

# FORK IN THE ROAD

## Classic Midwestern dishes

Hit the road, and fuel up with specialties of each state

BY KATHERINE RODEGHIER | Chicago Tribune

Eating local takes on new meaning in the Midwest, where every state has at least one iconic food. Sweet or savory, there's often a story behind each dish or the place that serves it. So when you hit the road, take time to sample local color along with native cuisine.



KATHERINE RODEGHIER/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The decor of the Mayberry Cafe in Danville, Ind., takes inspiration from "The Andy Griffith Show."

### Indiana

Pork tenderloin sandwiches fill plates across the Hoosier state. Nick's Kitchen in Huntington claims it was the first to serve them in 1908. Resembling Wiener schnitzel, but with pork subbing in for veal, the meat is pounded thin to the size of a dinner plate, breaded and either deep-fried, grilled or blackened. Top it with tomato, lettuce, onion and mayo. Because it laughably overwhelms its bun, aficionados debate how it should be eaten: edges first or by cutting the meat and stacking tall between the bread; [www.nickskitchen.net](http://www.nickskitchen.net).

More than 50 restaurants appear on the Tenderloin Trail in Hamilton County ([www.visithamiltoncounty.com/tenderloin](http://www.visithamiltoncounty.com/tenderloin)) and honor the humble meal with Tenderloin Tuesday deals in July. One of them, Dooley O'Tooles in Carmel, serves a hormone- and antibiotic-free version that ranks as its best-selling sandwich.

Dine farther south on Andy's Tenderloin at the Mayberry Cafe, and you may leave whistling the theme song of "The Andy Griffith Show" that plays on screens inside. Framed quotes from the TV classic hang on the wall of this Danville eatery; [www.mayberrycafe.com](http://www.mayberrycafe.com).

In Indy, wrap your hands around basketball lore and the Hoosier Tenderloin at Plump's Last Shot. The hole-in-the-wall sports bar is owned by Bobby Plump, who made the game-winning jump shot in the 1954 high school state basketball championship that inspired the film "Hoosiers."

For something sweet, head to Winchester to try sugar cream pie, named the Hoosier State Pie in honor of Duane "Wick" Wickersham, who operated a restaurant in the 1940s that served the pie made from his grandmother's recipe. It became such a hit that the family went into the pie-production business. Wick's Pies ships sugar cream and other varieties across the U.S. Sit down for a slice at Mrs. Wick's Bakery & Cafe, down the street from the pie factory; [www.wickspies.com/bakery-cafe](http://www.wickspies.com/bakery-cafe).



