



# 101 American Foods to Try in the U.S.A.

**Tips, suggestions and recipes about  
101+ American desserts, sweets, main dishes, snacks and drinks  
for those new to American cuisine and food culture**

**By Sara Rosso**





Dear Reader,

Living in another country (Italy), I often think about, talk about, or make reference to American (USA) foods with non-Americans. Many of my Italian friends have asked me for a list of American foods they should try when visiting the United States of America – here are my suggestions:

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**\*\*Important Note\*\*** This is not an exhaustive list! These foods are also **not the most healthy or best-tasting food that the USA has to offer**. I know that. Outside of this list there are wonderful, healthy and delicious food to be found in the USA.

This list is a mix of **notable, iconic, and classic foods**, and what I think a newcomer to American foods should try at least once, in America, or at least made by an American directly for them (none of those themed restaurants in other countries, please!) so as to understand some of our cultural references and films (*how can you explain a Twinkie to someone if they've never eaten it?*)

In the end there are more than 101 items on this list, and I expect it to grow! I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did compiling it.

**What would you add to this list? Is there an iconic or famous American food that you'd recommend a foreign visitor try?**

**This ebook is free, but if you'd like to show your appreciation, [you can make a donation to me via PayPal!](#)**

Grazie,  
**Sara Rosso**

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## Desserts and Sweets

- Ambrosia fruit salad** - not that different from jello salad, this creamy, sweet salad is made of sour cream/whipped cream/ marshmallows and mixed with oranges, pineapple and coconut and is served cold/chilled. (img by [Marshall Astor](#))  
**where to try:** *barbecue, supermarket, at home.*  
**[Recipes:** [ambrosia](#) - [modern ambrosia](#)]
- Apple pie, and pies in general** – we have a phrase “...as American as apple pie” because we have so many pies and variations. A buttery crust, and a delicious filling. (img by [romanlily](#))  
**where to try:** *bakeries and specialty pie stores / restaurants, at home*  
**[Recipes:** [pie crust](#) – [apple pie](#) – [hundreds of pie recipes](#)]
- Banana (nut) bread** – a sweet bread that is usually made in a small loaf (like a pound cake) or in muffin form. Walnuts are traditionally used as the nuts, but you can add chocolate, peanut butter or other nuts as desired. (img by [TransplantedVTer](#))  
**where to try:** *bakeries, some restaurants, at home.*  
**[Recipes:** [banana bread](#) – [nutella banana muffins](#) - [banana bread bakeoff recipes](#)]
- Black and White cookies** - cakey cookies iced equally with chocolate and vanilla icing - you'll have to decide which side you like better. (img by [bionicgrrl](#))  
**where to try:** *bakeries in NYC, on the East Coast, at home.*  
**[Recipes:** [black and white cookies](#) - [black and white cookies](#)]
- Blueberry muffin** – a sweet morning bread dotted with blueberries, normally served in a paper wrapper/cup, similar to cupcakes but not considered a cupcake. (img by [kitsunebabe](#))  
**where to try:** *bakeries, supermarkets, at home.*  
**[Recipes:** [blueberry muffins](#) – [blueberry muffins](#) – [blueberry muffin cake](#)]
- Brownies** – these chocolaty treats come in two varieties: fudgy or chewy, and most people are in one camp or the other (me: chewy). Brownies are sometimes frosted with a chocolate frosting, and often include walnuts or other mix-ins (chocolate chunks, etc.) in the batter. Bonus: get a warm one with a scoop of ice cream on top as dessert. (img by [rachel is coconut&lime](#))  
**where to try:** *bakeries and restaurants, at home.*  
**[Recipes:** [brownies](#) - [dark chocolate brownies](#) – [cheesecake brownies](#)]
- Candy Canes** – these cane-shaped hard candy treats come in all sizes and are plentiful around Christmas – their peppermint flavor (other flavors, too!) is quintessential of the holiday spirit and a very popular mint flavor in general in the U.S. (img by [Jenah Crump](#))  
**where to try:** *supermarket, candy store.*
- Caramel apple** – take an apple, stick a stick in it, and cover it in caramel, and you’ve got a classic Halloween treat now eaten round the year. The first bite is definitely the most difficult to make. (img by [QuintanaRoo](#)) **where to try:** *at a fair, in the fall, or make it at home.* **[Recipe:** [caramel apple](#)]



9. **Cheesecake** – a graham cracker or cookie and butter crust with a creamy fresh cheese filling, often topped with fresh fruit and/or sauce. Can be baked or unbaked. (img by [zingyyellow](#)) **where to try:** bakeries, specialty restaurants (like [The Cheesecake Factory](#)) or make it at home [**Recipes:** [cheesecake](#) – [cheesecake](#) – [sour cream cheesecake](#)]



10. **Chocolate chip cookies** – there's nothing that can compare to a warm, chocolate chip cookie straight from the oven. The "original" is the [Toll House chocolate chip cookie](#) is the original. (img by [esthereggy](#))



**where to try:** bakeries, specialty cookie shops (like [Mrs. Field's Cookies](#)), or at home.

[**Recipes:** [chocolate chip cookies](#) – [chocolate chip cookies](#) – [mesquite chocolate chip cookies](#)]

11. **Cobbler, Berry/Fruit** - a fruit filling (berries, apples, etc.) is poured over a sweet batter and baked - it rises and fills in the cracks between the fruit. (img by [sean dreilinger](#))



**where to try:** at bakeries, at home.

[**Recipes:** [blueberry-strawberry cobbler](#) – [peach cobbler](#) – [berry cobbler](#)]

12. **Cranberries** – [cranberries](#) are a fascinating little fruit that is quite sour but when sweetened are delicious. Try them in baked goods, in a sauce form with a turkey dinner or sandwich, or as juice. (img by [Muffet](#))



**where to try:** berries/juice – any supermarket, baked goods in bakeries and at home.

[**Recipes:** [cranberry-apricot muffins](#) – [cranberry sorbet](#) – [cranberry sauce](#) – [cranberry sauce](#)]

