

The local food scene is very important, whether you are a lifelong resident or just stopping on vacation. But if you're in the Baltimore area for a long or short time, then you're fortunate, because Baltimore, Maryland has an excellent community of restaurants serving any type of cuisine you can imagine. With a population of [576,498](#), the city of Baltimore has more than half a million hungry people. But it's also very close to Washington, D.C., and often is considered part of the same metro area. So if you factor in the surrounding regions, Baltimore restaurants have a [population of 9.764.315](#) to serve!

Luckily, their chefs are up to the task! If you want local Chesapeake Bay flavor and farm-fresh food, then look no further than [Gertrude's](#). Maybe you just want some good drinks and some wood-burned pizza? In that case, you'll want to check out [Hersh's](#). But no matter what you're looking for, Baltimore has you covered. There's a little something for everyone.

You can even [learn to cook](#) at the Community College of Baltimore County! However, if you'd rather let someone else do the cooking so you can do the eating, then this is the list for you. Read on to learn about the 10 best chefs that Baltimore has to offer.

## 1. Cindy Wolf

**Location:** Charleston, Petit Louis Bistro, Cindy Lou's Fish House, Cinghiale, Johnny's

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 25+ years

**How They Got Into the Industry:** Empress of the Baltimore food scene, Chef Cindy opened her flagship restaurant, Charleston, in 1997. A childhood spent in South Carolina influenced her to incorporate Southern-style flavors and foods among her menus, but the background of French cuisine that her dishes are built upon was inspired by her restaurant-executive father treating her to French fine-dining throughout her youth. Her love of food drove her to pursue a career in kitchens, and eventually led her to studying at the Culinary institute of America.

**Interesting Stats/Accomplishments:** Chef Cindy Wolf has been a finalist for the James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef Mid-Atlantic nine times and has been featured in numerous print publications and television programs. Her first restaurant, Charleston, consistently is ranked the best restaurant in the city, by *Baltimore Magazine*, and has received numerous awards and accolades, including the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences Five-Star Diamond.

Links: [Website](#)

## 2. Carlos Raba

**Location:** Clavel Mezcaleria

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 7+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Carlos is from Culiacán, Mexico, where his mother and five aunts raised him to cook traditional cuisine. He co-founded Clavel in 2015 to bring Baltimore authentic Mexican food that includes ingredients imported from small Oaxacan and Pueblan producers and meats that are butchered in-house.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He was a semi-finalist for the 2022 James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Mid-Atlantic region. In addition to his accomplishments in cooking, he also has a Black Belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and founded a non-profit designed to offer free classes to children.

Links: [Website](#)

### 3. Ben Lefenfeld

**Location:** La Cuchara

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 20+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Ben spent 15 years working under several notable chefs in his career before La Cuchara, like Chef Cindy Wolf, who is also featured on this list. His extensive travels through the Basque parts of Spain and France led him to share the cuisine of the region with Baltimore, when he opened his first restaurant, La Cuchara, in 2015.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He was Chef de Cuisine at Gerard's Place, for Gerard Pangaud, a 2-Michelin star chef. He was also Executive Chef for Petit Louis Bistro.

Links: [Website](#)

### 4. Julian Marucci

**Location:** Tagliata

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Partner

**Experience:** 19+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Julian taught himself how to cook from age 13 on. He got his start in the industry with Chef Cindy Wolf, who also appears on this list, at her James Beard

Award-nominated restaurant, Charleston. He later rose to be the executive chef for two popular spots in Baltimore, Cinghiale and Pazo.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He originally was hired as the Cinghiale sous chef, but was promoted to executive chef less than a month later. He was also named one of the *Baltimore Business Journal's* "40 Under 40" in 2015.

