), which have been shipped to bakeries all over the world.

## **Brake Bread (Saint Paul, MN)**

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Even at the height of the pandemic, this [exciting recent addition](#) to the Twin Cities scene was strictly waiting-list only for would-be subscribers, who are able to get all the bread they can eat delivered, and always by bike. A newly-opened [Saint Paul](#) storefront is closed for now, but the bread is still the bread, made with locally-milled Minnesota grains. With any luck, you'll get your hands on some.

## **Bread Alone (Kingston, NY)**

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Daniel Leader's [ahead-of-the-pack operation](#) (firing up in the early 1980s, a very different time for bread in New York) began with one wood-fired oven in the Catskills. The bread is the same today as it has been for decades: still wood-fired and baked in a certified organic bakery. You can find it at many New York City greenmarkets, but a leisurely drive up the Hudson River to the Kingston flagship is a recipe for a good time.

## **Breadfarm (Edison, WA)**

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Essentially ground zero for the American grain revolution, Washington's Skagit Valley is home to numerous small growers, one of the country's most exciting mills, Cairnspring, and the important-behind-the-scenes Washington State University Bread Lab. Since 2003, the county's best bread has come from Renée Bourgault & Scott Mangold's busy bakery.

## **Bub & Grandma's (Los Angeles, CA)**

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There's no loaf east of La Brea more sought-after than, well, just about anything people can get their hands on these days, from [this serious bread bakery](#) that has managed to become a household name without even hanging out a shingle. (Which is something they fully intend on doing, finally, once the storm passes.)

## **Burrow (Brooklyn, NY)**

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Ayako Kurakawa has quickly gained a sizable following—both online and in real life—for her delicate opera cakes, Insta-worthy tarts, and terribly creative pastries; you could walk past her bite-sized Dumbo shop for years and not know what you're missing—please, do not be like this. ***Temporarily closed but available for pickup, delivery, and***

## shipping online

### **B&W Bakery (Hackensack, NJ)**

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It's Saturday morning in the New York City suburbs. Do you know where your crumb cakes are? Because if you don't, you'll be waiting in a long line with everybody else who forgot, and ideally you will do so at this nearly-century-old institution. What makes a crumb cake in this part of the world special? Think more crumb than cake—the barely-there footer typically functions, and only adequately so, as a conveyance for so much delicious streusel. ***Temporarily closed but available on Goldbelly***

### **The Cheeseboard (Berkeley, CA)**

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Bread-loving Americans owe a debt to this worker-owned cooperative, a very early player on the modern bread scene. Opened in 1971, they would later inspire the well-loved (and also worker-owned) network of community-minded Arizmendi bakeries, located throughout the Bay Area. The pizza of the day here, dipped in the sparkling-bright house salsa verde, is essential Berkeley. ***Temporarily closed.***

### **Clear Flour Bread (Brookline, MA)**

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Brookline native John Goodman and partner Nicole Walsh wanted a bakery in San Francisco, but when Goodman sought out a childhood favorite for advice, owner/pioneers Christy Timon and Abe Faber had a proposal—after three and a half decades in business, would the couple like to take over? Yes, they would, it turned out. ***Temporarily closed.***

### **Elmore Mountain Bread (Wolcott, VT)**

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Blair Marvin and Andrew Heyn are more than the faces behind the preferred bread of Vermont's wild, wonderful Northeast Kingdom; the couple are founding members of the Skagit Valley, Washington-based Bread Lab Collective, a growing group of bread people pledging to offer quality, good-for-you breads at a price that remains accessible to everyone. Heyn heads up the New American Stone Mill project, which builds high-quality grain mills for bakers around the world.

### **Essen Bakery (Philadelphia, PA)**

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South Philly isn't exactly short on bakeries—you've got Italian, Mexican, Vietnamese, and a few more we're probably missing. What this side of town definitely did not have, however, was a cute little mod-Jewish outfit run by a South African expat, and Tova du Plessis was only too happy to fix this, just a few years back, and now we forget what life was like in Philadelphia before her apple cake, that babka, and loaves of challah fragrant with za'atar.