13. **Cupcakes** – fabulously popular in my childhood, these tiny cupcakes are topped with sugary/buttery [frosting](#) and presented in a paper wrapper "cup" are now are for grown-ups, too, and there are even entire bakeries dedicated entirely to them. (img by [wendycopley](#))



**where to try:** bakeries, specialty cupcake bakeries (like [Sprinkles](#) or [Magnolia](#)), at home.

[**Read:** [Cupcake takes the cake blog](#)]

14. **Dairy Queen Blizzard** – long before the McFlurry, a small fast food chain decided you could put anything you wanted in your ice cream, and blend it up so you had a thick, personalized ice cream shake. I still think it's one of the best available by a big chain, but there are lots of diners where you can make custom milkshakes! Try yours with Reese's Peanut Butter cups or Oreo cookies! (img by [jfer](#))



**where to try:** [Dairy Queen fast food restaurants](#).

15. **Doughnuts / Donuts** – glazed, raised, cake, claw – this sweet treat with a hole is fried or baked and is eaten mainly for breakfast across the country. You probably have a favorite donut and you just don't know it yet. (img by [bunchofpants](#))



**where to try:** specialty donut stores (like [Krispy Kreme](#), [Dunkin' Donuts](#), or [Winchell's](#))

[**Recipes:** [baked doughnuts](#) – [raised doughnuts](#) – [doughnuts](#)]

16. **Fluffer Nutter** – peanut butter and marshmallow creme in the same sandwich - what's not to like? It's also proposed as the official Massachusetts state sandwich. [Spread the peanut butter first!](#) (img by [jensteete](#))



**where to try:** at home.

[Recipes: [banana bread fluffernutter](#)]

17. **French toast** – Thick slices of bread or baguette, dipped in beaten egg/milk/spices and fried in a pan and topped with maple syrup means you have a hearty breakfast! (img by [roboppy](#))

**where to try:** breakfast restaurants, at home.

[Recipes: [basic french toast](#) – [easy french toast](#) – [classic french toast](#)]



18. **Fruitcake** - another controversial pick, the controversy is exactly why you should know fruitcake. This dense cake is dotted with nuts and candied fruits and usually soaked in liquor/rum and is the butt of many jokes as being hard as a rock, lasting forever, growing in your closet.

**where to try:** at a holiday party, at home.

[Recipes: [holiday fruitcake](#) - [dark fruitcake](#)]



19. **Fudge** – not to be mistaken with brownies, this dense chocolate is often made during the holiday times and given away to loved ones. I have a favorite recipe that I make with marshmallow creme but the main ingredients in fudge are butter, sugar and chocolate! (img by [jkblacker](#))

**where to try:** chocolate and candy shops, at home.

[Recipes: [baked fudge](#) - [fantasy-ish fudge](#) - [muscovado fudge](#)]



20. **Funnel cake** – a “cake” whose shape is not a funnel, but refers to the way it’s made – poured through a funnel directly into hot oil and fried, then topped with powdered sugar and sometimes jam, whipped cream or fresh fruit. A classic fair food. (img by [joits](#))

**where to try them:** some ballparks, at a street or county fair.

[Recipe: [funnel cake](#)]



21. **Gingerbread cookies/house** – a cookie made with spices, mainly ginger, its “gingerbread man” or “gingerbread house” forms are famous around Christmas time, especially with a glass of milk. (img by [Stuck in Customs](#))

**where to try:** at a bakery, or make it at home.

[Recipes: [gingerbread](#) / [gingersnap](#)]



22. **Ice cream sundae / Banana split** - the ice cream sundae has a [controversial history](#), but it has several consistent components: (any flavor - vanilla is popular) ice cream, whipped cream, some sort of sauce (caramel, berry, fudge/chocolate), nuts and maybe a (maraschino) cherry on top. Served inside a split banana, it's a banana split. Each person makes their own according to their tastes. My favorite: hot brownie, caramel sauce, whipped cream, chopped peanuts. (img by [zorbs](#))

**where to try:** ice cream parlors and stores, restaurants, at home.

[Recipes: [chocolate chip cookie bowl sundae](#) - [vanilla ice cream](#) - [hot brownie sundae](#)]



23. **Jello / Jello salad** - a gelatinous, colorful sugar treat, as kids we eat it in its "pure form" for dessert, and it appears in some family gatherings in a "salad" form - sometimes with cottage cheese, cream, carrots, or other fruit. Each family will make it different, though. Also, Jello shots (chilled jello with vodka) are a favorite at college parties. This picture is demonstrative of [how many varieties of Jello molds](#) there are. (img by [Victoria Belanger](#))

**where to try:** at a barbecue, supermarket, at home.

[Recipes: [double berry jello salad](#) - [lime jello salad](#)]



