

# THE CHEAP LIST

A roster of maximum deliciousness and minimal wallet stress.

## The Brooklyn Star

33 Havemeyer St., nr. N. 7th St.,  
Williamsburg; 718-599-9899

JOAQUIN BACA HAS COOKED in Texas, New Mexico, and, more recently, Momofuku Noodle Bar, where dishes like shrimp and grits and crispy pig's tails bore his boldly seasoned, down-home mark. At the Brooklyn Star, his first solo effort, he ventures even deeper into regional-American territory with a concise menu of small and large plates, all exactly what you'd be thrilled to find at

the end of a dirt road in Mississippi or an off-the-beaten-path stretch of Williamsburg. It is imperative that your meal begin with warm, flaky biscuits and honey butter, but after that, the choice is yours: a bowl of subtly spiced and exceedingly tender Dr Pepper riblets (\$16), say, or collard greens with not only ham hocks but—a rare yet happy discovery—some green, springy life left in them. Baca puts his century-old brick oven to good use for skillet-baked cornbread, and also for a perfectly cooked, herb-packed whole trout with blistered skin and a toothsome side of

creamed corn. Liquor license—and PBR on tap—pending.

## Dinner at 'wichcraft

11 E. 20th, nr. Broadway; 212-780-0577

TOM COLICCHIO'S spiffy sandwich chainlet does gangbuster business at breakfast and lunch, but languishes at dinner. To correct that imbalance, his minions have instituted a pilot program at the Flatiron location with dedicated dinner service (and waiters, wine, and candlelight). While the not-so-small plates here don't cost less than lunch, the miracle is they don't cost much more—especially for such thoughtfully conceived, creatively executed food. Particularly impressive: an aromatic fluke sevice with green mango and watermelon (\$9), pork and pickle (slow-roasted shoulder, with grain mustard and bread-and-butter pickles; \$11), rich sweet-pea cannelloni brightened with lemon (\$9), and a simple salad of sliced avocado with pickled onions, slivered radish, and a knockout black-chile garnish (\$8). The wine list is varied and gently priced, and there's limited seating on a roof deck that adjoins the second-floor dining room. For a sandwich shop, it makes a surprisingly nice date place, and we never thought we'd say that.

## El Almacén

557 Driggs Ave., nr. N. 7th St., Williamsburg  
718-218-7284

EL ALMACÉN, a rustic re-creation of an old-fashioned Buenos Aires general store, breaks the usual Argentine-menu mold by taking a broader Pan-Latino approach. So although the kitchen does proper justice to the grass-fed Uruguayan beef—in particular the juicy, flavorful entraña, or skirt steak (\$18)—it rounds out the offerings with lively innovations like short-rib tacos drizzled with chimichurri (\$9), lightly breaded calamari in a lulo-citrus vinaigrette (\$9), and the textural miracle that is avocado fries, wedges of the buttery fruit coated in panko crumbs and deep-fried (\$5). One way to celebrate summer (and the arrival of the long-

awaited wine-and-beer license): Commandeer a table in the garden and share the "parrillada" (\$38), a mixed grill of short rib, rib eye, and chorizo, carted out on a varnished tree stump of a serving platter and garnished with shishito peppers, chimichurri, and potatoes.

## Farinella

90 Worth St., nr. Broadway; 212-608-3222

A RARE FIND in the culinarily barren Civic Center, this Italian bakery specializes in the four-foot-long Roman-style pizza al taglio that chef Alberto Cretara learned to make in the Eternal City. But we have a confession: Even more than the thin, crispy slices, we love his slightly sunken calzoni (especially the escarole-and-olive-stuffed Portalba; \$7), and his sandwiches, served either on crusty focaccia or house-baked rustic white bread. The Cuma (\$9.25), with its molting eggplant and smoked mozzarella, is especially winning—as are the Italian amenities, like Sanbittèr soda and good espresso.

## Get Fresh Table and Market

370 Fifth Ave., nr. 5th St., Park Slope  
718-360-8469

AT THIS gourmet grocery-cum-restaurant, provenance is all. Your order will come, no doubt, with a spiel: the name of the woman who made the crackers, the man who made the bread, the farm that supplied the beet tops garnishing your heritage-pork tenderloin. Somehow, though, none of that comes off as TMI, maybe because it's hard not to appreciate the care that goes into the cooking and the genuine enthusiasm of the staff (who include, by the way, former *Top Chef* contestant Mark Simmons). On the current menu, the lentil dal (\$8) resonates with flavor, and impeccably fresh peas and mint enliven a simple plate of roast chicken (\$16). It's BYO for now, but a local wineshop makes deliveries, and the coffee comes from Stumptown and Intelligentsia. Snag a seat in the serene backyard, where a vegetable garden is planted with herbs and



Sel de Mer