



Think pink:  
pickled deviled  
eggs from  
Biergarten in  
San Francisco

# SNACK NATION

Forget Einstein's theory of relativity. The world's greatest, most comprehensive equation is this: snacks = happiness. It's that simple (and legend has it that it was discovered after devouring an entire bag of Cheetos). Inspired by that ultimate food pairing, we set out to tell you about irresistible salty, sweet, crunchy, creamy nibbles across the country that are worth their weight in glee. What's not simple? Starting with a list of possibilities that numbers, roughly, infinity.

So we applied some criteria. We focused on snacks that are freshly made, not mass-produced. (For the record, though, Ho Hos rule.) We left out items that could

be thought of as a full meal. (Appetizers? In. Pizza? Sadly, out.) And we favored food you could eat with your hands. (Sorry, pies.)

More than anything, though, we wanted our picks to reflect another undeniable truth: that when we travel, snacks are truly special when they speak to the flavors or traditions of their region, evoking a sense of place. That led us to sublime seafood in the Northeast, greasy goodness in the South, and nachos you could only get in New Mexico.

Did we miss some sweet spots? Did we ever. Join the conversation via our #SouthwestSnacks Sweepstakes. (See page 4.) In the meantime, happy munching.

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Photography by STEPHEN DEVRIES / Illustrations by HOLLY WALES



# SOUTHEAST

## BOUDIN BALLS

/ New Orleans

Cajun perfection? Look no further than these beloved fried orbs of pork sausage, onions, and rice. Grab a few at **Toups' Meatery** in New Orleans.

## CHICKEN WINGS

/ Nashville, Tennessee

At **Lockeland Table**, General Hal's wings fall off the bone in one saucy bite that marries sweet and heat. But get there early: Chef Hal Holden-Bache's take on General Tso's chicken is available only 4–6 p.m., Monday to Saturday.

## HUSHPUPPIES

/ Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Chef Bill Smith makes this Southern classic shine at **Crook's Corner**, where his jalapeno-cheddar version comes with a kick and home-made cocktail sauce.

## PLANTAINS

/ Miami Beach, Florida

At **Havana 1957**, expertly salted plantain chips come with your meal. Take it up a notch with the *tostones rellenos*—thick-cut green plantains stuffed with different fillings such as *ropa vieja*, a Cuban-style stewed beef.

Slim-dunk combo: boudin balls and Creole aioli

Boudin Balls

Plantain Chips

# SOUTHWEST

## NACHOS

/ Albuquerque, New Mexico

Red or green? At **Nexus Brewery**, the nachos arrive smothered with your choice of chile and are served with ground beef, chicken, or pulled pork. Pro tip: If you can't pick a type of chile, spring for "Christmas style"—a mix of both.

## CACTUS FRIES

/ Sedona, Arizona

The plant that's synonymous with the Southwest is also a

staple in desert cuisine. At Sedona's **Cowboy Club**, the spiky shrub is sliced, flash-fried, and served with a fuchsia prickly pear dipping sauce.

## FRUIT CUP

/ San Antonio

After exploring the historic San Antonio missions, head to **Fruteria La Misión**. At the walk-up window, order a mix of freshly cut favorites—from mango and pineapple to coconut and cucumber—and then douse

them with chile salt, lime juice, or *chamoy*, a sweet and spicy condiment made from pickled fruit.

## CHICHARRÓNS

/ El Paso, Texas

Cracklins, pork rinds, chicharróns. Whatever you call them, deep-fried pig skins are a must in the South. For three generations, the folks at **Martinez Brand Cracklings** have been selling the crunchy treat, as well as carnitas and a fiery salsa, at their shop north of the Rio Grande.

Nachos Christmas-style



## HERE'S TO ... BOILED PEANUTS

It's the texture that freaks some people out. But to understand—and ultimately love—the boiled peanut, divorce yourself from the crumbly favorite at baseball games and embrace it as a soft legume, caressed by wood-fired flame and educated with salt and time. Jason Clemmon is the owner of Sunrise Grocery, a general store in the North Georgia mountains that's been around since the 1920s. He keeps a cauldron of boiled peanuts over a fire out front. The nuts cook in brine an entire day. This can't be rushed. At Nashville's Black Rabbit, chef Trey Cioccia serves a swankier version, cooked with a fermented variation of his grandfather's barbecue sauce, and you can pop the entire thing in your mouth, soft shell and all. Both methods evoke a slower place and time, when I can practically hear the crunch of gravel under tires as my dad and I pull over for a bag, drawn by aromas of fire, earth, and fresh mountain air. —*Jennifer Justus*



# NORTHEAST

## ● OYSTERS

/ Boston

Located in the once-industrial Fort Point district, **Row 34** adds color to its fried oysters by serving them on lettuce cups with pickled veggies. After breaking for bivalves, make the 10-minute walk to Fan Pier Park—the water views are waiting.

