

The American Steakhouse 3.0

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Restaurants

By Casey Hatfield on May 04, 2017

These 14 restaurants represent a third-wave steakhouse movement that lends a more conscientious approach to the longstanding institution.



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America's fascination with the steakhouse dates back to 1868, the year the Old Homestead opened in New York's Meatpacking District with dark wood interiors, leather banquettes, and generously sized porterhouses. (Still serving, it's the oldest continuously operating steakhouse in the country.) When Morton's and Smith & Wollensky—icons that would become national, and international, chains—opened a century later, they too toed the party line. Indeed, for the whole of the 20th century, American steakhouses stuck with the same dark, masculine, clubby ambience—a setting better suited to a deal than a date.

The early-2000s saw a second wave steakhouse movement when establishments like Wolfgang Puck's Cut and STK arrived for a new generation with a more "high-energy," party-oriented setting. (The latter has a D.J. and operates by slogan "Not Your Daddy's Steakhouse.") The style was sleeker, the vibe more contemporary, but the offerings more or less stayed the same.

Call it steakhouse 3.0, but over the last several years, a more casual, socially conscious steakhouse has emerged

around the country You can identify these new concepts by their menus, which feature humanely raised beef, offer a variety of uncommon cuts and meats (pork, goat, bison, lamb, etc.), and place a newfound emphasis on vegetables and sides as more than just decoration. The spaces themselves reflect a sea change, too, throwing off their darkened rooms and stuffed booths for tall ceilings, large windows, and an airier feel.

Here within, the finest examples of this new breed of American steakhouse from coast to coast.



Wonho Frank Lee

Gwen Butcher Shop and Restaurant, Los Angeles

The heartbeat of this Sunset Boulevard restaurant, opened in July 2016 by celebrity chef [Curtis Stone](#) and his brother Luke, is the European-style butcher shop. Guests enter through the butchery with a hand-laid mosaic floor made from hundred year-old tiles. Floor-to-ceiling glass charcuterie rooms for dry aging line the dining room showcasing the butchery process. While not all meat is from California, it is all pasture-raised—like a bone-in Wagyu rib eye imported from Australia—and all steaks are grilled over live fire in the open kitchen. The restaurant is set in a Spanish Colonial Revival style building with Churrigueresque details. Two dramatic crystal chandeliers hang in the dining room; velvet banquettes and a rose-colored marble bar are a nod to 1920s Hollywood glamour. 6600 *Sunset Blvd.*; 323-946-7500; gwenla.com.



Courtesy Guard & Grace

Guard and Grace, Denver

Guard and Grace chef and owner Troy Guard says he wanted to create a steakhouse for a new generation with this Central Business District restaurant in Denver's CenturyLink Tower. Named for Guard's daughter Grace, the atmosphere is more feminine and clean than the classic steakhouse. There's natural light from the large storefront windows, sculptural seating, and rope detailing. Dishes also have less butter and cream than the steakhouses of yore, with sides like carrots blistered in the oak-fired oven and served with herbed yogurt and orange confit. Meat, all sourced from Colorado ranchers, includes cuts like a Colorado prime rib rubbed with the restaurant's namesake seasoning (a combination of 20 spices) and a filet mignon flight that showcases prime, Angus and grass-fed beef side by side. *1801 California St.; 303-293-8500; guardandgrace.com.*



Jen Bragan

Kensington Quarters, Philadelphia

This sustainable restaurant in Fishtown shuns the “steakhouse” moniker, billing itself as a meat-centric spot with a focus on whole animal butchery. All ingredients at the bi-level restaurant, including non-GMO and humanely raised meats, have come from within 150 miles of the site. Kensington Quarters’ stripped down, industrial feel (reclaimed wood tables, exposed ceilings) is very far from the classic steakhouse ambience but dishes like the Mixed Grill—a giant plate of different cuts of beef, lamb, pork, and venison—make it a meat-lover’s delight. Kensington Quarters even offers butchering demonstrations several times a month for those who want to truly meet their meat. 1310 Frankford Ave.; 267-314-5086; kensingtonquarters.com.