## Fat & Flour (Los Angeles, CA)

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Pie queen Nicole Rucker's bit of reasonably-priced honey chess wizardry for Whole Foods last year was such a marvelous thing while it lasted—the same could be said for her much-missed Los Angeles bakery and restaurant, Fiona. These days, she's been popping up inside the city's historic Grand Central Market, while kickstarting her way to a permanent stall, which we've filed under H for Hopefully Later This Summer, along with so many other things. *Temporarily closed.*

## Fat Rice Bakery (Chicago, IL)

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Home of the kaya sticky buns we never knew we needed, some very pretty pasteis de nata, plus also those one-of-a-kind ube bars, the destination-worthy offshoot of the award-winning Fat Rice, Chicago's favorite (and we're just spitballing here, but probably only) Macanese restaurant will still be one of our favorite reasons to venture out to Logan Square, once all this is over. *Temporarily closed.*

## Flour Bakery & Cafe (Boston, MA)

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People like to talk about the sticky buns, and that's great stuff, but for us, the love affair began with a big slice of Joanne Chang's Boston Cream Pie, rich with cream and enrobed in chocolate ganache, scarfed down in the middle of the afternoon after an exceptionally long train ride from someplace without Boston Cream Pie, and therefore inconsequential and not worth mentioning. Few bakeries are able to scale up like this and still win almost everyone over.

## Golden Crown Panaderia (Albuquerque, NM)

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The anise-scented biscochitos, one of New Mexico's favorite treats, are a highlight at this Old Town institution, run by father-and-son duo Pratt Morales and Chris Morales. But it's the bread, specifically the green chile bread, that is everything you want from a bakery in New Mexico and will have you going out of your way to get here.

## Gusto Bread (Long Beach, CA)

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If Arturo Enciso's kouign amann, made wholly unique with the addition of house-milled blue corn masa to the naturally-leavened pastry dough, doesn't have you pointing the car toward his two-story wood frame home near downtown Long Beach, everything else will—think polverones (made with California-grown walnuts, of course), spelt flour biscuits, and gorgeous fresh fruit galettes. Plus, of course, the bread—the drive may be long, but this might be our favorite Los Angeles baguette in right now

## Hershey Farm (Ronks, PA)

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Mainers, kindly take it up directly with Pennsylvania, because we're very much not here to get in the middle of debates over who invented the whoopie pie. Instead, let's talk about the annual Whoopie Pie Festival, held (normally) each September here in Lancaster, specifically at this farm and inn and very popular smorgasbord, where they bake up some of the best little pies in the county starting with classic chocolate, and sell them all year round.

## Hewn (Evanston, IL)

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After proving themselves indispensable to Chicagoland bread lovers, Ellen King and Julie Matthei have moved to more spacious digs, a project scheduled for completion smack in the middle of the (you guessed it!) lockdown. They've still managed to find time to participate in the worthy Neighbor Loaf program, a donation-driven project bringing fresh, high-quality bread to food banks throughout the Midwest.

## Homeboy Bakery (Los Angeles, CA)

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Chunky English muffins and handsome sourdough breads take their place alongside jalapeño cream cheese croissants and PBJ cookies at this vital training ground for the world's largest gang rehabilitation project, making Los Angeles a better place for three decades and counting

## Jaarsma Bakery (Pella, IA)

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Rusks for your breakfast, boterkoek for anytime, and those unwieldy pastry letters, just for fun—could we *be* anymore Dutch, and still be out here in the middle of Iowa? Yes, we could, thanks for asking—that windmill down the block, the one surrounded by tulips every spring, isn't just a pretty face; they're down there milling flour for bread, sold at the bakery for a couple of bucks like it's no big deal.

## The Jampot (Eagle Harbor, MI)

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Those who know will drive for hours to get here for the bars, muffins, breads, cookies, and, of course, the homemade jams; this seasonal operation is every bit as essential to the food culture of the rugged Keweenaw Peninsula as rutebaga-stuffed pasties and cardamom-scented nisu bread. Your purchase supports the group of Byzantine Catholic monks who've made one of the most remote places in the Midwest their year-round home.

## Janjou Patisserie (Boise, ID)

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Is Idaho, in fact, home to some of America's finest challah? We're just asking questions, people—since 2013, Moshit Mizrachi-Gabbitas has been wowing the locals in Boise, who have been overheard swearing that the Israeli expat's skills are Paris-worthy, or even better. We know this much: a better croissant you will not find, not for many a mile.