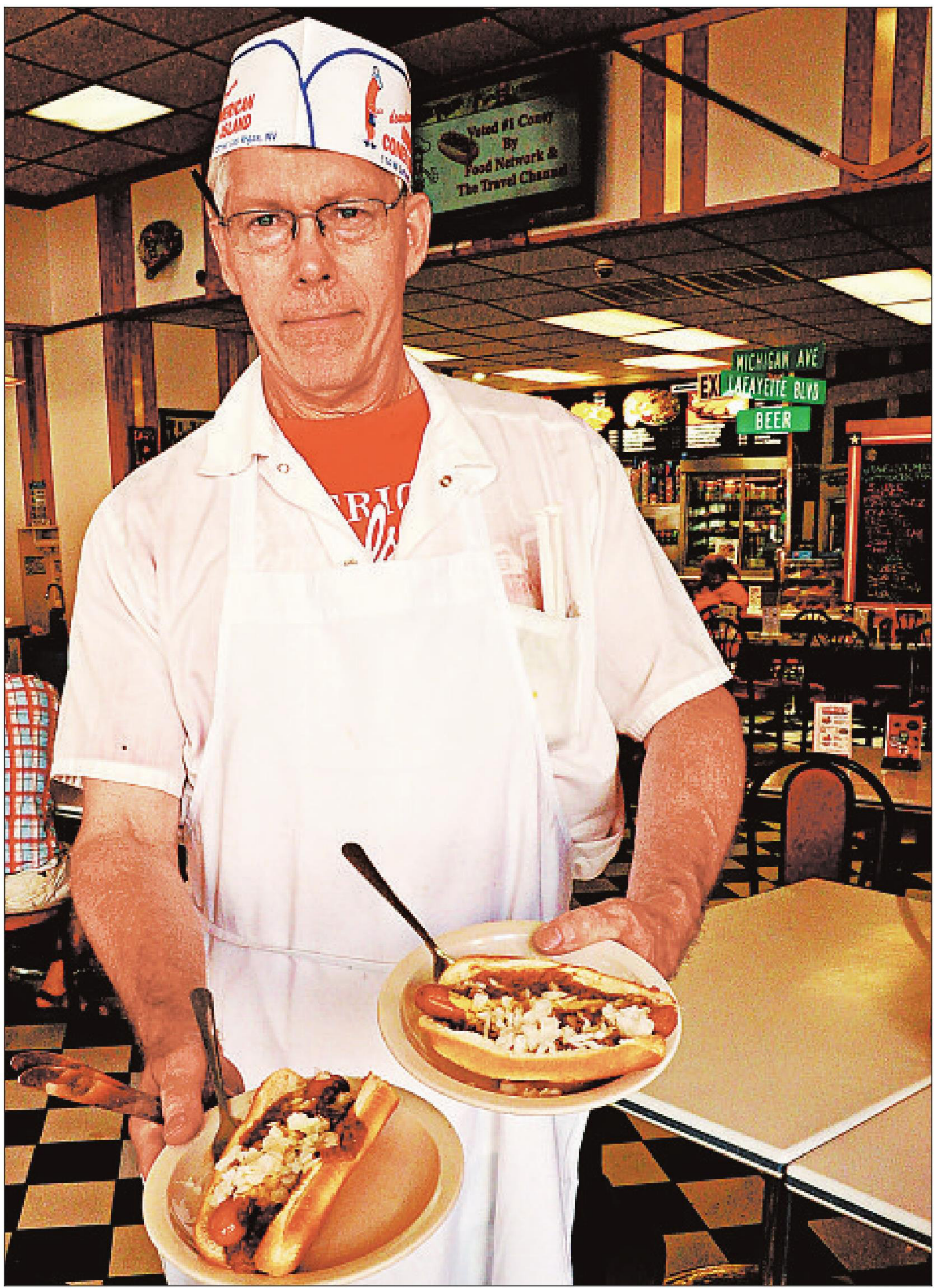
IOWA TOURISM OFFICE

The pork tenderloin sandwich at Nick's Restaurant in Des Moines, Iowa, was named No. 1 in the state last year.

### Iowa

The Iowa Pork Producers Association challenges Hoosiers in pork tenderloin sandwich superiority. Each year, it singles out an eatery serving the best pork tenderloin sandwiches in the No. 1 pork-producing state in the U.S. The 2016 winner, Nick's Restaurant in Des Moines, serves a thousand a week. Every morning, former stockbroker Nick Iaria cuts and tenderizes pork loins — fresh, never frozen — and sells the sandwiches in queen- and king-size portions; [www.eatnicksloins.com](http://www.eatnicksloins.com).

Another Iowa favorite, the loose-meat sandwich, came about when Muscatine butcher Fred Angell tinkered with cuts and grinds of meat along with blends of spices. In 1926 he offered his sandwich to a deliveryman who proclaimed, "This sandwich is made right." The Maid-Rite Corp. now has franchises across Iowa and in some surrounding states. The original sandwiches are made with freshly ground beef and secret seasoning served on a steamed bun. One of the earliest franchises, Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown, has the look and feel of a retro diner; [www.maidrite.com](http://www.maidrite.com).



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The coney dogs at American Coney Island in Detroit rival those of its next door neighbor, Lafayette Coney Island.