Dawn Rabinowitz

Oak + Rowan, Boston

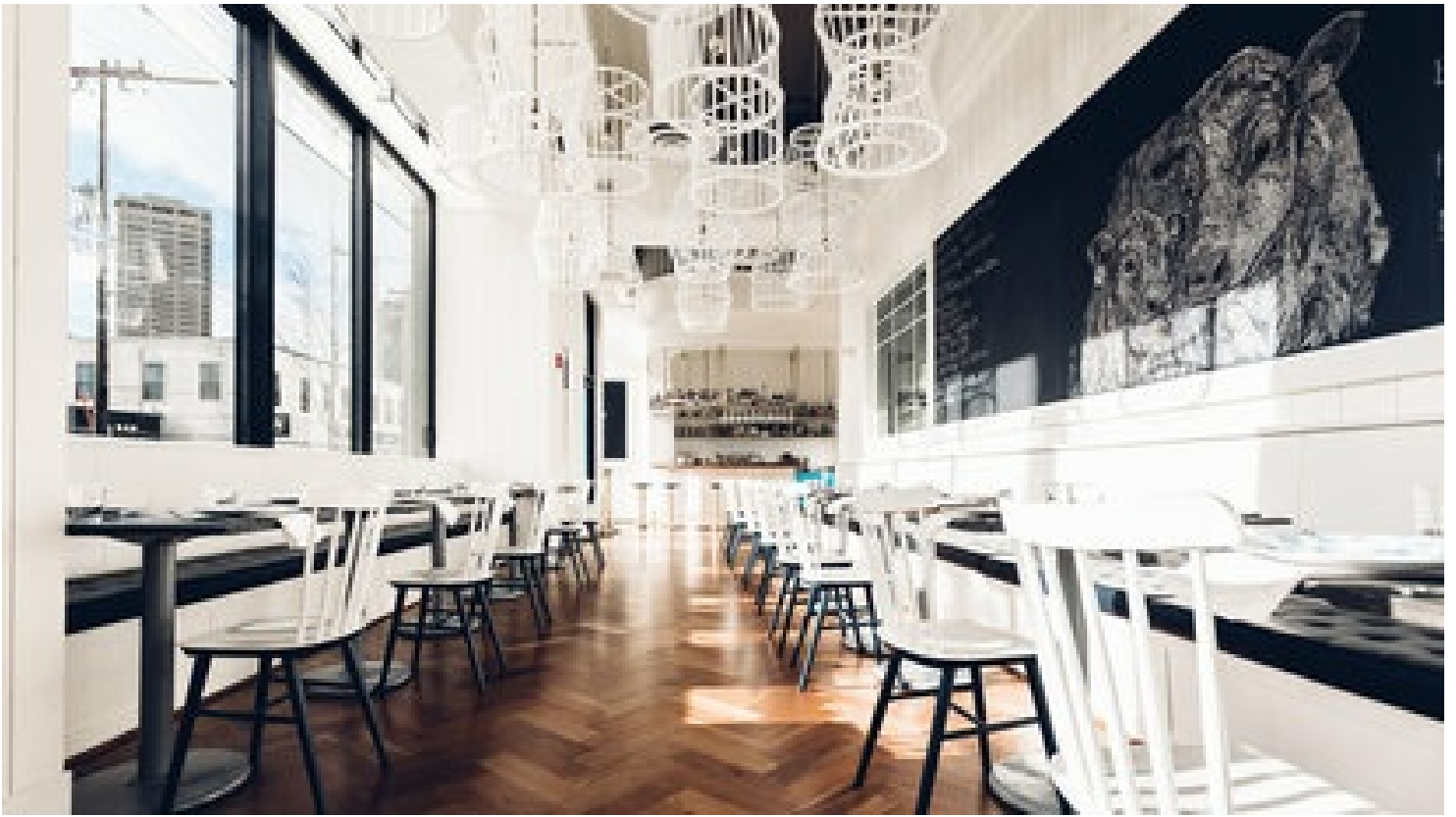
Oak + Rowan opened in November 2016 and offers the ultimate “surf and turf” with a menu that has prime meats (a level assigned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that denotes the highest quality American-raised beef), locally raised fish and oysters, and sustainable caviar. Steaks are prepared in cast iron to seal in the natural flavor and create a crisp outer layer. The signature bone-in rib eye is served with potato suzette, a heavenly twice baked potato, and sliced to order. The restaurant, designed by Sosa Design Studio, was inspired by a tree house and has oak beam ceilings, large windows, and loading doors that open wide to let the outside in. 321 A St.; 857-284-7742; oakandrowan.com.



Courtesy Rural Society

Rural Society, Washington, D.C.