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## **Jean-Marc Chatellier's French Bakery (Millvale, PA)**

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This blue-collar patisserie in a classic Pittsburgh suburb has been a local institution for roughly a quarter century, a lovably unpretentious stop for macarons and croissants and kouign amann, but also for pumpkin pies in the fall, apple strudel, and big squares of black forest cake, because sometimes that's just what life calls for.

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## **Jimmy Jamm's (Chicago, IL)**

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After years of happily inhaling her father James Jackson's spiced sweet potato pies at Thanksgiving, Jimmy Ferguson and husband Harold decided to share the magic with their South Side neighborhood; those who've tried the goods have been known to drive from much further away to pick up a pie for special occasions.

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## **Joey Bats Café (New York, NY)**

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Joey Batista and mom Isabel Fernandes are making some of the finest pasteis de nata in North America right now—not bad at all for a kid who grew up in Central Massachusetts. These come dusted with sugar and cinnamon, also known as the Lisbon way; there's now a branch in Batista's hometown of Ludlow, just outside of Springfield.

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## **K'Far (Philadelphia, PA)**

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Camille Cogswell made a name for herself baking at Zahav, one of America's finest restaurants since the day it opened, back in 2008—these days, she's at the helm of the fabulously Jewish all-day café and bakery we didn't know we needed, until now. Come for the Jerusalem bagels, the pistach sticky buns, the rugelach, the everything. ***Temporarily closed.***

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## **Ken's Artisan Bread (Portland, OR)**

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After coming out of the gate swinging at a time when Portland was still warming to the idea of becoming a majorly creative food capital, Ken Forkish pretty much wrote the book —*Flour Water Salt Yeast*—on modern American bread. After many printings, it's as relevant as ever.

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## **King Arthur Flour Bakery & Cafe (Norwich, VT)**

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Think of Vermont as a theme park for food lovers, in which case the glittering headquarters of America's hottest flour brand (employee-owned!) would have to be Bread Land. The on-site bakery is an essential stop—watch through giant windows as the cast members (we mean the bakers, sorry) do their thing.

## **La Panaderia (San Antonio, TX)**

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The future of pan dulce is now, and one of the best places to see it happening is this forward-looking outfit founded by David and Jose Caceres, raised in a commercial baking family in Mexico. Conchas, made with high-quality ingredients to exacting standards, are some of the best this side of those fancy new Mexico City panaderias.

## **La Petite Sophie (River Ridge, LA)**

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Jeff and Lya Becnel are quietly turning out textbook-perfect croissants (and craveable kouign amann) in a no-frills storefront out near the New Orleans airport, because that's just how good baking in America works these days, we don't make the rules—it's happening almost everywhere. Just have them fill up a box for you, it won't really matter, because it's all very good.

## **La Segunda (Tampa, FL)**

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Cuban bread, handmade by a small army of lifers, still with the signature palm frond running the length of each loaf, the way it's been done for more than a century. Any further questions? Thought not. Family-owned since day one, a second, sit-down location finally opened not long ago—come in the morning for too much cafe con leche and buttered toast, otherwise known as one of Tampa's best breakfasts

## **Le Fournil (Billings, MT)**

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Montana's largest city is just about as far as you can get from Dijon, France, without looping back, but Francois Morin spent much of his career in the IT world far from home, which is how he ended up marrying a Montana girl, which is how they ended up here, making some of the best baguettes on Mountain Time since 2017.

## **Left Bank (Olympia, WA)**

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Not only one of the finest patisseries in the Pacific Northwest, but also one of the most modest—Gary Potter's exceptional croissants have gotten even better with time, while remaining one of the best bangs for the buck we've found this side of the Atlantic. Potter closed up shop during the pandemic; he's hinted at using the time to perfect his baguette, however, a move one can't help but fully support. Learn more about Olympia's food scene here

## **Leidenheimer Baking Co. (New Orleans, LA)**

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When you're one of the country's oldest bakeries, and you're in New Orleans, it takes more than a pandemic to get you to break with routine—just think how many they've worked through since 1896, and then throw in countless hurricanes, and you get the idea. Morning after morning throughout the COVID-19 crisis, brown bags of the city's favorite po-boy bread could be seen leaning up against doorway after restaurant doorway, as if nothing had changed at all.

## **Liguria Bakery (San Francisco, CA)**

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One of the purest, most Italian bakeries in all of Italian America, this North Beach treasure, serving one of San Francisco's finest neighborhoods since 1911, sells one thing, and one thing only—some of the best focaccia around, non-Liguria division. When it's gone, it's gone, and believe us when we tell you that it goes.