### Michigan

Chicago hot dogs? Bah! Detroiters say there's nothing like their coney dogs. Brought to the D by Greek immigrants passing through New York, possibly picking up a Coney Island hot dog on the way, these wursts are topped with beef sauce, diced onions and yellow mustard and tucked into a white bun.

A fierce rivalry exists between two no-frills coney restaurants next to each other downtown: American Coney Island and Lafayette Coney Island. Have one at each, and decide for yourself who's top dog.

You'll discover a taste of Cornwall, England, when you bite into a pasty in the Upper Peninsula. Cornish miners immigrated to the U.P. in the 1800s, bringing their traditional meat pies with them into the copper mines. The meat, potatoes, onions and rutabaga baked in pastry made a filling midday meal. Pasties became so popular with Yoopers that other ethnic groups adopted them.

Brian Harsch, owner of Jean Kay's Pasties & Subs in Marquette, bakes pasties the way his grandma did. He takes pride not only in selling to locals but in shipping the savory comfort food coast-to-coast; [www.jeankayspasties.com](http://www.jeankayspasties.com).



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Storyteller Don Makuen, left, and boil master Dan Cegelski entertain guests during the fish boil at Rowleys Bay Resort in Ellison Bay, Wis.

### Wisconsin

The nickname Cheeseheads is often evoked in Green Bay Packer territory, a logical place to look for the state's iconic cheese curds. Formed when separating milk solids from whey, fresh curds squeak when you eat them.

Family-owned Scray Cheese Co. has been making cheese since 1924. Take a drive into the country to its factory store in De Pere, and you might catch a glimpse of the cheese-making process before you pick up a bag of fresh cheddar curds. Too lazy to get out of the car? Pull up to the drive-thru window, or go online and order a package shipped to you; [www.scraycheese.com](http://www.scraycheese.com).

For an elegant take on the humble curd, make a dinner reservation at the farm-to-table restaurant at Green Bay's Hinterland Brewery. A favorite on the appetizer menu, Caprine Supreme Goat Curds comes fried with a side of kimchi ketchup; [www.hinterlandbeer.com/restaurants/green-bay](http://www.hinterlandbeer.com/restaurants/green-bay).

Fish boils are found throughout Wisconsin but are especially popular in Door County. The outdoor cooking process begins when a large kettle of salted water is set to boil over a hardwood fire. Potatoes, onions and whitefish are added. When the boil master throws kerosene on the flames, the kettle boils over in a fiery display. The fish, potatoes and onions are removed and served with drawn butter, coleslaw and bread.

Rowleys Bay Resort in Ellison Bay adds an element of storytelling to its boil with an actor playing pioneer Peter Rowley spinning a humorous yarn about local history; [www.rowleysbayresort.com](http://www.rowleysbayresort.com).



HARRIS PIZZA

Quad City-style pizza is an iconic food on both the Illinois and Iowa sides of the Mississippi River.

### Illinois

Sure, Chicago is known for pizza, but look west to the Mississippi River for a different take. Quad Cities-style pizza isn't cut in wedges, but in rectangular scissor strips. Cornmeal lightly layers the bottom of the thin crust, and cheese usually goes on top of other ingredients. Crumbled sausage is a must and some varieties add fennel seeds.

Family-owned Harris Pizza started a half century ago, and now the second and third generation operate three locations in addition to the original in Rock Island; [www.harrispizza.com](http://www.harrispizza.com).

Springfield's culinary claim to fame, the horseshoe sandwich, originated in the 1920s at what was then the Leland Hotel. Served open face on Texas toast, it has a choice of meat topped by fries and a cheese sauce. Too much? Order the smaller pony shoe.

D'Arcy's Pint adds corned beef to its meat options in keeping with its Irish theme; [www.darcyspintonline.com](http://www.darcyspintonline.com). Charlie Parker's Diner, featured on Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives," serves a breakfast "shoe" with an egg. Hash browns substitute for fries; [www.charlieparkersdiner.net](http://www.charlieparkersdiner.net).

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