



The sucky economy brought us a parade of fantastically affordable new eateries. Thanks, mortgage crisis! Illustrations by **Kali Ciesemier**

Aamchi Pao

Why we love it: Erstwhile Indian Bread Co. is reborn as a sleek sandwich shop that specializes in upmarket spins on Bombay-style street food, with a focus on *pao*—meat and vegetable sammies served like sliders on ghee-griddled buns.

Top picks for \$10 and under: We drool for potato and coconut chutney pao (\$3), chicken and chili ketchup pao (\$4) and the copious side of fiery fried Manchurian cauliflower (\$3). 194 Bleeker St between MacDougal St and Sixth Ave (212-228-1909)

Arepa Arepa

Why we love it: Despite its obnoxious location (surrounded by Laundromats, bodegas and whooping car stereos), this minimalist 30-seater stands to dethrone the Caracas outpost around the corner.

Top picks for \$10 and under: You'll forget where you are as soon as you sink your chompers into a *pescado* (\$6), loaded with feathery tilapia and studded with bits of onion, tomato and parsley. A simple plate of fried plantains (\$3)—fanned out, drizzled with honey and sprinkled with Venezuelan *queso blanco*—works as an elegant side, especially when chased with a pineapple, cilantro and lime smoothie (\$4). 160 Havemeyer St between South 2nd and 3rd Sts, Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-388-5797)

B-Bap Fusion Rice Bar

Why we love it: This narrow slice of storefront exclusively peddles *bibimbap*—Korean rice bowls overflowing with veggies and meat that you can either customize or order à la carte. The

portions are so generous it's nearly impossible to eat the whole thing in one sitting.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Unless you go hog wild designing your own bowl, nothing on the menu surpasses a Hamilton. A standout is the Spicy Chicken B-Bap (\$8.50) made with fragrant green-tea rice, egg, mixed greens, crunchy nuts, steamed mushrooms, zucchini and chili pepper sauce that will have your lips burning long after you've devoured it. Put out the three-alarm fire with a pulpy Haitai crushed apple drink (\$2.50). 830 Ninth Ave between 54th and 55th Sts (212-315-0033, *b-bap.com*)

Baquette

Why we love it: Michael "Bao" Hyunh's second outpost of Baquette, perhaps the most inviting of the bunch (the brand is rapidly colonizing New York), is about much more than sandwiches. Along with classic *banh mi* (\$5), there are refreshing cold noodles with charred proteins on top and exceptional bowls of soup.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Beef B'un Bo (cold

Cheap eats

rice noodles topped with grilled Vietnamese beef, \$9), spicy beef pho (\$8) or a Sloppy Bao (\$7) keep us coming back for more. 37 St. Marks Pl between Second and Third Aves (212-380-1487)

Bouley Bakery

Why we love it: It's not often that you can eat the cuisine of a star chef for less than a tenner, but at David Bouley's casual café and market, that's exactly what you get. Everything is self-service (no tip!) and there's a comfortable dining room with upholstered chairs and marble tables, where you can feast in a civilized setting.

Top picks for \$10 and under:

Unless you're loading up on cold salads (recommended: string-beans-and-walnut or olive-and-almond salad), skip the often-tepid \$10-per-pound gourmet food bar. More avocado is a meal of the chicken-avocado sandwich served on a crusty baguette (\$7.50), followed by a flaky *pain pear au chocolat* (\$3.50). It is a bakery, after all. 120 West Broadway at Duane St (212-608-5829, davidbouley.com)

Brooklyn Ice House

Why we love it: Owner Trevor Budd's expertly crafted, extensive international and local beer list belies the *Big Buck Hunter* game, \$4 draft-beer happy hour and homemade patio tables at this lovable, low-key dive.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Stick with the lowbrow and order two smoked pulled-pork sandwiches on soft white buns with neon-green pickles and barbecue sauce on the side (\$5). 318 Van Brunt St at Pioneer St, Red Hook, Brooklyn (718-222-1865)

Defonte's of Brooklyn

Why we love it: The monstrous sandwiches at this long-awaited Manhattan outpost of a Red Hook favorite make it possible to get two meals out of a single sub, significantly cutting the cost of your chow.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Try the roast beef, mozzarella and fried eggplant on pillowy Italian bread (\$9.75), or the Dino, stuffed with homemade meatballs (\$8.50). 261 Third Ave at 21st St (212-614-1500, defontesofbrooklyn.com)

Doc's

Why we love it: Sheer volume and short lines are the biggest draws of Doc's soul-food takeaway menu. Arrive early in the day for mac and cheese and baked chicken fresh from the oven.