## **L'Imprimerie (Brooklyn, NY)**

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Gus Reckel—that's Monsieur Gus to you—might look like he spent his life hanging around waiting for Brooklyn to become as cool as him, a thing that will probably never happen, but being one of New York's best bakers is actually his second life—the French expat worked for years as an investment banker. Bread—the miche, the baguette—is worth a journey.

## **Lodge Bread (Los Angeles, CA)**

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Chances are you'll be reeled in by one of the butchest cinnamon rolls America has ever seen, a whole-grain sourdough giant of a thing, and hefty enough to sustain a small mountain of cream cheese frosting. Stick around for the also-formidable breads, beginning with the sprouted German rye.

## **Long's Bakery (Indianapolis, IN)**

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Everybody in Indiana's capital city knows about Long's, including native son David Letterman, and pretty much everybody can afford Long's, too—their donuts, yeast rolls, and cakes—thanks to a decidedly non-dynamic pricing structure that appears to have run out of steam a few decades ago. Long's is a true bakery for the people, and every community deserves one.

## **Lost Bread Co. (Philadelphia, PA)**

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After more than doing his part to make High Street on Market (and its New York follow-up) extremely successful, Sullivan Street-schooled Alex Bois opened his own place, turning out some of Philadelphia's most exciting bread, leaning squarely on locally sourced grains. His pretzel shortbread is the cookie of the future

## **Lost Larson (Chicago, IL)**

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Bobby Schaffer was the pastry chef at Grace before everything went up in smoke; before that, he was ace-ing it at New York's Blue Hill at Stone Barns. These days, he makes cardamom buns at one of Chicago's best new bakeries of the last few years, up in Andersonville.

## **Macrina Bakery (Seattle, WA)**

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This '90s-era trendsetter may now feel somewhat ubiquitous in the Seattle area, but being big doesn't necessarily mean losing touch with your roots. The rustic, affordably-priced house whole wheat loaf begins with a starter made from Champagne grapes, grown in founder Leslie Mackie's backyard.

## **Maison Villatte (Falmouth, MA)**

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If we're all very lucky, there will be one hell of a July 4th weekend this year, and there will be, as per usual on many summer mornings, a line out the door at this magnificent French-American bakery, the pride of Cape Cod. It's not nearly, as it happens, the only good French bakery on the Cape—just the clear standout, that's all.

## **Manresa Bread (Los Gatos, CA)**

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If there is a more finely-tuned monkey bread—that sticky-sweet Saturday morning classic—in existence than Avery Ruzicka's, kindly let us know; chances are you'll try a lot of other pastries before you get around to our favorite, so allow us to save you some time. The breads are everything you'd expect from a spin-off project from one of California's top restaurants—the baguette is almost too good for this world.

## **Moonrise Bakehouse (Brooklyn, NY)**

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A tiny operation milling regional grains for bread made with serious passion—this sounded more like the New York of 30 years ago than the same city in late 2019, when Cynthia Lamb finally realized her dream of a small storefront in Sunset Park. She hasn't missed a beat this spring, either, chauffeuring her freshly-baked boules and baguettes all over town.

## **Moxie Bread Co. (Louisville, CO)**

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Organic heirloom wheat is the backbone of the extremely fine work being done at this Boulder-area find; the croissants are as refined as the loaves are ruggedly handsome. Founder Andy Clark summoned the energy to open a planned second location—complete with grain mill—during the middle of the pandemic.

## **Ms. Lena's Pie Shop (De Valls Bluff, AR)**

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When Lena Barnhill passed a few years back, her final wish, she told her daughter Viv, was to keep the pie shop going, and here we are—Arkansas' sleepy Delta region, it turns out, is not only a place for some of the country's most important barbecue, there's great pie as well.

## **Napoli Bakery (Brooklyn, NY)**

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If you've come to New York looking for the real, Italian-American deal, these days you're typically best off in the boroughs, or specifically here in East Williamsburg—it's where you'll find the best, most reasonably-priced loaves (brick-oven baked, and be sure to ask about the lard bread) in the neighborhood. And please, whatever you do, don't miss the sugar rolls, which are exactly what they sound like: fluffy balls of bread with a crackling sugar crust.

