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# P O R T

With its forward-thinking, food-driven spirit, this US city is flying high in the culinary world, writes *delicious.* travel editor **Sonya Gellert**, who dips into the population's love for pickling, distilling, brewing and ingenuity.

@sonya\_gellert

PHOTOGRAPHY DINA AVILA

# L A N N



**CLOCKWISE:** Middle Eastern flavours at Tusk; Coava's Public Brew Bar & Roastery; a Coava barista brings serious pour-over game; Division Street is home to a multitude of boutiques and eateries. **OPPOSITE:** Hawthorne Bridge over the Willamette River.



# W

can pickle that" should be the unofficial slogan of Oregon's centre of culinary creativity, and it's an outlook its inhabitants apply to everything they do.

The motto is one that not only encompasses both the people and Portland's waste-not approach to food, but also the population's upbeat attitude towards pursuing creative visions – no matter how big.

"There are no bad ideas here," says Laura Morgan, my lunch companion, who shares the secrets of her home city with curious visitors on **The Big Foody Portland** walks. "When people here want to test out new ideas, everyone seems to jump in and support them." We're seated at the bar of **Olympia Provisions** – a stalwart deli-style diner that epitomises Portland's resourcefulness, with its from-scratch approach to cooking (and pickling) and use of locally sourced ingredients.

It's this supportive spirit that feeds into a larger collaborative movement here. You'd be hard-pressed to find a cafe, bar or restaurant that's not collaborating with multiple makers in town. If a teashop

decides to create 'tea floats', you can bet that scoop of ice cream has come from a nearby gelateria. And if a chocolatier wants to add honey or salt flakes to a creation? Well, you know where this is going...

In a city where there are an estimated 75 breweries operating harmoniously, along with 11 distilleries and, at last count, 15 bean-to-bar artisan chocolate makers, Portland's inspired residents are not afraid to take risks when it comes to pursuing their passions. Those passions, I quickly discover, are mostly centred on food and drink. It seems every maker in this city has a carefully honed specialty they are profoundly passionate about and, when it comes to their story, eager to share.

Take, for instance, **Meadow**, the shelves of which are lined with hundreds of small bottles of bitters in just about every flavour you



Portland's streets buzz with diversity and creativity.



CLOCKWISE (from top right): Cup & Bar's dedicated coffee delivery service; Cartopia Market is food-cart heaven; white truffles on offer at PSU Farmers Market; a change of pace at Portland Japanese Garden.



could imagine. If you ever doubted the need for any bitters in your pantry, you'll come out questioning that notion.

It's this devil-may-care bravura that's seen Portland undergo a 20-year-long renaissance. And yet, despite the hum of activity, the city retains its gentle pace and laid-back charm. This might have something to do with one noticeably rising trend on menus here: the addition of CBD – or cannabidiol, a hemp derivative touted as a Zen-inducing relaxant. No longer a controlled substance in the US, CBD from hemp is making its way into sodas, cocktails, beer, smoothies and, believe it or not, even pet food. Seated at the bar of **Hey Love** on the ground floor of the chic new Jupiter Next Hotel late one evening, I ask my neighbour why soda with CBD has become his new drink of choice (he's ordered three). "It helps with my anxiety," the film-set designer tells me. And, he adds with a betraying wink, "a splash of vodka really helps, too".

Amid the shifting trend-driven landscape, some things remain the same: food carts continue to occupy Portland. And although their number fluctuates with the seasons, there are approximately

500 carts operating in 'pods' across the city – offering everything from tacos to Korean bowls, and even Korean tacos.

Though you're likely to return home with pockets full of salted caramels from providore **Jacobsen Salt**, or preserves and hot sauces from the energetic weekly **Portland Farmers Market**, the city's gift, book and fashion stores are similarly hard to resist. Independent stores thrive here. Unique garments, small-run zines and homemade beauty products (beard oil blends aren't hard to find) tempt visitors at stores like **Tender Loving Empire**, **Powell's City of Books**, **Kabinett** vintage store and **Paxton Gate**.

Outdoor supplies are easy to track down, too, a reflection on the pristine hiking tracks and picturesque woods a short drive from the city. And, in the city limits, Portland's prized **Japanese Garden** is a place of reflection for active minds.

