

EAT & DRINK

5 best things our food writers ate in the Twin Cities this week

Our food writers highlight the favorites of their weekly dining experiences.

By Rick Nelson (<https://www.startribune.com/rick-nelson/6370601/>) and Sharyn Jackson (<https://www.startribune.com/sharyn-jackson/6370531/>) Star Tribune

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French cruller at **Cardigan Donuts** (<https://cardigandonuts.com/>)

"They're our best-kept secret," said general manager Justin Bedford, referring to this uncomplicated study of deep-fried elegance. "To true fans, they're No. 1. We have a special subset of customers who come in just for the crullers."

That devotion is easy to comprehend. The egg-heavy dough is a traditional *pâte à choux*, the miraculous foundation of profiteroles, cream puffs, beignets and other delights, and makes for a rich bite, which is puzzling since the delicate crullers are infused with air pockets.

"Essentially, it's a soufflé in the shape of a doughnut, which is why the egginess is so pronounced," said Bedford. "The eggs do the leavening. There's no yeast, or baking soda."

Think of them as a kind of deep-fried popover. The rings are hand-piped, and those deep, sculptural ridges are both beautiful and functional, since they capture all kinds of vanilla-boostered glaze.

Bedford is right when he calls Cardigan's French cruller a "fundamental" doughnut, in part because its construction is so dazzling. The crisp outer edges give way to a pillowy, slightly moist interior — the golden color more than hints at egg yolks — with all that egg-and-butter heft countered by the glaze's not-too-sweet sweetness. Given the investment in time-consuming craftsmanship, the \$2.15 price is a total bargain.

"It really should be more," said Bedford. "But we're extremely proud of it, and we want to offer it at an approachable price." (*Rick Nelson*)

40 S. 7th St., Mpls., 612-259-7804, cardigandonuts.com. Open 6:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sat. Delivery is available within 20 miles of the shop. Starting Monday, most of Cardigan's doughnut selection will also be available at FRGMNT Coffee, 729 N. Washington Av., Mpls., [frgmntcoffee.com](https://www.frgmntcoffee.com/) (<https://www.frgmntcoffee.com/>).



RICK NELSON STAR TRIBUNE

Crullers from Cardigan Donuts in Minneapolis.

Chicken pot pie at Bellecour Bakery (<https://bellecourbakery.com/>)

Skeptical is one way to describe owner Gavin Kaysen's reaction when pastry chef Diane Moua halfheartedly proposed adding a chicken pot pie to the French bakery's menu.

"He said, 'Is that really us?'" she recalled. "And I was, like, 'Yeah, kind of.'"

Baker Elaine DeLima's handiwork won them over. Everyone else, too, because this labor-intensive beauty (\$15) tastes as good as it looks. The golden, butter-laden latticed crust, gleaming with an egg wash, is pot pie perfection — and then some — and the filling checks all the boxes: tender chicken, potatoes, onions, the peas-carrots-sweet corn trinity and a welcome pop of tarragon.

"Elaine puts a lot of love into it, that's for sure, and her palate is amazing," said Moua. Which explains why DeLima has sold more than a thousand heat-and-serve potpies since she introduced them to the grab-and-go case two months ago.

"That first weekend, we couldn't keep up," said Moua. "I told Elaine that I'm sorry that I doubted her, and asked if I could take one home to my daughter. She said, 'We don't have enough, chef.'"

In other Bellecour news, Moua plans to unveil a new flavor for her famous crêpe cake on March 26. After offering mint matcha, apple crumble and other temptations, the latest iteration is going to be ... drumroll ... yellow cake. Specifically, her rendition of supermarket staple.

"Once in a while it's just nice to get a yellow box cake, nothing fancy," she said. "My kids said that this one is their favorite crêpe cake." (R.N.)

210 N. 1st St. (Cooks of Crocus Hill), Mpls., 612-223-8167, bellecourbakery.com. Open 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat.-Sun.

Fish and chips at Chip's Clubhouse (<https://www.chipsclubhousemn.com/>)

Friday fish fry season is in full bloom (find a list of 26 Twin Cities restaurant options at [startribune.com/taste](https://www.startribune.com/taste) (<https://www.startribune.com/it-s-fish-fry-season-26-to-try-in-the-twin-cities-metro/600030153/>)), and this newbie has a fish and chips (\$14.95) that's worth seeking out.