## **Night Moves Bread + Pie (Biddeford, ME)**

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Can a loaf of sourdough have terroir, just like wine? If yes, Kerry Hanney's would be Maine in bread form—one of the region's most forward-thinking bakers leans heavily on local grains and mills them herself. There are a whole lot of bread people out there nowadays, ready to bend your ear about this stuff; the follow-through here is impressive. PS: We didn't talk about the pie. (There's pie.)

## **1900 Barker (Lawrence, KS)**

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Brothers Taylor and Reagan Petrehn were in their early twenties when they turned an abandoned neighborhood laundromat into the most modern and exciting bakery and coffee shop in a college town already full of quality carbs and coffee. Coming soon: A donut shop, and eventually, hopefully, their own grain mill.

## **Noble Bread (Phoenix, AZ)**

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Jason Raducha was into bread from a very early age, he will tell you—by the time he was old enough to launch his own business, he had trouble with the standing around and waiting, eventually launching Noble Bread out of his home, to the delight of some neighbors more than others. Launching quietly in 2012, this little gem has grown to become something of a valley mainstay; Raducha's breads can be found in restaurants all

over town.

## **Orchard Hill Breadworks (Alstead, NH)**

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Picture it—Noah Elbers’ grandparents farm, back in the 1990s, one modest outdoor wood-fired bread oven. Fast-forward to today, and all that’s changed, really, is that there are more ovens, churning out some of the Granite State’s most sought-after loaves

## **OWL Bakery (Asheville, NC)**

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Squeeze into this brilliant little spot, which vibes like a cozy neighborhood bakery, but is actually a serious destination for some of the South’s top pastry—carefully, delicately made, with the finest ingredients available. Breads are equally good, and anything but dainty, thank goodness.

## **On The Rise (Cleveland, OH)**

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Nearly twenty years ago now, before good baguettes were a thing in a lot of other places in America you’d have thought would know better, they were flying off the shelves at this Cleveland Heights essential business, and were notably favored by discerning hometown boy Michael Ruhlman. Just one of many reasons we like to spend time foraging our way through Cleveland

## **Origin Breads (Madison, WI)**

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Sourdough loaves made with organic Wisconsin grains have made Kirk Smock something of a star in the state’s highly food-literate capital city; after a couple of years on the farmer’s market circuit, the bakery finally has a retail space of its very own

## **Pancho Anaya (Tulsa, OK)**

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One of the best panaderias north of the border has an ace up its sleeve—it began life a century ago in Michoacan, Mexico. Generations of Anayas later, part of the family moved to Oklahoma, where they’ve been churning out top pan dulce—made with all-natural ingredients—since the 1990s.

## **Pane Bianco (Phoenix, AZ)**

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Your summer plans for Italy are probably on hold for now, and perhaps the next best thing begins with the bread coming out of the ovens at Chris Bianco’s bakery and sandwich shop-turned-restaurant, bread that you’ll have them stuff with whatever they’ve got, which ideally will be fresh mozzarella, thick slices of heirloom tomato, and a shower of fresh basil.

## **Petsi Pies (Somerville, MA)**

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Renee McLeod's years of culinary training in her grandmother's kitchen turned her into something of a pie genius, whether we're talking about classic chicken pot, or a Texas-worthy chocolate bourbon pecan, all made with top-flight ingredients. [A favorite](#) of comfort-seeking students (and anyone in [Greater Boston](#) who likes pie, really) since 2003. Ice cream with your pie? [Read about Boston's best classic spots here.](#)

## **Phoenix Bakery (Los Angeles, CA)**

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The winter melon pastries, the almond cookies, the mooncakes—all of these early favorites are still on the menu at [one of Chinatown's oldest businesses](#). But it's a 1940s recipe—the strawberry cake, a refreshing burst of springtime flavor, available year-round—that has been largely responsible for turning generations of Angelenos into adoring fans.

