



EDIBLE

EMPIRE STATE

THE 13 BEST THINGS TO EAT IN NEW YORK

by Lyn Dobrin
photos by Loreto Caceres

When traveling, I enjoy seeking out regional food specialties. There was a delicious pleasure in dining on roasted green onions in Barcelona, spring artichokes in Rome and Low Country shrimp and grits down south. Here in New York state, we all know about Buffalo wings, Saratoga potato chips and Thousand Island dressing but that's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to tasty regional dishes.

One such dish is Cornell chicken, a beloved upstate New York staple. In the 1950s Cornell University professor and food scientist Robert Baker was contracted by the USDA to encourage people to eat more poultry. His creations include turkey ham, chicken hot dogs, the now-ubiquitous chicken nugget—and Cornell chicken, prepared by marinating the pieces in a mayonnaise-like batter with vinegar and seasonings and grilled until crisp—Jim's BBQ near Ithaca makes a superb version.

A dish to accompany Cornell chicken could be Syracuse potatoes. Salt potatoes emerged from the area's long history as a site of salt production in Onondaga Lake's salt springs. Syracuse markets sell bags of the famous Hinerwadel's small white potatoes with a package



Clockwise from left: Blue Point oysters; chili dogs from Charlie's; Barton Orchards' cider donuts.



of salt. The potatoes and salt are boiled together in water and then served with melted butter. You can also try Utica greens, which reached stardom when Food Network's Guy Fieri featured this Italian-style dish made of escarole, chopped prosciutto, hot peppers, breadcrumbs and Romano cheese sautéed in olive oil and garlic. Numerous restaurants offer it including Georgio's Village Cafe.

Aside from Cornell chicken, there are other meat specialties that have become standard in their regions including spiedies. Italian immigrants brought these sandwiches to Broome County, and while many places make it, Lupo's Char-Pit in Endwell is known for it. Cubes of marinated meat (usually chicken) are grilled over charcoal and served on a soft bun. Every August, there's a spiedie cook-off at the Spiedie Fest in Binghamton.

Beef on weck, a steak sandwich with German origins, is commonly found in and around Buffalo (Schwabl's is famous for its wecks). It's made with thinly-sliced rare roast beef on a kummelweck roll—a Kaiser

roll topped with pretzel salt and caraway seeds. The roll's top half is dipped in the natural roast beef juice and served with strong horseradish and a kosher dill pickle on the side. Another famous sandwich is pastrami on rye. The version at Katz's, the iconic delicatessen on the Lower East Side (you might remember a certain scene from *When Harry Met Sally* that was filmed there) features a heaping portion of carved smoked pastrami slices on rye bread slathered with mustard and served with a pickle.

An additional delicious meat-based treat: the chili hot dog. Greek immigrants first sold these mini hot dogs slathered in meat sauce at Coney Island, later they moved north to ply their trade. Chili dogs can be found in and around Albany and Rensselaer counties—Hot Dog Charlie's, with several locations, is famous for its

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dogs. And way upstate in Malone is where you'll find the red-skinned Glazier's hot dog, a spicy blend of beef and pork developed by the Glazier family in 1903. Local markets carry the brand and food stands at the Franklin County fair in August also sell them.

All this talk of meat and potatoes can bring on a thirst, so sample a locally brewed Ommegang beer in Cooperstown. Although this Otsego County brewery has only been making Belgian-style ales since 1997, beer production in the region goes back to the 19th century when Cooperstown was the center of hop production in the United States. After a brewery tour, sample six different beers such as Hennepin and Rare VOS.

Seafood specialties are also common. Downstate on Long Island are Blue Point oysters, known for their fresh, crisp texture and sweet aftertaste—apparently, Queen Victoria was a fan.

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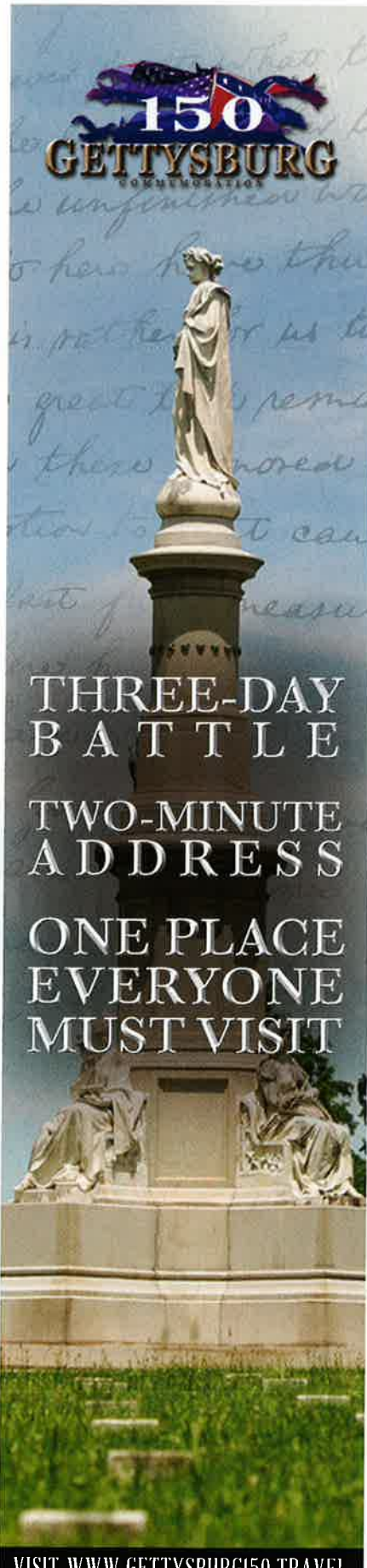
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Though many oysters are called Blue Point, they can only be the genuine article if they've been cultivated in Long Island's Great South Bay. The Blue Island Oyster Company produces the real thing—taste them at Bridgehampton's Topping Rose House and Mattituck's Old Mill Inn.

At the turn of the 20th century, as tourists started coming to the 1000 Islands, a regional dish emerged—the shore dinner (still popular today; available through Seaway Charters). After heading out on a fishing expedition, the guide would pull into a shaded site to prepare lunch: just-caught fish (generally perch or bass) pan-fried with pork fat back, served with boiled potatoes, corn on the cob and a side salad, topped with (what else?) Thousand Island dressing, along with a dessert of French toast and strong coffee.

Ready for dessert? In Dutchess County, a major apple-growing center, you'll love cider donuts, available at farmer's markets and pick-your-own orchards like Barton. The donuts are not glazed, but when they're hot, and just out of the deep fryer, the cinnamon sugar melts into a kind of glaze. And, finally, our New York state culinary journey ends in Manhattan with an egg cream. I grew up on homemade egg creams. We had real seltzer delivered to our house (in now-classic pressurized bottles with spigots) and always kept a jar of Fox's U-Bet chocolate syrup in the fridge. Nowadays, I order this classic shake, thought to have originated in Brooklyn, at the old-fashioned Lexington Candy Shop on the Upper East Side.

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