24. **Oatmeal cookies** with California raisins and walnuts – a dense and craggy cookie, oatmeal cookies are usually made with raisins and walnuts and are slightly cinnamony. (img by [esthereggy](#))  
**where to try:** bakeries, at home.  
 [Recipes: [oatmeal raisin cookies](#) - [oatmeal cherry white chocolate cookies](#)]
- 
25. **Pancakes** – a sweet, flat bread that is cooked in a skillet/frying pan, and covered with maple syrup (traditional), butter, fresh fruit or other sugary-syrup. They are served in "stacks" - a "short" stack will be only a few pancakes. (img by [Strausser](#))  
**where to try:** at home, IHOP, or other breakfast restaurants.  
 [Recipes: [pancakes](#) - [blueberry buttermilk pancakes](#) - [pumpkin pancakes](#) - [cinnamon pancakes](#)]
- 
26. **Peanut Butter Cups** - Peanut butter, and chocolate, together? It's heaven. The most well-known brand is [Reese's](#). The slightly-salty peanut butter filling contrasts wonderfully with the chocolate. This is one of the things I usually bring with me back to Italy. (img by [Bob Fornal](#))  
**where to try:** supermarkets, at home after you've tasted the original.  
 [Recipes: [white chocolate peanut butter cups](#) - [homemade peanut butter cups](#)]
- 
27. **Pecan pie** – nutty pecans and a buttery, caramel-sugary filling make this pie a sticky gooey mass. It's most popular in the south. (img by [pierreotsomepeople](#))  
**where to try:** bakeries (especially in the south/southwest), at home.  
 [Recipes: [grandmother's pecan pie](#) - [pecan pie](#) - [classic pecan pie](#)]
- 
28. **Popcorn, Caramel and Kettle Corn** – from an old-fashioned air popper, topped with butter you melt yourself or in that little tray that sits above the popper, or made in huge cast iron kettles that is both salty and sweet (kettle corn), or covered in sticky caramel (caramel corn). (img by [DawnVGilmore](#))  
**where to try:** fairs and festivals, at home. If you must buy [Cape Cod Popcorn](#) is pretty good.  
 [Recipes: [caramel corn](#) - [chile lime tequila popcorn](#) - [homemade kettle corn](#)]
- 
29. **Pumpkin pie** – in the autumn there's no better time to eat a clove / cinnamon / nutmeg – spiced pumpkin pie with whipped cream. Or so I hear (not a pie lover). This pie makes an appearance at many a holiday event. (img by [jamesjyu](#))  
**where to try:** bakeries or supermarkets with a bakery department, at home.  
 [Recipes: [silky smooth pumpkin pie](#) - [pumpkin pie](#) - [pumpkin pie](#)]
- 
30. **Red velvet cake** – more popular in the south, and made with copious amounts of red food coloring, this chocolate cake is often layered and paired with a buttercream / cream cheese frosting. (img by [La Mia Cucina](#))  
**where to try:** bakeries in the south, at home.  
 [Recipes: [red velvet cake](#) - [red velvet cake](#) - [red velvet cupcakes](#)]
- 
31. **Rice Krispie Treats** – made with Kellogg's Rice Krispies cereal, marshmallows and butter, a sticky treat that is the first thing to disappear at bake sales and birthday parties. (img by [rachel is coconut&lime](#))  
**where to try:** bake sales, or at home.  
 [Recipes: [the original](#) - [rice crispy treats](#) - [caramelized brown butter rice krispies treats](#)]
- 

32. **S'mores** – anyone who has ever gone camping has eaten a S'more (short for I'd like some more) – graham crackers sandwich a fire-roasted marshmallow and a slice of chocolate. (img by [Colin Purrington](#))



**where to try:** buy the ingredients at a supermarket and do it at home / while camping.

[[Recipe: history of S'mores](#)]

33. **Sugar (cutout) cookies** – Thousands of shapes and ways to decorate, sugar cookies can be found for any occasion or holiday. Not as rich as butter cookies, these low, slightly-cakey cookies are then decorated with different colors of icing and colored sugar. (img by [Kitchen Wench](#))



**where to try:** bakery, at home.

[[Recipes: sugar cookies](#) – [ghost sugar cookies](#) – [5 tricks to perfect sugar cookies](#)]

34. **Twinkie** – around since the 1930s, this vanilla creme-filled shortcake-like treat from Hostess has been widely consumed, but perhaps more widely known for the [urban legend regarding its incredibly long shelf life](#) (it was in Wall-E, too!). The original banana-creme has now come back as a limited edition flavor. (img by [foonus](#))



**where to try:** supermarket, and then at home after you've tasted the original.

[[Recipes: gluten-free twinkies](#) – [homemade twinkies](#) – [homemade twinkies](#)]

35. **Whoopie Pie** – more like a cookie/cake sandwich than an actual pie, supposedly the name comes from your exclamation of "Whoopie!" upon finding one of these two chocolate cakes sandwiching a creme filling. (img by [joyosity](#))



**where to try:** in Pennsylvania/East Coast, at home.

[[Recipes: whoopie pie](#) - [strawberry whoopie pies](#) - [lemon whoopie pies](#)]

36. **Yams / sweet potatoes and marshmallows** – these sweet, orange potatoes are usually eaten at Thanksgiving and/or Christmastime, with marshmallows baked right on top. Marshmallows are a point of avid controversy among lovers and non-lovers, so you should try them both ways to decide which kind you like best. (img by [dougww](#))



**where to try:** at a Thanksgiving meal, at home.

[[Recipes: mashed sweet potatoes](#)]

37. **Zucchini bread** – who could take a green vegetable and make it into a dessert? Only in America. Another sweet bread in loaf or muffin form, made with shredded zucchini and nuts. (img by [Vanessa-Pike Russell](#))



**where to try:** bakeries, at home.

[[Recipes: zucchini bread](#) – [zucchini bread](#) – [zucchini and chocolate bread](#) – [double chocolate zucchini bread](#)]

## Main Dishes and Savoury Snacks

1. **American breakfast** – The classic American breakfast: eggs (scrambled, fried, over-easy), meat (bacon/sausage), potatoes (hash browns/home fries) (see below), and one or more kinds of bread (bagel/toast/English muffin/pancakes). Add some fruit juice and/or a glass of milk to it and you've got a complete meal that will probably fulfill for your dietary needs for the entire day. (img by [ricardo.martins](#))



**where to try:** at home, breakfast restaurants like [IHOP](#).

2. **Bagel (w/ cream cheese or lox)** A New-York style [bagel](#) has become the staple of many a “quick breakfast” – a bread that is boiled first and then baked, with a tight skin and a chewy inside. Try it with flavored cream cheese, or lox, smoked salmon. Bonus: “Everything” bagel with poppy and sesame seeds, garlic and rock salt. (img by [yumarama](#))



**where to try:** *bagel shops (like Noah’s), or some supermarkets that make them fresh in their bakery department.*

**[Recipes:** [bagels](#) - [mini bagels](#) - [bagels](#)]

3. **Baked Potato** – take an entire potato with the skin on, scrub it down, poke holes in it, and bake it in the oven. Then, slice it open and top it with your choice of butter, sour cream, chives, cheese, bacon, and more! There are entire stations devoted to topping a baked potato in some buffets. Bonus: try a twice-baked potato or baked potato soup! (img by [stefano a](#))



**where to try:** *in restaurants or at home.*

**[Recipes:** [twice-baked potato](#) - [baked potato soup](#)]

4. **Barbecue (BBQ) Baked Beans** – a staple at any barbecue, baked beans are a mix of different beans, a little sweet, and perhaps a little bacon-y, too! (img by [me, Sara Rosso](#))