## **Porto's Bakery (Southern California)**

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In normal times, there are airport terminals with more chill than your average Porto's outlet on a weekend morning, or afternoon, or anytime really—even now, with customers lining up in their cars for curbside pickup, instead of the usual standing in line. Feeding an astoundingly large segment of the population in America's second largest metropolitan region, [the best Cuban bakery west of the Mississippi](#) may very well be the opposite of artisanal these days, but without Porto's pastelitos, croquetas, picadillo-filled potato balls, and colorful birthday cakes, life as millions of Southern Californians know it would be a whole lot less sunny. (You can now [order Porto's nationwide](#)

## **Prager Bros. Artisan Bakery (San Diego, CA)**

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Open your first proper retail outlet in the middle of a pandemic? No sweat for North County brothers Clinton and Louie Prager, two of San Diego's most energetic (and modern) bakers, who literally just threw the doors open at the [long-awaited Encinitas shop](#). The bread is terrific.

## **Proof Bakery, Los Angeles, CA**

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At the close of a decade in Atwater Village, Na Young Ma isn't really all that hyped on scaling up, thank you, or moving somewhere more central, or any of those things successful businesses are apparently supposed to do; the talent behind some of LA's best pastry is more than content with the [same modest shop](#) that has been the setting for countless very good Los Angeles mornings since 2010.

## **Saboteur Bakery (Bremerton, WA)**

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After years of pastry-cheffing in San Francisco (Coi) and Napa (The Restaurant at Meadowood), an ambitious Matt Tinder blew into workaday Bremerton with his wild ideas about brioche sucré and the perfect slice of quiche, pissed off a bunch of locals, mostly because there never seemed to be enough croissants, and turned a whole lot more into loyal customers.

## **Sanchioli Brothers Bakery (Pittsburgh, PA)**

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Rumor has it the brick oven built back in 1921 for this century-old Italian-American institution has never been turned off, which tells you plenty about how much Pittsburgh likes its Italian bread, and specifically a loaf from Sanchioli's. It's always worth a pilgrimage to the no-frills Bloomfield bakery, where they'll gladly sell you whatever's fresh.

## **Sea Wolf Bakery (Seattle, WA)**

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Just like the whole coffee thing, Seattle signed up early for the American bread revolution, then sort of settled in and got comfortable. Jesse and Kit Schumann's thoroughly modern operation was something of a jolt to the culture, back in 2014, and while there was never any danger of a bread shortage around here, having more bread—their bread, specifically—has been exceptionally good.

## **Shatila Bakery (Dearborn, MI)**

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When Riad Shatila left a war-torn Lebanon for Michigan in the 1970s and began baking the pastries of his homeland, the story goes that he sold them by calling all the Arab-sounding names in the phone book, giving each one his spiel. It worked, clearly—today, Shatila's ships baklava all over the country, and the bakery is not only a focal point for the country's largest Arab-American community, it's a Metro Detroit institution.

## **She Wolf Bakery (Brooklyn, NY)**

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When the book is written about New York in the time of the virus, there must please be mention of the often long, typically very patient lines of people turning up at local greenmarkets to buy some of the city's best bread. She Wolf is a firm favorite of clued-in foragers who don't go looking for anything so gauche as a storefront.

## **Sour Duck Market (Austin, TX)**

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Rustic loaves fat with regionally-grown olives, twice-baked pecan croissants, fancified kolaches (ask a real Texan, they can tell you anything you want to know about them)—this is the Austin bakery of your dreams, operating alongside another very Austin thing, an all-day café. If they've got conchas, grab some.

## **Sub Rosa Bakery (Richmond, VA)**

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A wood-fired oven is the canvas on which siblings Evrim and Evin Dogu prefer to paint. Throw in lots of seriously good grains from around the region and you have the bakery Virginia's capital city didn't know it deserved. Lamb-stuffed borek and a fast-baked pide topped with rosemary and sea salt are something special.

## **Sullivan Street Bakery (New York, NY)**

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Long before home baking became something you did to keep from climbing the walls, Jim Lahey ignited a revolution of sorts with his no-knead bread recipe, which more than fifteen years ago reminded Americans that it wasn't all that hard to make your own. The artist-turned-bread artist has inspired many a professional on this list, kicking off his hobby-turned-career all the way back in 1994, in a very different New York. His work is no less important to the city (and the country) today.

## **Suraya (Philadelphia, PA)**

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Wake up earlier than everyone else, say on a Sunday, when the city is still sleeping one off, and get down to one of the country's most exciting Lebanese restaurants right now, right as they carry thing (rose-scented crullers) after beautiful thing (warm chocolate financiers that nearly melt in your hands) out to the bakery counter up front. You order one of everything. You order until it hurts.

