

# dine small Eat Big

ALASKA'S  
BEST SMALL  
EATERIES

by Lisa Maloney



**PEOPLE IN ALASKA TEND TO DRESS FOR COMFORT AND PRACTICALITY:** snow pants and sturdy workwear like Carhartts fill our winter wardrobes, while summer brings jeans, sundresses... and Carhartts again. So it's no surprise that some of our best little restaurants take a similar approach, serving food out of whatever's practical: food trucks, tidy little cabins, and in one memorable case, a repurposed train depot. But if there's one thing you'll learn in a visit to Alaska, it's that you can't judge a book by its cover.

**SO KEEP READING FOR A SELECTION OF THE BEST SMALL, CASUAL RESTAURANTS IN ALASKA, EACH ONE PUNCHING WELL ABOVE ITS SIZE — AND SOMETIMES, ITS LOOKS — IN TERMS OF THE FOOD THEY SERVE.**



Halibut ceviche

# 1 Juneau and Talkeetna

Few small eateries exemplify that "don't judge a book by its cover" spirit as much as **Deckhand Dave's**, a perennial favorite — and if I may pun freely, a cherished anchor — in downtown Juneau's food-truck park. The deckhand in question is a former commercial fisherman, who still works with commercial fish processors to source the best and freshest seafood — then turn it into tacos that issue forth from the truck, creating a steady stream of elated customers.

Find Deckhand Dave's at 139 S. Franklin St. in Juneau, or [deckhanddaves.com](http://deckhanddaves.com).



Deckhand Dave's crew



## We've Moved

From Dave's, I hoped to send you to **The Salmon Spot** — a humble, unassuming hut that usually sits next to the Juneau cruise docks, and was so heavily promoted by shuttle bus drivers that I started out a little suspicious of their quality. But one visit is all it took to convince me that those drivers were right. This place's salmon burgers are unbeatable.

*There's just one catch:* Unable to secure their usual spot near the cruise docks this year, The Salmon Spot had to relocate... to the inland town of Talkeetna, a hugely popular destination for cruise land excursions. So if your adventures take you there, make sure to stop in and visit the Salmon Spot.

Find The Salmon Spot at 101 N. Main St. in Talkeetna, or [aksalmonspot.com](http://aksalmonspot.com).



## WE ALL SCREAM...

One more thing before we depart Juneau entirely: If you like ice cream, check out **Coppo**, which has a permanent downtown cafe at 917 Glacier Avenue, but usually has a small ice cream cart stationed near the cruise docks too. The cafe serves a surprisingly good salad too, but ice cream is the big draw.

Find Coppo at 917 Glacier Avenue in Juneau, or [coppaalaska.com](http://coppaalaska.com).



Coppo's macarons

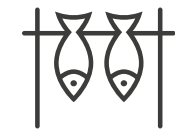
# 2 On to Petersburg

**HEADING SOUTH** along the Inside Passage to the Norwegian-founded fishing town of Petersburg, another seafood restaurant, **Inga's Galley**, stands out as one of the best. It's a small, simple hut with outdoor seating scattered around its skirts. But the fresh seafood they serve up in simple, paper-covered baskets? Sublime, and flavorful enough to hold its own against any street-food vendor in the world.

Find Inga's Galley at 104 N. Nordic Drive in Petersburg, or on Facebook.



The Salty Pantry's sirloin burgers (bacon, Swiss, mushrooms, onions on a house-made brioche bun)



Even in a fishing town, good food isn't always about fish. That's exemplified at **The Salty Pantry**, a small stand-alone restaurant down by the harbor. They focus on artisanal food: creative yet focused, with careful attention to ingredients and preparation. The end result can be anything from sandwiches to enchiladas to empanadas and stuffed portobello mushrooms, plus fresh-baked treats — but it's always good.

Find The Salty Pantry at 14 Harbor Way in Petersburg, or on Facebook.



PLANET PLAYGROUND

# 3 Jump to Southcentral

**TOURIST TIPS** If your cruise brings you to the Southcentral Alaska ports of Seward, this little port has a real lock on creative restaurant buildings. Two of my favorites for casual, quick eats are **Zudy's**, which serves some of the town's best sandwiches and baked goods out of what used to be an Alaska Railroad train depot; and **Resurrect Art**, a combination coffee house and art gallery in a converted church. Don't be caught sleeping on **Resurrect Art's** small but excellent selection of sweet and savory baked goods, which almost always sell out before the end of the day. Especially the chocolate-cherry cookies ... no, wait, my mistake. You don't want those. Leave them all for me.

Find Zudy's at 501 Railway Avenue in Seward, or [zudyscafe.com](http://zudyscafe.com).

Find Resurrect Art at 320 3rd Avenue in Seward, or [resurrectart.com](http://resurrectart.com).

## LAST BUT NOT LEAST, NO VISIT TO SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

is complete without a stop in Homer, the fabled seaside community that's a happy mix of art, fishing, and food. And one of Homer's brightest little dining gems is **La Baleine Cafe**, a pleasant, breezy little spot with a few seats indoors and a couple picnic tables outside. This cafe is powered by a pair of award-winning local chefs, the power duo of Kirsten and Mandy Dixon.

Ingredients at La Baleine tend to be staples — you're more likely to dine on chicken here than caviar. But every single fresh, local, and often-organic ingredient is presented on its own best terms: You get hearty bowls of salmon and root vegetables topped with local greens and wildflowers, robust breakfast skillet, and piping hot sandwiches.

I suppose this — not just La Baleine, but all of it — is rather like the very Alaskan act of going to the opera in Carhartts. If you can't judge Alaskans by the way we dress, you can't judge an eatery by the shape of its walls, either. But please do judge these fine little restaurants on the quality of their food. They can take it!



La Baleine Cafe's duck confit fried rice, sautéed with zucchini, yellow squash, and cauliflower