**where to try:** *barbecue restaurants, at a BBQ, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [barbecue baked beans](#) - [hot and smoky baked beans](#) - [three bean baked beans](#) ]

5. **Barbecue (BBQ) Ribs** – Barbecue pork ribs, to be exact, are rubbed with spices and smoked or slow-cooked. Then they are smothered in homemade barbecue sauce and eaten with your hands and all that remains in the end are the bones. Very, very, messy. Sometimes referred to as short, pork or baby back ribs. (img by [seanomatopoeia](#))



**where to try:** *barbecue restaurants or at home.*

**[Recipes:** [baby back ribs](#) - [braised short ribs](#)]

6. **Barbecue (BBQ) Sandwich** – shredded chicken, beef or pork is mixed with barbecue sauce and served inside a bun or bread, sometimes with coleslaw inside, too. (img by [dalboz17](#))



**where to try:** *barbecue restaurants, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [pulled pork](#) - [BBQ pork](#) - [BBQ chicken](#)]

7. **Black-eyed peas** – before the musical group came along, black-eyed peas were known for other reasons! Not really peas, these beans are eaten in the south at New Year’s for good luck, and are a part of southern culture. (img by [Erik Mallinson](#))



**where to try:** *restaurants or at home.*

**[Recipe:** [black-eyed peas salsa](#) - [southern style black-eyed peas](#) - [indian spiced black-eyed peas](#) - [creole black-eyed peas](#)]

8. **Biscuits and Cream Gravy** (preferably sausage gravy) – something to be eaten at any time of day, but also in the morning, a warm, steamy biscuit that you can taste the butter in as it cuts through the cream gravy (with sausage pieces!) is bliss. (img by [LauraFries.com](#))



**where to try:** *various (breakfast, barbecue, home cooking) restaurants*

**[Recipes:** [biscuits and gravy](#) - [buttermilk biscuits](#) - [biscuits](#) - [biscuits with sausage gravy](#)]

9. **Breakfast burrito** – Take the classic American breakfast, and wrap it in a flour tortilla with some salsa. A mobile way to enjoy your breakfast! (img by [Marshall Astor](#))  
*where to try:* IHOP, or other breakfast restaurant, at home.  
[Recipes: [breakfast burritos](#) - [breakfast burrito](#) - [egg burritos](#) - [breakfast tacos](#)]
10. **Brisket** – the cut of meat most used for barbecue – it’s rubbed with spices and smoked or slow-cooked and then sliced or shredded. (img by [another pint please](#))  
*where to try:* barbecue restaurants, in the South, at home.  
[Recipes: [oven-baked brisket](#) - [texas barbecue beef brisket](#) - [beer oven-barbecued brisket](#)]
11. **Caesar salad** – romaine lettuce, crunchy croutons and a lemony-peppery-egg dressing are characteristic of this salad which is found on almost any large restaurant’s menu. (img by [Caro Wallis](#))  
*where to try:* restaurants, at home.  
[Recipes: [chicken caesar salad](#) - [artichoke caesar salad](#) - [vegan caesar salad](#)]
12. **Catfish** – Often breaded in cornmeal and fried, or blackened. Catfish is most enjoyable if you actually see it before you eat it, so you see those funky whiskers and get the “cat” reference. (img by [ehfisher](#))  
*where to try:* in fish restaurants, at home  
[Recipe: [fried catfish](#)]
13. **Chef or Cobb Salad**– a salad isn’t a salad unless it includes the kitchen sink. The “chef” salad usually means the chef put what was available or left over in it – including meat, cheese, vegetables and other treats. A Cobb salad has a more specific formula ([Cobb salad on about.com](#)) (img by [nemo’s great uncle](#))  
*where to try:* restaurants across the country, at home.  
[Recipe: [Cobb salad](#)]
14. **Chicken Fried Steak** – one of my “discoveries” in college – a steak is pounded thin, dipped in batter and fried like chicken...but it’s a steak! And it’s marvelous. (img by [KB35](#))  
*where to try:* barbecue restaurants, in Texas, at home.  
[Recipes: [chicken fried steak](#)]
15. **Chicken parmigiano** (or parmesan)- another Italian-American invention – a breaded chicken breast is paired with a tomato sauce (!) and sometimes served over pasta (img by [seriouslygood1](#))  
*where to try:* Italian restaurants, at home.  
[Recipes: [parmesan chicken](#) - [chicken parmigiano](#)]
16. **Chicken pot pie** – a classic “TV dinner” food that was eaten in front of the TV in the 70s and 80s but still eaten today. A savory crust pie contains chicken, potatoes and a few other vegetables, and topped with the same crust and baked. (img by [helga’s lobster stew](#))  
*where to try:* in a restaurant, at home.  
[Recipe: [chicken pot pie](#) - [deep dish pot pie](#) - [chicken pot pie](#)]
17. **Chicken / Buffalo Wings** – those little [chicken wings](#) are breaded, fried and then covered in wing “sauce” – often ranging from slightly spicy to nuclear hot. Some restaurants will actually provide a hot scale and make you wear gloves to protect yourself. (img by [rick](#))  
*where to try:* chicken wing specialty restaurants or barbecue restaurants, at home. Often offered as an appetizer in many other restaurants.  
[Recipes: [chicken wings](#) - [buffalo wings](#)]



18. **Chili (con carne)** – a thick and often spicy mix of red kidney beans, tomatoes, ground beef, and chili peppers, served hot and usually with cornbread. [It's the official dish of Texas!](#) (img by [metzecki](#))  
**where to try:** *restaurants around the country, barbecue / Texan restaurants.*



[**Recipes:** [beef / 3 bean chili](#) - [barack obama chili](#) - [7 chile chili](#)]

19. **Clam chowder (New England and Manhattan style)** – A hearty soup made with potatoes, clams, and lots of cream (New England style) or with a tomato base (Manhattan), this is a favorite soup for many Americans. Friday is the day that most restaurants have this soup as Soup of the Day. (img by [purploony](#))