## ● PRETZEL BITES

/ Philadelphia

Knots, twists, sticks, rolls—in all their forms, pretzels have been delighting diners since 600 A.D.—or so the story goes. In the City of Brotherly Love, **Strangelove's** adds toasted anise seed and brown butter to its soft bites, and then pairs them with house-made mustard.

## ● CIDER DOUGHNUTS

/ Guilford, Connecticut

Once you're done picking your own apples, treat yourself to one (or, let's be realistic, a few) of **Bishop's Orchards'** doughnuts, made with cider from the orchards. Don't fret if picking season is over; the market is open year-round.

## ● BROWN BUTTER LOBSTER ROLL

/ Portland, Maine

Raw bar **Eventide** forgoes tradition in favor of a more innovative approach—warm lobster meat is dressed in a lemony brown butter vinaigrette and served atop an Asian-style steamed bun. An added bonus: The smaller-than-usual size makes it ideal to enjoy between meals.



● Cider Doughnuts



● Crispy Oysters



● Brown Butter Lobster Rolls



## HERE'S TO ... WATER ICE

All ice is water, not all water is ice, and neither one is water ice, the weirdly named treat indigenous to greater Philadelphia. Water ice is a cousin to Italian ice, but while both originated with early 20th-century Italian immigrants, water ice's semi-frozen consistency sets it apart. Too slushy to hold a scoop and too solid to drink with a straw, it's served in waxed cups with spoons (though locals cut out the middleman by creasing their cup like a milk carton). Many a Philly kid, careless with a black cherry or chocolate, has ruined a pair of fresh Reebok Classics this way. Get it at independent stands like 73-year-old John's, O.G. and maker of a superior pineapple, and Bucks County's Yardley Ice House. Every Philadelphian has their favorite stand. Mine is inside L. Mancuso & Son cheese shop, where owner Phil Mancuso shovels bittersweet lemon from a seasonal sidewalk window, same as when I was a kid.

—Adam Erace



# MIDWEST

## ● TATER TOTS

/ Milwaukee, Wisconsin

By adding caviar, a dollop of sour cream, and a handful of chives, **Snack Boys** has engineered an elevated take on tots. You can order them with a fried bologna slider.

## TOASTED RAVIOLI

/ St. Louis

Don't let the name fool you: These tasty squares, which date as far back as the 1930s, are fried, not toasted. **Salt + Smoke** takes them to the next level, stuffing the crispy "ravs" with burnt ends—flavorful pieces of brisket.

## BUCKEYES

/ Columbus, Ohio

Located in Columbus' historic German Village, **Schmidt's Fudge Haus** has been a neighborhood staple since 1960. To make its signature buckeye candy, this confectionery hand-dips creamy peanut butter balls in Belgian chocolate.

## PASTIES

/ Detroit

First brought to Michigan's Upper Peninsula by Cornish miners, the pasty (pronounced PASS-tee) served as easy-to-carry sustenance on the job. The hearty treat—a pocket of meat, potatoes, and veggies wrapped in a flaky pastry crust—made it down to Detroit by way of food truck, thanks to **Motor City Pasty Company**.

● Caviar-topped Tater Tots

● Deviled Eggs

● Angostura-bourbon Nuts

# WEST

## ● HUCKLEBERRY ICE CREAM

/ Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

In the summer, huckleberries blanket the Northern Rockies and locals search for the treat that's sweeter than a blueberry. Can't forage? **Abi's Artisan Ice Cream** serves fruit-filled scoops, along with sundaes drizzled with a huckleberry glaze.

## ● DEVILED EGGS

/ San Francisco

No, your eyes aren't deceiving you. The

deviled eggs at **Biergarten** really *are* hot pink—and they're as flavorful as they are colorful. This pickled take on the hard-boiled bites is best enjoyed with a Bavarian beer on the spacious patio.

