

# Best of 2011

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## For as much as things change in Milwaukee

— and, really, things do — just as much stays the same. Our very first Best Of issue, which hit the stands all the way back in October 1982, is littered with little nuggets of truth that, all these years later, remain resonant. Once you get past the outdated graphics, disturbing black and white photos of a mustachioed Bob Reitman and of Joel McNally looking, well, exactly the same, and the inevitable retro campiness of it all, strong parallels emerge.

For example, in 1982, Speed Queen was singled out for its great barbecue chicken. Today, it's spoken of with words like "icon" and "institution," and is thusly heading to our Hall of Fame. In 1982, the Pet Lawn Cemetery & Crematory took home Best Pet Cemetery honors. Today, our pick for Best Dog Stories, the Kindred Spirits Animal Communication company, could perhaps enable you to check in with some of those long-dead pets. In 1982, a clever quip scrawled on a bathroom stall at the long-closed Coffee Trader ("When incognito, do as the cognitions do") was awarded Best Graffiti. Today, we again praise that unsanctioned form of public art — Jesse Graves' eco-friendly mud-made graffiti. Finally, in 1982, the pasties on the dancers at Rickey's Tavern enticed us, and now it's the fluffy puff pastries of Julia's bureks that caught our eye. See, it's all cyclical. The past is more present than ever, and our Retro sidebar is further proof.

You'd think after putting out a Best Of issue every year for nearly three decades — that's roughly 2,500 items — Milwaukee would run out of things worth celebrating. You'd be wrong. The following pages are filled with more than 80 illustrious items, from the attractive and the absurd to the tasty and the trendy. And, for the first time, we let you in on the fun. In what will become an annual feature, we opened up a recent dining story ("Best Pizzas," March 2010) to public voting. Keep reading to find out which pizza place is the city's favorite. Although we hope decades from now, you won't look back and snicker at our silly graphics and sillier facial hair, we are, at the very least, confident this list will hold up as well as our first. (ES)

44  
*Sports*

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*Kids*

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*Food*

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*Bars*

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*Arts*

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*Shopping*

*Etc.*





STYLE  
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5

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## Food

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to soak up every drop of the broth with your bread. (BM)

### CLEVER NAME

As clever names go, **Challahluyah!** ("Heavenly homemade challah at the JCC") is downright divine. And the bread, subtly sweet and golden glazed, is pretty darn good, too. Every week, Whitefish Bay's Laurie Biskowitz bakes more than 100 of these luscious loaves, which are available every Friday for just \$4. (ES)

### FISHMONGER

Want fresh seafood? Head to **Empire Fish** (11200 Watertown Plank Rd.) for the highest quality in the Milwaukee area. From local Rushing Waters trout to South American mahi mahi filets, Dan Ryan delivers a large selection to his customers. You'll also find wines, seasonings and other great accoutrements to complete your meal. (KL)

### INEXPENSIVE PASTA

Spaghetti alla marinara for \$7? Fettuccine Alfredo for \$9? Lobster ravioli with garlic cream sauce for \$12? The prices are hard to believe at **centro café** (808 E. Center St.), but the quality is good, and the cozy atmosphere is reminiscent of a Greenwich Village bistro. (BM)

### REASON TO NOT COOK

Julia Asimi's mom taught her how to make buttery puff pastry and stuff it with delectable fillings such as beef, feta and spinach. Today, she makes **Julia's bureks** ([madi-sonavemarket.com](http://madi-sonavemarket.com)) by hand in her South Milwaukee kitchen, so you don't have to. Order 12 of them and get free home delivery, or just grab one for \$4.99 in the frozen food aisles of stores like Pick n' Save, Gloriosos's, Piggly Wiggly and Grasc's. (JH)

### NEW CHEESE

In a state with more than 1,000 dairy products, new cheeses are a

dime a dozen. Not so with **Evalon**. This Gouda-esque raw goat's milk cheese from LaClare Farms is only the second non-cow's milk cheese ever to be crowned in the U.S. Cheese Championship. (JH)

### GOBI MANCHURIAN

Cauliflower has never looked better. Imagine the vegetable – lightly battered and deep-fried – in a sauce whose tanginess can be traced to ketchup. Stop imagining and go get this princely dish at **Indian Bazaar** (5254 S. 27th St.). (AC)

### FROYO FREE-FOR-ALL

Strawberries and Oreos and peanuts and hot fudge and ... gasp ... cookie dough and M&Ms and kiwi and jelly beans ... OK, you get it. There are a lot of choices at **Yo Mamma!** (1349 Wauwatosa Ave., Wauwatosa) frozen yogurt shop. And it's all yours for the taking. Just grab a cup, fill it up with whatever crazy combination you like, and all it'll cost you is 45 cents an ounce. (ES)

### AWARD-WINNING TEA

**Rishi Tea** boasts a collection of medals to make even Earl Grey envious. It's no wonder that the 14-year-old company, founded by Joshua Kaiser, has racked up 26 national awards with its organic and fair trade-certified teas originating from 120 gardens across Asia. Our dining critic's fav is Golden Phoenix Dancong Oolong, but there are many other great ones worthy of anticipation while you put the kettle on. (KS)

### LONGEST WAIT FOR BREAKFAST

I like my breakfast like I like my cars: fast. But how can you deliver quality in less than an hour, you ask? Well, last time I checked, an egg can be cooked in a minute. It's done all over the city. So come on, **Blue's Egg** (317 N. 76th St.), we love ya, but you've got to pick up the pace. I'm not waiting 45 minutes for stuffed hash browns, though to be fair, it looks like many other people are willing to do just that. Sigh. (CD)

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