Chef Jose Garces's steakhouse in the Lowes Madison Hotel in Washington, D.C. is inspired by the great tradition of South American meat grilling. Garces was first introduced to Argentine cuisine at Bolivar, a steakhouse and ceviche restaurant in New York City where he worked in the late '90s. In 2014 he visited Argentina and Uruguay for a crash course in the style and brought back a contemporary take on the classics like Picaña, a Wagyu from Snake River Ranch seared on the grill and then served with chimichurri, and Entraña, a certified Black Angus skirt steak that is carved table side and finished with Malbec butter. Vegetable dishes like charred asparagus with bagna cauda highlight seasonal ingredients. 1177 15th St. NW; 202-587-2629; ruralsocietyrestaurant.com.



David Dossett

Bateau, Seattle

This bright, French-inspired restaurant from chef Renee Erickson (*The Whale Wins*, *The Walrus and the Carpenter*) could be the poster child for steakhouse nouveau. The interior is flooded with natural light, the decor includes parquet floors and painted wood pendant light fixtures, and the restaurant only serves humanely raised beef, much of it Limousin cattle that comes from the restaurant's own farm on Whidbey Island. Erickson was inspired to open Bateau after dining at *Le Severo*, a Parisian restaurant famed for steak frites, and the name ("boat" in French), is a nod to Erickson's *the Boat Street Café*, which she closed in 2015. Offerings are written on a chalkboard menu and only one or two of each cut is available per night. Look for little-known steaks like chuck eye, underblade, *Gracilis*, and petit top sirloin that are cooked in steal pans and served with compound butters like seaweed or anchovy. Starters like beef neck pastrami tartine with fermented garlic and turmeric aioli are equally delicious. 1040 E. Union St.; 206-900-8699; restaurantbateau.com.



Courtesy B&B Butchers

B&B Butchers & Restaurant, Houston

After more than ten years working for steakhouse heavyweights such as Smith & Wollensky, Benjamin Berg decided to break with the typical steakhouse formula. B&B Butchers & Restaurant feels more casual than the classic steakhouse thanks to its location in a former bakery from the 1920s with exposed brick walls and wood beam ceilings. At the butcher shop, clients can pick up thick cut smoked bacon, brisket, and even bone marrow to take home. The 55-day dry-aged Texas Wagyu from Gearhart Ranch in Marfa, Texas, is the closest thing to actual Japanese Wagyu beef raised in the U.S.: The bulls are descendants of the Tajima cattle bloodline and the grass-fed beef has incredible marbling and intense flavor with notes of blue cheese. *1814 Washington Ave.; 713-862-1814; bbbutchers.com.*



John Dole

Born & Raised, San Diego

This ambitious steakhouse, which opens in June, touts all the hallmarks of today's third wave steakhouses—vegan steaks and tartars, an indoor/outdoor design, beef sourced from Creekstone Farms, one of the nation's most highly respected Black Angus beef farms—but borrows a bit of decadence from the traditional steakhouse mold: Consider the private label caviar and the largest collection of scotch by the glass in the city. Jason McLeod, also executive chef at San Diego's Ironside Fish & Oyster, will present an in-house dry-aging program that goes beyond classic cuts with 20-day dry-aged duck, pork, and lamb. (He previously earned two Michelin stars working at Ria at the now shuttered Elysian in Chicago.) The project, designed by BASILE Studio, is a restoration of an original 1930s drugstore and soda fountain, and includes a 45-foot-long Italian green marble cocktail bar, custom parquet flooring, and a sprawling terrace with copper fireplaces, an herb garden, and views of downtown San Diego. *1909 India Street*; consortiumholdings.com.



Neil John Burger / Courtesy The Barn

The Barn, Evanston

Few have had as much exposure to the American steakhouse as Amy Morton, who grew up working side by side with her father, the co-founder of Morton's The Steakhouse, for more than two decades. When it came time to open her own steakhouse she took what she learned and added her own twist. Morton considers The Barn, opened in Evanston in November 2016, to be a modern “meaterie” where the sole focus isn't beef, but the best quality meat she can find. Alongside Prime Heritage Black Angus beef from MEAT BY LINZ, a fourth generation family butcher in Northern Indiana, guests can also order roasted duck and bison Bolognese. Rib eye, New York strip, or filet mignon steaks are finished with a red wine demi-glace and can be paired with updated takes on classic side dishes like German butterball potatoes with bone marrow and creamed Swiss chard with cippolini onions. The restaurant, located down an alley in a 19th-century brick horse stable, tempers an industrial-chic design with a nostalgic twinge, courtesy of oxblood leather booths and photograph of Amy's father as a child on a pony next to the bar. *Rear 1016*, Church St.; 847-868-8041; thebarnevanston.com.



