



FOOD & DRINK

creamy mounds of Yucatan slaw and refried pinto beans. Truth be told, it's not quite like a night in Tijuana—too much snow, too many gringos—but it's a grand slam for us.

1 Lansdowne St., Boston, 617-421-9595,
laverdadtaqueria.com

MIDDLE EASTERN Byblos

Way outside of town and well after the "auto mile," make a few right turns into Norwood to find Byblos. The room looks and feels like a function hall, but the intense aromas coming out of the kitchen prove otherwise. Traditional dishes like the baked kibbee, baba ghannouj and za'atar pie (made from a blend of spices) are spot-on, and the service is friendly. Hit it on a weekend to check out the belly dancers.

678 Washington St., Norwood, 781-278-0000,
byblosrestaurant.com

NACHOS Sunset Grill & Tap

Layer after gooey layer, the nachos at Sunset Grill & Tap will make you grateful that you're not lactose intolerant. The south-of-the-border giant fiesta platter puts all other cheese-covered tortilla chips to shame with its pile of olives, cheddar, sour cream, jalapeños and scallions. Splurge and get the large with barbecue pulled pork and black beans. But only do so when there's nothing else on your social calendar. These nachos demand unflinching attention.

130 Brighton Ave., Allston, 617-254-1331,
allstonsfinest.com

NATURAL FOOD STORE Whole Foods

You can make an entire meal out of browsing the free

samples at Whole Foods. (It's a sport, really.) The upscale grocery chain also cultivates die-hard fans of their all-natural and organic prepared items. From the garlicky Thai chicken salad to creamy dolmades, hummus and tofu to juicy rotisserie chickens, it covers all your dinner bases. Not to mention lunches, snacks and immediate cravings.

181 Cambridge St., Boston, 617-723-0004;
additional locations in Boston and
Cambridge; wholefoods.com



NEW RESTAURANT T.W. Food

While some restaurants create a lot of noise upon their arrival, others, like T.W. Food, remain sleeper hits. Chef Tim Weichmann and his wife, Bronwyn, are low-key, but they offer an exceptional dining experience. Tim has worked at Aujourd'hui and Ten Tables as well as with Michelin-starred chefs Joel Robuchon and Alain Passard, and this culinary knowledge can be tasted in every exhilarating dish. An oyster shooter reveals fennel essence; a lightly scrambled farm-fresh egg matches the texture of sea urchin beneath it; a confit leg of pheasant is served with curling fiddleheads. The ingredients seem to shine, but really, it's Tim's gentle hand that's coaxing them. T.W. Food dazzles without pretense or ego.

377 Walden St., Cambridge, 617-864-4745,
twfoodrestaurant.com



PLACE TO GO WHEN PRICE IS NO OBJECT O Ya

IT'S FAIRLY EASY to blow a couple hundred dollars at a restaurant where uni, foie gras, truffles and tuna belly make up most of the menu. At this sleek, 40-seat Leather District space, the ingredients may veer toward the ridiculous (kurobuta pork fat drizzle, olive oil bubbles), but it's a meal worth splurging on. Each bite-sized dish (priced anywhere from \$8 to \$159) is elegantly composed with flavors that can practically stun you into drooling silence. The omakase (chef's menu) can be tailored to fit smaller budgets, but for a no-holds-barred celebration, choose the \$200-per-person version.

9 East St., Boston, 617-654-9900, oyarestaurantboston.com