Top picks for \$10 and

under: A roasted chicken thigh (\$2.50) or six charred and sticky rib tips (\$7.95) both come with fries, but if you prefer, add on a generous side of sweet potatoes bathed in butter and brown sugar (\$1.50). Bookend that meal with sweet tea (\$1.25)



and a slice of red velvet cake (\$3.75). 1902 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd (Seventh Ave) between 115th and 116th Sts (212-222-8820)

HB Burger

Why we love it: The proximity of Heartland Brewery's burger restaurant to Times Square pretty much guarantees tourists, but look past them: The straightforward, griddle-seared patties are juicy and bursting with beefy flavor.

Top picks for \$10 and under: The burger with fries is \$10, but for 50¢ more you can get bacon-cheese Tater-Tots—a defensible splurge. 127 W 43rd St between Broadway and Sixth Ave (212-575-5848)

La Superior

Why we love it: Picture the best taco truck in L.A. doing it up restaurant-style in Williamsburg and you're halfway there.

Streetwise takes on tacos (\$2.50–\$3.50) and quesadillas (\$3.50) abound, but good luck tearing yourself away from the baseball-size gorditas overflowing with mild *requesón* and slick, orange chorizo (\$5 for two), or the exceptional *sopa tarasca* (\$6), a traditional black bean soup punched up with ancho chili goodness.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Invest in four \$2.50 tacos (we're fans of the juice-squirting carne asada and *carnitas* varieties), or the more dignified *torta ahogada*—pork confit and black beans bundled in a sourdough roll and swirled with tongue-lashing *arbolsauce*—for \$8. 295 Berry St at South 2nd St, Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-388-5988)

Lansky's

Why we love it: You'll need to unhinge your jaw to wrap your mouth around the sandwiches (most of which are less than \$10) at this classic Jewish deli. The dining room's retro look and homey, outsize portions will bring you back to Bubbe's kitchen.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Make a meal of the soothing chicken noodle matzo ball soup (\$4.50) served in a bowl that could double as a birdbath. Those who bleed for red meat will appreciate the Lansky's grilled cheese (\$9.25), made with cheddar, crispy pastrami and tomato on rye, or a juicy ten-ounce cheeseburger blanketed with mushrooms (\$7.70). Bonus: Sour pickles and creamy homemade coleslaw are free when you dine in. 235 Columbus Ave between 70th and 71st Sts (212-787-0400, lanskysnyc.com)

Momokawa

Why we love it: Though the trip to your table is a bit of a challenge (factor in the subterranean entrance and spiral staircase that

eventually lead to the dining area), once you overcome it, you'll be rewarded with a gem of a restaurant. The draw here are *ippin*, or small plates—at least two dozen priced at less than \$10—designed to pair with sake.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Don't miss Berkshire pork simmered with brown sugar and soy sauce (\$8) or sliced tomato with *fleur de sel* (\$3). 157 E 28th St between Lexington and Third Aves (212-684-7830, momokawanyc.com)

Pollos 36

Why we love it: This friendly little hole-in-the-wall has a hearty Peruvian and Colombian menu that provides numerous combos of delicious deals. Portions are generous, rice and beans are restorative, and Inca Kola is served in sundae glasses with crushed ice and a straw.

Top picks for \$10 and under: A quarter juicy roasted chicken with expertly caramelized skin (\$3) and a side order of *tostones* (fried plantains, \$2.75) make a straight-up satisfying meal, or go with the almost soulful *arroz con pollo* (\$4.25). Either way, make sure you ask for some of the punchy pale-green hot sauce. 36-02 Steinway St at 36th Ave, Astoria, Queens (718-786-9030)

Tasty Hand-Pulled Noodle Inc.

Why we love it: While this Chinatown noodle shop is a bit out of the way, the priciest item on the menu is \$6.50. That'll even get you plates of the more traditional and adventurous meat options, like lamb, tripe or oxtail.

Top picks for \$10 and under: The beef hand-pulled noodles—a large, steaming, pho-style soup with thinly sliced, broth-cooked beef, plus spinach, green onions, ginger and cilantro—is a feast for a mere \$5. 1 Doyers St between Pell St and Bowery (212-791-1817)

Tortilleria Nixtamal

Why we love it: Mexican eateries are ubiquitous in Corona, but unlike most, this sunny, family-run *tortilleria* painstakingly grinds corn into fresh masa for many of its dishes. This means that the tamales are delicate and fluffy, and profoundly corny tortillas envelop fillings such as fried skate in the first-rate fish tacos.

Top picks for \$10 and under: The Italian tamale (\$2.50) is a melting-pot marvel of steamy masa, sausage, peppers and mozzarella. 104-05 47th Ave at 104th St, Corona, Queens (718-699-2434)

Wilfie & Nell

Why we love it: The budget menu at West Village bar Wilfie & Nell—courtesy of Momofuku alum Joaquin Baca—is designed to complement, not upstage, your frothy pint.

Top picks for \$10 and under: Drink to a pair of succulent Berkshire pork sliders with McClure's pickles (\$10) or a fine grilled Gruyère on Blue Ribbon pullman bread (\$7). 228 W 4th St between Seventh Ave and 10th St (212-242-2990, wilfieandnell.com)

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