**where to try:** *in restaurants (especially Fridays), especially on the waterfront. Try it in a sourdough breadbowl in SF at [Boudin Bakery!](#)*

[**Recipes:** [clam chowder](#) - [new england clam chowder](#) - [calamity chowder](#)]

20. **Coleslaw** – a fresh salad made with raw shredded cabbage, carrots, and celery with the addition of mayonnaise to make it creamy. Usually eaten with BBQ. (img by [coconut&lime](#))



**where to try:** *anywhere, at supermarket deli counters, hopefully at a local BBQ, or at fried chicken fast food chains [KFC](#) or [Popeye's](#).*

[**Recipes:** [crunchy coleslaw](#) - [blue cheese coleslaw](#) - [coleslaw](#)]

21. **Corn bread** – a cakey bread made with corn flour, sometimes with corn kernels in it. To be eaten with BBQ, chili (below) or other southern food. (img by [food in mouth](#))



**where to try:** [make cornbread at home](#), *restaurants in the south*

[**Recipes:** [corn bread](#) - [southern corn bread](#) - [beans and corn bread](#)]

22. **Corn Dog** – a hot dog on a stick, dipped in corn meal batter and deep fried, topped with a little mustard and/or ketchup. So good. (img by [jpwbee](#))



**where to try:** *fairs and festivals, seaside locations, at home (w/a deep fryer).*

[**Recipes:** [corn dogs at home](#) - [oven baked corn dogs](#)]

23. **Corn on the cob** (and grilled!) – one of the best foods in the planet, in my opinion – eat boiled or grilled sweet corn directly off the cob with a little butter and salt / pepper and other spices melted on top first. (img by [stevendepolo](#))



**where to try:** *at home, at a BBQ, fair, or restaurant.*

24. **Dungeness crab** – perhaps one of my favorite things in the world, I think a good Dungeness crab needs no adornment, or just some simple cocktail sauce on the side for the big pieces. Just crack it open with your hands and eat. (img by [Zeetz Jones](#))



**where to try:** *on the West coast, in a fish restaurant or on the wharf.*

[**Recipe:** [cocktail sauce](#) - [cocktail sauce](#)]

25. **Egg salad** – boil some eggs, cool them down and chop them into large chunks and mix them with mayonnaise, mustard and other spices, and put it between two slices of bread, and you have an egg salad sandwich! (img by [monkeycat!](#))



**where to try:** *at home*

[**Recipes:** [egg salad](#) - [egg salad](#) - [egg salad](#)]

26. **Fettuccine alfredo** – a dish that’s completely Italian-American (rather than from Italy), a parmigiano/parmesan cheesy-creamy-very-buttery sauce that is generously mixed with fettuccine noodles for a dish that’s on most Italian restaurant menus in America. Sometimes the sauce by itself is used as a dipping sauce for bread. (img by [yuichi.sakuraba](#))



**where to try:** *Italian restaurants, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [fettuccine alfredo](#) - [fettuccine alfredo](#)- [fettucine alfredo](#)]

27. **Fried Calamari** – something that seems to be available across the country as an appetizer is fried calamari. Most Americans like just the rings, and not the legs. (img by [roboppy](#))



**where to try:** *restaurants, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [fried calamari](#) - [frittura di calamari](#)]

28. **Fried Dill Pickles and Okra** – not that similar, but they have a lot in common – two green vegetables full of seeds – dill (sour) pickles sliced, battered and fried, and seedy-silky okra sliced, battered and fried – two better side dishes in the south cannot be found! (img by [coconut&lime](#))



**where to try:** *restaurants in the south, [fried pickles on the east coast](#), at home.*

[**Recipes:** [southern fried okra](#) - [fried okra](#) - [fried dill pickles](#)]

29. **Fried Green Tomatoes** – there is also a movie by the same name – are similar to the above-mentioned fried okra and pickles. Sliced green tomatoes are battered and fried! (img by [coconut&lime](#))



**where to try:** *restaurants in the south, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [fried green tomatoes](#) - [fried green tomatoes](#) - [fried green tomatoes with milk gravy](#)]

30. **Garlic bread** – a must for Italian-American food or at a barbecue, butter and garlic (and sometimes cheese) are spread on a baguette or bread and broiled or grilled. Bonus points: with a roasted garlic head. (img by [surfzone](#))



**where to try:** *Italian-American restaurants, at a BBQ, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [garlic bread](#) - [garlic bread](#)]

31. **Green bean casserole** – another holiday dish, green beans are mixed with milk and mushroom soup, topped with fried onions (from a can!) and baked in the oven. (img by [bengarland](#))



**where to try:** *at a Thanksgiving-holiday dinner, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [green bean casserole](#) - [foodie green bean casserole](#) - [3 mushroom green bean casserole](#)]

32. **Grilled Cheese Sandwich** – a classic comfort food made at home, it can be as simple as two pieces of white bread with some cheddar and buttered on the outside and pan-fried to fancy versions with bacon and pesto. It’s frequently paired with a bowl of tomato soup. (img by [maggiephotos](#))



**where to try:** *make it at home.*

[**Recipes:** [bacon pear grilled cheese](#) - [grilled cheese and honey](#)]

33. **Grits / Hominy** – Soul food, grits is a corn-based dish that is thick in consistency and is often eaten plain or with a little butter. It can be eaten for breakfast/lunch/dinner depending on the way it’s prepared. Hominy is made similarly from a different kind of corn. (img by [flirty kitty](#))



**where to try:** *in the south in restaurants, at home.*

[**Recipe:** [grits recipes](#) - [grits with corn and onion greens](#)]

34. **Hamburger & French Fries** – with more than just cheese on it! A real American hamburger is personal, and exactly the way you want it. You want fresh tomatoes, bread-and-butter pickles, lettuce, caramelized onions, mushrooms, bacon or Swiss cheese on it? Just ask. Make it your own. (img by [vanessa pike-russell](#))



**where to try:** everywhere, at home.

[**Read:** [A Hamburger Today](#) blog – [20 Hamburgers to eat before you Die.](#)]

35. **Home fries / hashbrowns / Tater tots** – at breakfast, potatoes are shredded and pan-fried to get a crust (*hashbrowns*) or cubed and mixed with seasonings in a skillet (*home fries*), or made into little cylinders and fried ([Tater tots](#)). Tater tots are often eaten with non-breakfast dishes, too. (img by [mistersmed](#))



**where to try:** IHOP, or other breakfast restaurant, at home.

[**Recipes:** [home fries](#) – [home fries](#) ]

36. **Hot Dogs & Sausage** – this needs its own category – kielbasa, andouille, bratwurst, summer sausage, pork, chicken, turkey, pesto, artichokes, hot peppers, sweet, breakfast, Italian – you need to try as many types of sausage as you come across. They are integral! (img by [pkingdesign](#))



**where to try:** supermarket, at the ballpark, street vendors, specialty sausage locations (like [Rosamund's in SF](#)), BBQ or breakfast restaurants, at home.