Instead of cod, walleye or any other fish fry usual suspect, chef Gina Mangiameli wisely chooses Lake Superior whitefish. It's shipped in fresh daily, and the flaky, slightly fatty fish holds its own against the deep fryer's rigors.

Each hefty piece is coated in a tempura-like batter (fueled by nostalgia-soaked Hamm's Beer), and Mangiameli adds a heaping helping of skin-on, hand-cut fries and a fabulous tartar sauce that's packed with vinegar-ey cornichons, salty capers and tangy mustard seed.

Owner Tara Coleman is also the force behind next-door neighbor [Hot Hands Pie & Biscuit](https://hothandspie.com/) (<https://hothandspie.com/>) — a total gem that features, among many delights, a beyond-impressive chicken pot pie, an obvious fixation of mine — and she and Mangiameli are focusing the Chip's Clubhouse menu on pork belly ramen, fried chicken, beef pasties, peanut butter-chocolate pudding and other affordable, comfort classics for a reason.

"It sounds so basic, but it's what we grew up eating, and it's what we like to eat when we go out," said Coleman. "We wanted to create something for the neighborhood." (R.N.)

272 S. Snelling Av., St. Paul, 651-330-1617, chipsclubhousemn.com. Open 5-9 p.m. Thu.-Sun.



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Chicken pot pies from Bellecour.



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Fish and chips from Chip's Clubhouse in St. Paul.

Springtime Optimism dinner from a Bird in Hand
(<https://abirdinhandmn.com/>)

What a delight, on the last day of February, to have a meal celebrating spring.

I ordered a tasting menu from a Bird in Hand, a pandemic-born pop-up that has held some on-site events at Gibbs Farm and Stewart's in St. Paul. For now, the collective devoted to in-season and local foods and flavors is operating without a dining room, putting out monthly take-home or delivery meals. Alex Warren is the "chef/introvert" who coordinates the team of five — all of whom take turns doing the dishes.

"I love my Grandma Judy's palate, and cut my teeth in some pretty timeless kitchens, so I wanted to do something that was nostalgic but still fine dine-y, or progressive, or however you say it," Warren said about Bird's vision.

For this meal (\$60, serves two), "I wanted this menu to be substantial but with lighter flavors, in the same way that at the end of winter there's still snow and it's cold but the sun has more strength and it makes it more bearable to be outdoors," Warren said. "I also wanted to convey the feeling of springtime daydreaming."

It began with celery root soup, an homage to Grandma Judy. Then an aged half chicken over stewed tomatoes canned in the summer from "avant-garde farmer" Veg Vernissage. On the side, creamy, dreamy celeriac and fontina agnolotti. And for dessert, a savory-sweet tart with foie gras and apple jam, covered in darling slices of kumquat.

You'll find more from Bird in Hand this summer, with "ambitious vegetarian" tasting menus popping up at park pavilions. Eventually, the goal is to open a 20-seat brick-and-mortar restaurant. Until then, stay tuned for information about the next takeout meal March 28 at abirdinhandmn.com. There will be gnocchi. (Sharyn Jackson)

Pupusas from Don Goyo Mexican & Salvadorian Restaurant
(<https://www.dongoyomn.com/>)

A reader wrote in some weeks back recommending a new restaurant in Columbia Heights, and since then I've been back twice for pupusas, the Salvadoran corn cakes that are griddled to a crisp on the outside and stuffed with savory fillings.

There's a lot on the menu to choose from, from a basic queso pupusa, one with beans or squash, or the revueltas, which is kind of an "everything" pupusa (meat, cheese, beans). And there's also plenty more beside pupusas, including birria tacos, tortas and Salvadorian entrees with grilled beef or fried chicken.

This time, I got two pupusas: the chicharrón (shredded pork) and loroco, which is cheese mixed with little green buds of the loroco flower that grows in Central America. They're served with the traditional accompaniment of curtido, a fermented cabbage and carrot slaw so crunchy and bright, I could (and did) eat it right out of the plastic baggie it came in. (S.J.)

2301 37th Place NE., Columbia Heights, 763-788-0299. Open 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sun.-Mon., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tues.-Sat.

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PROVIDED

Tasting menu from the Bird in Hand pop-up.



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SHARYN JACKSON, STAR TRIBUNE

Pupusas from Don Goyo.