Audrey Ma

Mr. Lyons, Palm Springs

This steakhouse designed by San Francisco–based Brent Kanbayashi opened in 2015 in the iconic Lyons English Grille. It takes its design cues from the classic steakhouse—plush velvet booths, Italian marble floors, leather club chairs—but adds a casual California style: Jackets and ties are not required and the restaurant offers two outdoor dining patios and a bocce ball court. Beef comes from Snake River Farms and Double R Ranch, two of the country’s best prime cut purveyors. Try the M&M, which stands for meat and magnum. It includes every cut of meat available on the menu and a magnum of Champagne (\$500). 233 E. Palm Canyon Dr.; 760-327-1551; mryonsp.com.



Laurie Peacock

Boeufhaus, Chicago

Boeufhaus opened in steak loving Chicago in 2015. The beef-centric restaurant and butcher shop located in the city's Ukrainian Village, a neighborhood that was filled with German and Eastern European butchers and delicatessens in the early 1900s, serves Creekstone Farms beef and uses smaller local farms for pork, lamb and goat. The dining room feels like a Parisian brasserie with brick walls and bistro-style tables and chairs, but meat is at the core of the restaurant. A la carte steaks include a 55-day dry aged rib eye and a tender filet mignon, complemented by sides like mustard spätzle and boeuf fat fries. *1012 N Western Ave., Chicago; 773-661-2116; boeufhaus.com.*



Jesse David Harris

Bowery Meat Company, New York City

Bowery Meat Company in New York City's East Village serves mainly prime, dry-aged meat sourced from Pat LaFrieda, a highly respected third generation meat wholesaler in New Jersey. All steaks are cooked in a broiler at an extremely high temperature that results in the perfect charbroiled crust. Guests go for the tomahawk rib eye, the duck lasagna, and the broiled oysters, but the most unique cut may be the Bowery Steak, an American Wagyu rib eye cap that's rolled, tied, and cut into medallions. It melts in your mouth and is served on a bed of whipped potatoes with salsa verde. Vegetable and potato side dishes like sour cream and onion hash browns and creamed spinach complement the main dishes. 9 E. First St.; New York; 212-460-5255; bowerymeatcompany.com.



Leah Nash / Getty Images

Laurelhurst Market, Portland, Oregon

Portland has been ahead of the curve on many food fronts—small batch coffee, craft beer—and so it's apropos that the updated steakhouse got an early start there, too. Laurelhurst Market opened in 2009 when having a full service butcher shop along side a restaurant still seemed revolutionary. "It's always been a focus to offer some cuts that don't get as much love as they should," says co-owner David Kreifels. Laurelhurst Market serves rib eye and bone-in New York strip, but in lieu of tenderloin, there's Teres Major from the shoulder and heavily marbled Denver steak. All meat, sourced from small family-owned ranches like Brandt Beef and Rosewood Wagyu, are cut the day prior and allowed to air dry in a cooler for 24 hours. Rather than a simple pat of butter, a la carte steaks are paired with a specific accompaniment. The rib eye, for example, is served with avocado puree and pieces of candied jalapeño to cut through the richness of the meat. The restaurant, a former convenience store, is pure Pacific Northwest with sliding glass doors along the front that can be opened in spring and summer. 3155 E. Burnside; 503-206-3097; laurelhurstmarket.com.



Courtesy Belcampo

Belcampo, San Francisco

Belcampo Meat Co., an organic farm and meat processing facility featuring pens designed by humane handling expert Temple Grandin in Northern California, has been setting the bar for compassionately raised meat since 2012. It has opened seven butcher shops throughout California including a butchery and full service restaurant in San Francisco's Russian Hill. At the farm, animals are rotated on a daily basis and graze on a range of grasses, grains, and legumes, a process that shows up in the quality of the beef—especially in dishes like steak tartare (with cornichons, shallots, and egg yolk, steak frites with red wine juice), and a 10-ounce New York strip, served with mashed potatoes and pancetta braised kale. The burger, a steakhouse staple, made with a half-pound of grass-fed beef and topped with cheddar, caramelized onions, and butter lettuce, is one of the country's best. *1998 Polk St., San Francisco; 415-660-5573; belcampo.com.*

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