[**Recipes:** [how to make homemade sausage](#) – [homemade sausage](#)]

37. **Hushpuppies** – a deep-fried ball of cornmeal and spices that usually accompanies barbecue and southern foods like catfish. (img by [The Rocketeer](#))



**where to try:** restaurants in the south, at home.

[**Recipes:** [hush puppies](#) – [hush puppies](#)]

38. **Macaroni and Cheese** – Mac'n'Cheese Definitely one of my favorite comfort foods ever, elbow pasta or other short pasta is mixed with cheddar and other cheeses, butter, and milk, and served immediately or baked. From basic to fancy, everyone has their favorite recipe. (img by [Tammy Green](#))



**where to try:** restaurants, at home.

[**Recipes:** [macaroni & cheese](#) – [fondue mac and cheese](#) – [3 cheese macaroni and cheese](#) – [orgasmic mac 'n' cheese](#)]

39. **Macaroni Pasta Salad** – a classic “picnic” food, this cold/room-temperature salad is made with elbow pasta and a mayonnaise dressing and can include anything from tuna / shrimp, olives, pickles, fresh onions, celery, etc., depending on who's making it. Often sold in supermarkets, too, but I think homemade tastes better. (img by [kumquatgirl](#))



**where to try:** at a BBQ/picnic, at home.

[**Recipes:** [macaroni salad](#) – [shrimp macaroni salad](#)]

40. **Mashed Potatoes** – boil potatoes, mash them with butter and milk/cream (and garlic!) and you've got a favorite dish for turkey and holiday dinners, steaks and roasts. With or without skins? You decide. (img by [coconut&lime](#))



**where to try:** restaurants, at home.

[**Recipes:** [garlic mashed potatoes](#) – [creamy mashed potatoes](#) – [extra creamy mashed potatoes](#)]

41. **Meatloaf** – a classic way to “dress up” ground beef into a big loaf of meat, bread, and other spices. Each family has their own version. (img by [su-lin](#))



**where to try:** *some home-cooking restaurants or preferably in someone’s house, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [cajun meatloaf](#) - [meatloaf](#) - [horseradish meatloaf](#)]

42. **Omelet** - at breakfast, a “Denver” omelet – bell peppers, onions and ham with cheese is a classic, but omelets again are as you want them – beaten eggs folded in half over mushrooms, spinach, meat, or other things and of course, cheese. (img by [pacificbro](#))



**where to try:** *breakfast restaurants, hotels, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [omelette](#) - [skinny omelette](#) - [spring omelette](#)]

43. **Onion Rings** – not those constituted onion rings but real, whole thick onion rings breaded and fried to a crisp, served alongside a hamburger or a steak. (img by [Adam Kuban](#))



**where to try:** *in a restaurant or burger joint, at home or wherever they have a deep fryer!*

**[Recipe:** [fried onion rings](#) - [onion strings](#)]

44. **Pastrami** – a sandwich meat that is served hot or cold – [pastrami](#) is beef is brined and then smoked, usually the outside is peppered. (img by [stevendepolo](#))



**where to try:** *at home, any number of specialty sandwich places (a few chains: Togo’s, Quizno’s) or delicatessens / supermarkets that sell it*

**[Read:** [on pastrami](#)]

45. **Pot Roast** - a hearty winter meal – a large slab of meat is first browned on all sides, and then “roasted” (braised) on the stovetop together with a few stew-like vegetables like carrots, potatoes, celery, and onions. (img by [subspace](#))



**where to try:** *at home*

**[Recipes:** [pot roast](#) - [pot roast](#) - [stove-top pot roast](#) - [mom's pot roast](#)]

46. **Ranch dressing** – this “buttermilk” dressing for salads has made its way into uses and applications in parts of America – on pizza, as a fresh vegetable dip, and to help cool down the aforementioned chicken wings! (img by [ubikiberry](#))



**where to try:** *supermarket, in a restaurant, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [buttermilk dressing](#) - [homemade ranch dressing](#)]

47. **Rocky Mountain Oysters** : bull/buffalo testicles, breaded and fried (also called Prairie Oysters) – sometimes they are given to an unsuspecting eater and then told later (by their friends, of course)! (img by [Sklathill](#))



**where to try:** *in some southwest restaurants / county fairs, or at [The Big Texan](#) in Amarillo, Texas (that’s where I ate them!)*

48. **Scalloped Potatoes** – a winter side dish, potatoes are sliced, layered with cheese, butter and cream and topped with breadcrumbs and baked in the oven. (img by [tofutti break](#))



**where to try:** *in a restaurant, or make it at home.*

**[Recipes:** [scalloped potatoes](#) - [vegan scalloped potatoes](#)]

49. **Sloppy Joes** – a classic “kid’s” food – ground beef is mixed with spices and tomato sauce and served on buns. The “sloppy” part comes from how much mess you’ll make! (img by [su-lin](#))



**where to try:** *buy a mix like Manwich in the supermarket or make it at home.*

**[Recipes:** [sloppy joes](#) - [homemade sloppy joes](#) - [san francisco sloppy joes](#)]

50. **Submarine (or Hero or Hoagie) sandwich** – the American sandwich can never have “enough” and are very personal – lettuce, cheese, tomatoes, veggies, olives, hot peppers, sprouts, sauces and creams – whatever you want on it, it works. Get some interesting bread while you’re at it (like [dutch crunch](#)). (img by [barron](#))



