Game of Chicken

Ridiculously good birds that everyone's crowing about.

WHOLE ROASTED CHICKEN FOR TWO

Nomad Hotel, *New York City*

Chef Daniel Humm and restaurateur Will Guidara like to tease those who order this dish at their polished, low-lit restaurant. First, a server brings out a cast-iron pot holding a caramel-toned chicken smelling of the foie-gras-and-black-truffle mixture that was piped under the skin. But you get only a quick glimpse before it's whisked back into the kitchen. After what feels like an eternity (but is just a few minutes), the chicken returns, carved into portions, alongside a truffled potato purée and a tiny bowl of dark leg meat sautéed with shallots and morels. One bite confirms it: this ultimate elevation of a once humble meal deserves a spot in the pantheon of New York's most decadent dishes. *thenomadhotel.com; $90.*

ROAST CHICKEN WITH WARM BREAD SALAD FOR TWO

Zuni Café, *San Francisco*

One of the city's most iconic dishes, unaltered since the late chef-owner Judy Rodgers first served it in 1987, is brilliantly simple. Small, organic birds emerge crisp-skinned and juicy from a wood-burning brick oven and get plated over a salad that's just as essential as the chicken: grilled, torn rustic bread tossed in a vibrant vinaigrette with sautéed scallions, garlic, baby mustard greens, dried currants, pine nuts, and—crucially—chicken drippings, so those savory juices seep into the bread below. *zunicafe.com; $54.*

HOT CHICKEN

Hattie B's, *Nashville*

If you don't know hot chicken, it's time to get familiar with Nashville's claim to culinary fame. There are many places in Music City to find these oily, crispy, cayenne-laced (or -laden) birds, but family-owned Hattie B's stands out for its levels of heat. From noon to night, antsy customers form a line around the block for breasts, thighs, and wings labeled as "hot," "damn hot," or "shut the cluck up." Those who triumph head to communal tables, baskets in hand, where white bread and pickles await to temper the burn. *hattieb.com; from $9.*

Chef's pick

"The burger at **Husk**, in Charleston, South Carolina, has a great smoky beef flavor, and I love that they use American cheese. Not to mention the bun is perfect, because it smashes down just so." *huskrestaurant.com; $14.* —**Naomi Pomeroy** BEAST, PORTLAND, OREGON