No matter the specialty of the enthusiastic producer, Portland businesses have an ethos in common: locally sourced, fair-trade, eco-friendly, waste-free, community-supporting and slow fashion are not mere buzzwords here. Small-scale and artisanal companies are not the exception, but the norm.



**CAFFEINE HITS**

**CUP & BAR** In true Portland style, Charlie Wicker and his team deliver coffee by bicycle across the city – rain, snow or shine. Those visiting the cafe should try the much-loved ‘Dirty Charlie’ featuring house-roasted Trailhead Coffee, with the roaster’s own Ranger Chocolate Company chocolate.

**TUSK** A favourite among brunchers, Tusk’s Middle Eastern-inspired menu revives the Sunday-morning set with a side of Melbourne’s own Proud Mary coffee, kombucha and cocktails. By night, the space transforms into a wine bar and share-plate restaurant.

**CLOUDFOREST CHOCOLATE** Owner Sebastian Cisneros’ love of chocolate and design come together in this visually pleasing cafe and adjoining chocolate factory, where the maple drinking chocolate and single-origin chocolate bars are must-try items.

**STEVEN SMITH TEAMAKER** Take a break between the whiskey and wine tastings at the serene Steven Smith Teamaker’s headquarters. Sample Smith’s delicate, French-inspired tea combinations, or the gently carbonated nitrogen herbal blends on tap.

**COAVA COFFEE ROASTERS** A sensible point to jumpstart a day of touring, Coava’s Public Brew Bar & Roastery is the spot to discover your new favourite cup. ‘Chain’ is a dirty word in Portland, but Coava has multiple sites across the city.

**CACAO DRINK CHOCOLATE** A chocolate institution known for its spicy Mexican-style drinking chocolate and selection of artisanal blocks. You’ll find everything from shrimp and bonito-flavoured chocolate, to sourdough and olive oil squares, to red coconut curry infusions, in this highly frequented shop.

**CANARD** End the day, or night, with a coffee and one of Canard’s Paris-Brest desserts: slices of apple dusted with cinnamon and layered with praline cream between soft choux pastry. Low lighting, soft music and a warming space make this locale a date-night go-to.



FROM TOP: hit the sweet spot at Cloudforest Chocolate; the cafe’s interiors have an industrial-chic vibe; more food-cart offerings on Mississippi Avenue; art that speaks to the city.





**CLOCKWISE:** it's summer all year round at Jupiter Next's Hey Love bar; Jacobsen Salt's sweet treats; sample remarkable drops at Westward Whiskey; settle in for cocktail hour at Multnomah Whiskey Library.



## SPIRITED SIPS

### MULTNOMAH WHISKEY LIBRARY

As I arrive at this refurbished historic space, patrons are told by a smiling *maître d'* about tonight's waiting time: "Three hours with no guarantees." Whiskey lovers will want to reserve a spot in this old-world bar's library of "all distilled spirits known to the modern world".

**HEY LOVE** It may be raining outside, but it's tropical year-round at Jupiter Next's palm-dotted bar. Housemade cocktails feature quirky and delicious combinations – think salty mango oolong or ginger tamarind sarsaparilla. An impressive food menu encourages guests to linger.

**BAR NORMAN** Portland's taste for fine things extends from coffee and chocolate to its wine offerings, too. Light-filled Bar Norman is a natural wine bar from renowned sommelier Dana Frank. The focus is on organic or biodynamic grapes and minimal-intervention wines.

**TOPE** Step inside the newly unveiled The Hoxton Hotel and head to the top floor where casual Mexican dishes with views over the city await. The drinks centre on one smoky ingredient: mezcal. Dine at sophisticated La Neta downstairs, then travel below the hotel to its unnamed, clandestine and dimly lit basement bar.

**OUI! SOUTHEAST WINE COLLECTIVE** The bright sparks behind Division Street Winemaking Company, Kate Norris and Tom Monroe, founded urban winery Southeast Wine Collective. Now, their adjoining restaurant, Ouil, offers a cosy space to dine and sample the winery's fruits. Chef Althea Grey Potter's share plates make for a seamless match.

**WESTWARD WHISKEY** Miles Munro, lead distiller at Westward Whiskey, says his team includes a collection of former brewers, since beer is "just a small step away from being whiskey". Take a guided tour of the warehouse and sample the finely tuned results of the team's work. ✂

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