**where to try:** *at home, any number of specialty sandwich places (a few chains: Togo’s, Quizno’s) or delicatessens*

51. **Turkey w/stuffing** – a turkey with stuffing is perhaps the most iconic of American meals (after barbecue!) and is used at Thanksgiving and often Christmas. A bread “stuffing” – cubes of bread seasoned and mixed with various ingredients – is a necessary accompaniment and is completely personal! (img by [s.yume](#))



**where to try:** *in an American’s home at Thanksgiving!*

[**Read:** [Bread dressings Recipes: how to roast a turkey - bread stuffing - fresh bread stuffing](#)]

52. **Veggie Burger** – just like the hamburger has become a staple in the American diet, veggie burgers have become a delicious alternative if you’re not in the mood for meat. Mushrooms, rice, black beans, and other ingredients are popular veggie burger varieties. (img by [Adam Kuban](#))



**where to try:** *supermarket, in restaurants, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [ultimate veggie burger - veggie burgers](#) ]

## Drinks

1. **Apple cider** -usually served in autumn or winter, when apples are harvested, apple cider is unfiltered/raw apple juice and therefore a bit pulpy and cloudy, and usually has a limited shelf life. In the winter it's often served mulled/spiced and hot, or as "sparkling" / carbonated in a champagne-like bottle at New Year's Eve celebrations. Some orchards offer cider doughnuts, too! (img by [sholeh](#))



**where to try:** *apple orchards, supermarkets.*

2. **Arnold Palmer** – half lemonade, half iced tea, I love this drink on a summer day. There is actually a real "[Arnold Palmer](#)" who is an old professional golfer and this was one of his favorite drinks. If I’m making it the “fast” way, I add a little lemonade concentrate directly to the tea, but it should half of each drink poured in the same glass. (img by [Eric Rice](#))



**where to try:** *some restaurants may offer it (more probable in the south) but it's probably easiest to try it at home.*

3. **Dr. Pepper** – love it or hate it, Dr. Pepper has a very unique taste that is not similar to Coke, or any other soda you've ever tried. Dr. Pepper reminds me of Chinotto, Italy’s most popular “acquired taste” drink. (for the record: I like, not love, DP, but I hate Chinotto). (img by [kendrak](#))



**where to try:** *supermarket, in restaurants*

4. **Eggnog** - a drink served normally during the holiday times made with cream, eggs, sugar and other spices and served cold. It can be made alcoholic with rum, or served without alcohol. It's quite rich, but entirely necessary! Most supermarkets will carry cartons of it in the fresh milk area during the holidays. (img by [izik](#))



**where to try:** *supermarkets, at home.*

[**Recipes:** [eggnog - egg nog recipe - eggnog](#)]

5. **Ginger Ale** – a carbonated drink made with ginger. Now used in SF as a chaser after a [Fernet Branca](#) shot, Ginger ale is a classic drink that everyone knows but not that many people drink anymore. (img by [Gush Party, USA](#))



**where to try:** *supermarkets, bars, at home.*

**[Recipes:** [homemade ginger ale](#) - [DIY ginger ale](#)]

6. **Grape juice** – deep, dark purple goodness, the most well-known kind is made from Concord grapes, and the most well-known brand is [Welch's grape juice](#). There is so much sugar in grape juice it's bound to send you into sugar tilt, but a little won't hurt. Bonus: try white grape juice, too - it won't stain your fingers or clothes. (img by [jek in the box](#))



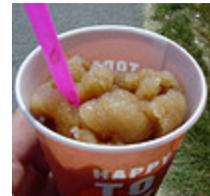
**where to try:** *supermarkets.*

7. **Root Beer** – this dark, very sweet carbonated drink is traditionally made from sassafras, and various roots but today varies from brand to brand. It's often paired with pizza (kids can drink "beer" this way, too!) Bonus: take 2 scoops of ice cream, put them in a tall glass and pour root beer over them - now you have a famous Root Beer Float! (img by [lucky pines](#))



**where to try:** *diners, restaurants, pizzerias, and supermarkets (try [Barg's](#), [A&W](#) or [IBC Root Beer](#) or [one of these numerous brands!](#))*

8. **Slurpee / Icee** - a frozen, carbonated beverage that is usually brightly-colored (unless it's Coke flavor) sold by 7-Eleven convenience stores. It's basically sugar, ice and flavoring, but it might be welcome on a hot summer day instead of a regular soft drink! (img by [bchow](#))



**where to try:** *7-Eleven stores, ballparks, other convenience stores.*

## Regional - Local Specialties

**Bonus: Nationally-know, locally-best foods – recommended to be eaten only at the source!** This is purposely a limited list as I obviously haven't visited all of the USA (**only 27 states** at my count this morning!) so I welcome input about specialties from the states you know best!

1. **Cajun food: Po'boy sandwich / Jambalaya / Étouffée / Gumbo** (New Orleans, Louisiana) - New Orleans cuisine needs its own post, its own book! I cannot do it justice in this small space. But Cajun food is not to be missed, and some of the dishes I listed here are a definite must. Dirty rice, too! [Read up on Cajun cuisine and get crackin'!](#) (img by [simplerich](#))



**where to try:** *New Orleans*

2. **Cioppino** (San Francisco, CA) - cioppino, a fish stew with dungeness crab, with a tomato and therefore red base, was invented in America from Italian immigrants and remains one of the most interesting and involving dishes to eat in San Francisco. You will probably have to crack open your dungeness crab with a cracker and protect your clothes with a bib! (img by [Kelly Sue](#))