Links: [Website](#)

## 5. Scott Bacon

**Location:** Magdalena, A Maryland Bistro

**Profession/Category:** Executive Chef

**Experience:** 12+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Scott Bacon's first passion was music, but he picked up a job as a line cook when studying to be a musician. Eventually he became a sous chef while working at Cinghiale, a restaurant owned by the #1 chef in Baltimore, Cindy Wolf. His food combines training in classic French cuisine and influences from his Southern Black and English heritage.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He is the first Black executive chef for Magdalena, which is the restaurant for the only Relais & Chateaux accredited luxury hotel in Maryland, The Ivy Hotel. He reached this position at the young age of 31.

Links: [Website](#)

## 6. Chris Amendola

**Location:** foraged

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 20+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Amendola got his start as a sous chef in Florida, but it wasn't until a few years later that he found his niche. While working at McCrady's in Charleston, with the James Beard Award-winning chef, Sean Brock, he learned how to forage for ingredients. His love for discovering food in the wild led him to establishing foraged, his farm-to-table restaurant, in 2017.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He studied at the Southeast College of Culinary Arts and has worked under award-winning chefs. His restaurant, foraged, was featured in *Baltimore Magazine's* Best Restaurants in 2022.

Links: [Website](#)

## 7. Ashish Alfred

**Location:** Duck Duck Goose, George's Chophouse

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 10+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Inspired by watching the Food Network, Chef Ashish trained at the French Culinary Institute in New York. However, his career was hindered by his personal struggle with drugs and alcohol. Once he found sobriety, he opened his take on a French Brasserie, Duck Duck Goose, in Bethesda, MD in 2016, which was followed by a Baltimore location in 2018. He now has multiple restaurants and his own restaurant group.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: He was named Chef of the Year by the Restaurant Association of Maryland in 2019. His restaurant has also been featured in "Best of" lists by *Southern Living* and *Baltimore Magazine*. He has also been invited to cook at the James Beard House

Links: [Website](#)

## 8. Jerry Trice

**Location:** Gunther & Co

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 10+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Jerry studied at the Culinary Institute of America and has worked throughout the mid-Atlantic region for years, at restaurants such as Yin Yankee and Sam's on the Waterfront. His approach to food relies heavily on using locally sourced and seasonal ingredients, which he attributes to the impression made on him by his grandfather, who taught him to avoid food waste as well as to hunt and fish.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: Prior to opening Gunther & Co, he gained notice for establishing the first food truck in the region to be operated restaurant style. This truck, ChefDriven, was named by the *Washingtonian* and the *Washington Post* to be the Top Food Truck of 2012.

Links: [Website](#)

## 9. Steve Chu

**Location:** Ekiben

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 10+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Steve Chu was raised by a chef father, but he did not immediately pursue the field himself, as his father did not want him to work in the restaurant industry. However, Chef Steve found himself dreaming of pursuing a career in food while he studied at university, and eventually began to work in kitchens. His start was at Petit Louis Bistro (owned by Cindy Wolf, #1 on this list), where he worked under Chef Ben Lefenfeld, who also ranks on this list.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: Ekiben has been listed in Yelp's Top 100 US Restaurants and has been lauded in publications like *Vogue*, *Travel & Leisure*, and *Eater*. Chef Steve also made headlines when he personally drove six hours to Vermont to serve a customer and fan of Ekiben, who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer, her favorite dish, cooked fresh.

**Links:** [Website](#)

#### 10. Maria Kaimakis

**Location:** Cypriana

**Profession/Category:** Chef and Owner

**Experience:** 25+ years

How They Got Into the Industry: Chef Maria first learned to cook traditional Greek food at age 18, while staying in Chios, with her grandmother. She opened Cypriana as a food cart in 1991, but it has since evolved into a cafe with multiple locations and a more upscale restaurant.

Interesting Stats/Accomplishments: Cypriana has become a mainstay of Baltimore cuisine, and their falafels have been voted the Best in Baltimore more than 12 times. Cypriana has also been featured by *Eater* and the *Baltimore Sun*.

**Links:** [Website](#)

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