## ● MIXED NUTS

/ Seattle

**Canon** lures in patrons with its world-class selection of spirits—the collection currently tops 4,000 labels—but the whiskey bar's food menu is just as impressive in its own

right. The Angostura-bourbon nuts include cashews, pretzels, and caramel corn, which combine for an enviable mix of sweet and salty.

## JERKY

/ Denver

Thanks to its shelf life and light weight, jerky has long held a special place in the rough-and-tumble American West. Located in the city's trendy River North Art District, **Rebel Restaurant** sells its homemade jerky by the ounce.



## HERE'S TO ... CHEESE CURDS

Ask a Wisconsinite about cheese curds and you'll get an earful, if not a mouthful. Everyone's got a story, a tradition, or an almost religious preference. Fresh cheese curds—solid pieces of curdled milk—are small, salty, and chewy, so texturally satisfying that, while your teeth are still working, your hand instinctively reaches for another. In a state that produces more than 3 billion pounds of cheese annually, the choices on how to consume cheese curds never end. Some dip them in marinara at roadside drive-ins. Others get a bag at a farmers market or munch samples at cheese factories. You'll find them at restaurants, fairs, cookouts. But the fried variation marries two great traditions: agriculture and deep frying. "The real Wisconsin play," one friend told me, "is to get a burger and, in lieu of fries, get cheese curds." And really, what could be more American than that? —Jeff Ruby



# Light Bites

From kitchen experts, here are three easy recipes for healthier snacking.

## 1 BLACK-EYED PEA HUMMUS

A Southern staple reinvents this spread, lending it a heartier texture and earthier flavor.

- 4 cups cooked black-eyed peas
- 4 tablespoons chopped garlic
- ¼ cup tahini
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1½ cups olive oil

**DIRECTIONS:** Place all ingredients, except oil, in a food processor. While adding the oil, pulse until the oil combines with other ingredients. Serve with carrots, sliced cucumbers, and pita chips.

—Hal Holden-Bache,  
executive chef,  
Lockeland Table,  
Nashville, Tennessee

## 2 SEASONED FRUIT

The sweetness of basil plays against the acidity of these fruits, while chile powder adds a subtle warmth.

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup basil leaves
- 1 big pinch salt
- 1 small pinch chile powder
- Juice of 1 lime
- 8-12 cups of sliced fruit (1 pineapple, 1 watermelon, 4-6 peaches or mangoes)

**DIRECTIONS:** In a food processor, pulse the basil, sugar, salt, and chile powder until the mix takes on a green tint. Set aside. Toss the fruit in a bowl with the lime juice. Scatter mixture over top to taste.

—Adam Erace,  
food writer and recipe  
developer

## 3 FROZEN YOGURT FRUIT POPS

Summer should be all about economizing your time, not fussing around in a hot kitchen. This treat is as quick as it is delicious. The color will vary depending on the fruit you use.

- 4 cups unsweetened full-fat vanilla yogurt
- 2 cups fresh or frozen fruit
- 3 tablespoons honey

**DIRECTIONS:** Place all ingredients in a blender. Pulse until smooth (or chunky for fruit pieces in pops). Pour equally into molds or small paper cups. Place craft stick in center and freeze until solid.

—Joshua Blackwell,  
executive chef, Sweet Jon's  
Cafe, Birmingham, Alabama

These simple fruit pops are sure to brighten your break time.



### GO FOR A DIP

THESE SPREADS ARE THE CREAM OF THE CROP.

#### SMOKED FISH DIP

/ St. Petersburg, Florida

Since 1951, **Ted Peters Famous Smoked Fish** has specialized in this spread that lives up to its billing.

#### GUACAMOLE

/ Long Beach, California

Ordering **Padre's** guac? Add the grasshoppers, a frequent feature in Oaxacan cuisine.

#### AJVAR

/ Portland, Oregon

At **Kachka**, this Balkan pepper and eggplant blend is served with lavash crisps.

#### CRAB DIP

/ Baltimore

**Koco's Pub** turns lump crab meat into a tasty, herb-filled spread. We won't judge if a spoon's your vessel of choice.

#### PIMENTO CHEESE

/ Charleston, South Carolina

This Southern favorite stands out at **Smoke BBQ**, where it comes with rye toast and house pickles.

#### TARAMOSALATA

/ Washington, D.C.

**Cava Mezze's** Greek meze stars whipped salmon roe, lemon, and bread crumbs.

For more recipes, go to [southwestmag.com/snack-recipe](http://southwestmag.com/snack-recipe).