## **Tecumseh Bread & Pastry (Tecumseh, MI)**

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Not long ago a nursing student with a passion for baking, Arlo Brandl is barely into his thirties and already an accomplished artisan, impressing (over and over again) his tiny Michigan town, and anybody who knows to make the drive out here, with playful but precise croissants stuffed with jalapeño and cheddar, or peanut butter and jelly. The bread is serious business.

## **ThoroughBread (Austin, TX)**

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Upon opening in 2018, this modest neighborhood storefront quickly acquired something of an outsized reputation for owner and baker Ryan Goebel's sourdough breads. His smart take on the klobasnek (the savory version of a kolache) stuffed with brisket, egg, and cheese is a gift for your weekend.

## **Tokyo Premium Bakery (Denver, CO)**

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A young Manri Nakayama has charmed the Mile High City with one of the country's most exacting responses to the wave of modern Asian bakery chains proliferating up and down the West Coast, and increasingly beyond. (Curry bun, anyone? The answer is yes, by the way.)

## **Tomaro's Bakery (Clarksburg, WV)**

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There's nothing quite like a fresh-from-the-oven pepperoni roll at this century-old gem, a truly essential business at the heart of one of the country's most fascinating old Italian immigrant communities. Tomaro's didn't invent West Virginia's answer to the croissant—okay, it's nothing like a croissant, that's just a joke—but they make some of the best. (They're shipping nationwide via Goldbelly)

## **Utica Bread (Utica, NY)**

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A workhorse of a bakery that's part of a vibrant little culinary community of old and new favorites in a town doesn't get all that much attention from outside, the croissants here easily compete on a regional level, and their breads are the sort every neighborhood deserves.

## **Valerie Confections (Los Angeles, CA)**

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A thrilling foursome of bitter and sweet, soft and crunchy, the Blum's Cake is one of the finest layered affairs in America, a claim that will possibly be doubted by the unlucky people who have not tried Valerie Gordon's loving recreation of the honeycomb candy-covered San Francisco classic. Then again, you could always order one online and see for yourself.

## **Wave Hill Breads (Norwalk, CT)**

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For the first five years, this ahead-of-trend bakery in the New York City commuter belt made only one thing—a simply beautiful pain de campagne. This, it turned out, was more than enough to build on; today, the long-time head baker owns the company, which distributes all kinds of bread (currently via home delivery, as well) throughout Westchester and Fairfield counties.

## **Wayfarer Bread & Pastry (San Diego, CA)**

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People who thought they were doing Tartine grad Crystal White a favor, warned her that San Diego didn't care about good food. She's awfully glad she didn't listen to them, and so are we—her can't-stop-eating pastry and giant-sized sourdough loaves most likely weren't the first thing you went to the beach looking for, but they ought to be now. ***Temporarily closed.***

## Win Son Bakery, Brooklyn, NY

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Griddled milk buns with braised pork knuckle fritters, scallion pancakes stuffed with bacon, egg, and cheese, turnip cakes with Benton's ham and shrimp, mochi donuts made with millet flour—what will pastry pro Danielle Spencer think of next? This wild child spinoff of the popular, same-named Taiwanese-American restaurant across the street recently re-opened for pickup and delivery; you could almost hear the sighs of relief throughout the neighborhood.

## Yonah Schimmel's (New York, NY)

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Back in the late 1800s, Yonah Schimmel, recently arrived from Romania, was known around the Lower East Side for his knishes, sold from a pushcart. Well before the turn of the century, he had a proper bakery, and the rest is glorious tradition. These days, there are more refined specimens around town—some find these, still hewing to the original way, a bit rustic. Still, for the ability to time-travel while also eating a delicious knish, you won't do better.

## Zak The Baker (Miami, FL)

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America's hippest kosher bakery is also the source of some of South Florida's best bread. Zak Stern started out baking at home, and since 2012 has been doing more than his part to make Wynwood—the bakery's home base—one of our favorite neighborhoods in Miami. (Support the bakery's front-of-house staff relief fund.)

## Zingerman's Bakehouse (Ann Arbor, MI)

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The in-house supplier to America's pioneering modern Jewish deli is tucked into an industrial park on the other side of town, far enough off the beaten path to be mostly appreciated by locals. This means it's always a good time to drop by and stock up on pastries, baguettes, or even just a classic sliced pan loaf for the week's sandwiches. Make time for cake.