

Pie and the Sky: Take your dining outdoors this season



This year so far has given us snow, rain, more rain and grey skies. RI doesn't get the promised four seasons. Growing up, it was a joke that our seasons are autumn, winter, half winter, roadwork, summer. Really though, it's all just roadwork. In the hopes that summer weather will soon be here, I have compiled a list of restaurants with good views and even better food to appease the weather gods.

We all know the Rhode Island Staples of Summer. You have Chelo's by the Water, De Pasquale Square on Federal Hill, and essentially all of Newport as the go-to areas for that nice view while you eat your lobster roll. I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with these places, but isn't it nice to just spice it up a bit? Here are a few new ones to try.

English Muffin (1989 Plainfield Pike, Johnston) Always busy, always delicious. The English Muffin is a great breakfast place if you love large portions, pancakes and hot chocolate with a mountain of whipped cream. When the weather is nice, they have the patio set up for those who want to eat their breakfast and enjoy the breeze. They serve breakfast and lunch four days a week, but Wednesday through Friday, they stay open late for dinner. The homey atmosphere will make you want to go back for more.

Corner Bistro (1115 Hartford Pike, No. Scituate) Way out in the woods on the corner of 101 and 102 is a little restaurant disguised as a house called Corner Bistro. This family owned business offers everyone's Italian favorites. Although it isn't on Federal Hill, Corner Bistro boasts a large menu that can placate everyone's food cravings. There's a balance of chicken, beef and seafood meals, so there's a bit more variety than some of the other spots on the list.

Finn's Harborside (38 Water St., East Greenwich) Neighbors to the RI famous Chelo's by the Water, Finn's Harborside has a fantastic patio/dock hybrid. So if you've got a boat, feel free to come right up

through the patio and the waitstaff will be happy to get you seated. From the lobster rolls to the calamari, there isn't a thing at Finn's that I haven't loved eating. What's best about this place is that there's no rush to get you moving, a sentiment that can be found at all the restaurants on this guide. So relax, order another drink and another tray of oysters, and get settled in for the night.

Blackey's Bulldog Tavern (181 George Washington Highway, Smithfield) Always packed, but worth the wait. Blackey's is an American eatery with a laid-back atmosphere. If you can stand the wait (or just make reservations beforehand), the food at Blackey's is worth every minute, and they have a menu for those with gluten intolerances and other dietary needs. Their buffalo dip and margherita pizza are on both menus and are definitely worth a taste.

The Simple Greek Located in Garden City in Cranston, this restaurant is exactly what it claims to be: simple Mediterranean food from lamb to baklava. The Simple Greek is set up akin to Chipotle; you pick what type of meal you want and add what you think looks good as you walk down the queue. The Simple Greek also boasts a covered patio to shelter you from the harsh summer sun. It's good food that doesn't bust the bank, which is always a win. Plus, you don't feel bad for eating it.

Matunuck Oyster Bar (629 Succotash Rd, Wakefield) A bit far south in the state for some, but I promise it is worth the drive. Matunuck Oyster Bar is a great place if you love taking your time and enjoying your meal. The food is all sourced from local farms and ponds, which is a plus for small businesses all around. Matunuck's menu boasts a medley of different seafood dishes. Oysters can be found as appetizers and as main entrees. And if raw oysters aren't your thing, maybe enjoy a cup of clam chowder or my personal favorite, the king crab legs.

Two Ten Oyster Bar & Grille (210 Salt Pond Rd, South Kingstown) Another South County gem. Just like Matunuck Oyster Bar (which is not that far from here) Two Ten has beautiful views of the ocean and a fantastic menu. Oysters, of course, are one of the best things to get and share with the table. Like Finn's, the restaurant has a dock where you can self-park your boat. Their menu is full of fishy and land-dwelling options.

Dune Brothers Seafood (1 Ship St, Providence) Dune Brothers Seafood was started by a couple of guys living in Portland from the East Coast who reworked the chowder shacks of typical New England summer nights to something more modern. Owners Jason Hegedus and Nicholas Gillespie source all their ingredients from local fishermen and farmers. With resumes from restaurants in Boston, New York and Portland, Nick and Jason have the know-how to recreate your favorites. Their clam chowder has chunks of locally sourced littlenecks. For those trying to get through the summer without gaining an extra person, they also offer a light salad. Their "dock-to-dish" method means you get New England seafood with every meal.

Ogie's Trailer Park (1155 Westminster St, PVD) For the 20- and 30-something crowd, Ogie's gives off that carefree, dive-bar-but-not-really vibe. Their outdoor bar area follows the theme of eclectic, trailer park aesthetic. Didn't know that was a thing, did you? It is true Americana cuisine: from the burgers to the tater tots, it's simple, good eats. The menu is short, but fantastic, and you can't go wrong with the truffle tots and a burger.