**where to try:** *start at the Fisherman's wharf in SF: [Scoma's](#) or [Alioto's 8](#) are good places to start.*

3. **"Coney Dog" Hot Dog** (Coney Island / Cincinnati, Ohio / Flint, Michigan) - a hot dog with mustard and ketchup on top? That's for amateurs. Top it instead with meat chili, minced fresh onions and cheese, and you have a real Coney dog. (img by [Lan Bui](#))  
**where to try:** *Coney Island, Cincinnati or Flint, Michigan. :)  
Wherever they sell "Coney-style" hot dogs.*
4. **Deep-dish Pizza** (Chicago, Illinois) - this is where a pizza "pie" really makes sense - these pizzas are baked with high crusts in a pie-like baking dish (sometimes up to 3 inches tall!) It's not Naples, but this variety of pizza needs to be tasted! (img by [gtrwndr87](#))  
**where to try:** *Chicago - Gino's East or [Lou Malnati's](#) or other [famous Chicago pizzerias](#)*
5. **Philadelphia Cheesesteak** (Pennsylvania) - also known as the "Philly" cheesesteak, this is often imitated around the country but the original needs to be tasted. A roll is sliced and filled with thin-cut steak and cheese. (img by [mhaithaca](#))  
**where to try:** *start in Philadelphia, at [Geno's](#) or [Pat's](#) or [Jim's](#)*
6. **Texas Barbecue (BBQ)** (Texas) - good Texas barbecue doesn't really use plates or even barbecue sauce - waxed paper or paper serve as the base for Texas BBQ with some bread (thick-sliced Texas toast is best), pickles, onions and your pick of meats (sausages and brisket most popular) and your hands for eating. (img by [bigbirdz](#))  
**where to start:** *Texas, of course!*
7. **"Tex-Mex" Fajitas / Chili con Queso** (Texas) - when Mexican food meets Texas, you get Tex-Mex. Lots of beef and cheese, with the fabled fajitas (meat grilled on a cast iron plate and served with onions and bell peppers and tortillas) are worth trying with a bowl of chile con queso and tortilla chips as an appetizer. (img by [Daremoshiranai](#))  
**where to try:** *any number of Tex-Mex restaurants in Texas*
8. **Key Lime Pie** (Florida Keys) - made with limes from the Florida Keys (the most southern part of the United States) and often topped with a fluffy meringue. The limes are a little harder to transport than other limes available in the US, so for the freshest Key Lime Pie you can get, go to the source! (img by [foodistablog](#))



## Resources

- Wikipedia's [Cuisine of the United States](#)
- About.com's [American Food portal](#) - I love that [California has its own regional cuisine page](#)
- [Iconic foods from across America \(www.foodsacrossamerica.com\)](#)
- [10 Foods that Make America great!](#) - MSNBC
- [The Birthplaces of 10 Great American Foods](#) - Mental Floss



## Checklist: 101 American Foods to Try in the USA

Tasted!	Item	Where Tasted
	<b>DESSERTS / SWEETS</b>	
	Ambrosia fruit salad	
	Apple pie, and pies in general	
	Banana (nut) bread	
	Black and White Cookies	
	Blueberry muffin	
	Brownies	
	Candy Canes	
	Caramel apple	
	Cheesecake	
	Chocolate chip cookies	
	Cobbler, Berry/Fruit	
	Cranberries	
	Cupcakes	
	Dairy Queen Blizzard	
	Doughnuts / Donuts	
	Fluffer Nutter	
	French Toast	
	Fruitcake	
	Fudge	
	Funnel cake	
	Gingerbread cookies/ house	
	Ice creame sundae / Banana split	
	Jello / Jello salad	
	Oatmeal cookies	
	Pancakes	
	Peanut Butter Cups	
	Pecan pie	





## 101 American Foods to Try in the USA ebook

	Popcorn, Caramel and Kettle Corn	
	Pumpkin Pie	
	Red velvet cake	
	Rice Krispies Treats	
	S'mores	
	Sugar (cutout) cookies	
	Twinkie	
	Whoopie Pie	
	Yams / Sweet potatoes and marshmallows	
	Zucchini bread	
	<b>MAIN DISHES AND SAVORY SNACKS</b>	
	American breakfast	
	Bagel (w/cream cheese or lox)	
	Baked potato	
	Barbecue (BBQ) Baked Beans	
	Barbecue (BBQ) Ribs	
	Barbecue (BBQ) Sandwich	
	Black-eyed peas	
	Biscuits and Cream gravy	
	Breakfast Burrito	
	Brisket	
	Caesar salad	
	Catfish	
	Chef or Cobb salad	
	Chicken Fried Steak	
	Chicken parmigiano (or parmesan)	
	Chicken pot pie	
	Chicken / Buffalo wings	
	Chili (con carne)	





## 101 American Foods to Try in the USA ebook

	Clam chowder (New England and Manhattan style)	
	Coleslaw	
	Corn bread	
	Corn dog	
	Corn on the cob	
	Dungeness crab	
	Egg salad	
	Fettuccine alfredo	
	Fried calamari	
	Fried Dill pickles and okra	
	Fried Green Tomatoes	
	Garlic bread	
	Green bean casserole	
	Grilled cheese sandwich	
	Grits / Hominy	
	Hamburger & French Fries	
	Home fries / Hashbrowns / Tater tots	
	Hot Dogs & Sausage	
	Hushpuppies	
	Macaroni and Cheese	
	Macaroni Pasta Salad	
	Mashed Potatoes	
	Meatloaf	
	Omelet	
	Onion Rings	
	Pastrami	
	Pot Roast	
	Ranch dressing	
	Rocky Mountain Oysters	
	Scalloped potatoes	
	Sloppy Joes	





## 101 American Foods to Try in the USA ebook

	Submarine (or Hero or Hoagie) sandwich	
	Turkey w/stuffing	
	Veggie burger	
	<b>DRINKS</b>	
	Apple cider	
	Arnold Palmer	
	Dr. Pepper	
	Eggnog	
	Ginger Ale	
	Grape juice	
	Root Beer	
	Slurpee / Icee	
	<b>REGIONAL SPECIALTIES</b>	
	Cajun Food (Po'boy sandwich / Jambalaya / Etoufee / Gumbo)	
	Cioppino	
	"Coney Dog" Hot Dog	
	Deep-dish Pizza	
	Philadelphia Cheesecake	
	Texas Barbecue (BBQ)	
	"Tex-Mex"	
	Key Lime Pie	

