



REUBEN
BENEDICT, P. 100

HAM-AND-CHEDDAR
SCALLION BISCUIT
SANDWICHES, P. 100

I'VE ALWAYS gone out for brunch for reasons that had more to do with spicy Bloody Marys than with food. I obsess endlessly about where to eat dinner; at brunch, all the menus seemed the same.

Now, brunch wins my award for Most Improved Meal. Chefs had already rethought burgers and fried chicken and all the other comfort-food standards; likewise, they'd made breakfast-for-dinner a trend. Bringing that ingenuity to brunch was logical for restaurants that take comfort food seriously. "I spent 99 percent of my career working in fine dining," says Lincoln Carson, who is making killer pimento cheese muffins at Superba Food + Bread in Los Angeles. "When you're trying to garner Michelin stars, you have no interest in brunch."

These days, brunch is everywhere, at places as diverse as the ambitious Italian spot Nico Osteria in Chicago and Manhattan's groovy Caribbean hangout Miss Lily's. It's even become a meal that chefs look forward to. At Puritan & Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Will Gilson works the egg station every Sunday, making outstanding breakfast sandwiches on scallion biscuits. "At night I don't cook; I finish all the plates," he says. "At brunch there's no sous vide and no immersion circulators. I can have more fun. And I see customers in the daylight; it's a whole new world."

The New Golden Age of Brunch

BRUNCH WAS BIG IN THE '80S, OVERHYPED IN THE '90S, MALIGNED IN THE AUGHTS. BUT NOW CHEFS ARE MAKING IT TRULY GREAT.

BY KATE KRADER PHOTOGRAPHS BY CON POULOS

- 1 cup chilled buttermilk**
- ½ cup thinly sliced scallions**
- 9 large eggs, 1 lightly beaten**
- 16 slices cheddar cheese (about 1 lb.)**
- 16 slices Virginia ham (about 1 lb.)**
- 2 Tbsp. canola oil**

1. In a large bowl, whisk the flour with the sugar, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Pinch the butter into the dry ingredients to form pea-size clumps. Stir in the buttermilk, scallions and the beaten egg just until

a dry, shaggy dough forms. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead gently just until it comes together. Pat the dough out to a ½-inch-thick rectangle. Using a 4-inch round cookie cutter, stamp out 6 biscuits. Gently press the scraps together and stamp out 2 more biscuits. Arrange the biscuits on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and freeze for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 375°. Bake the biscuits for about 20 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool slightly, then split in

half, laying the halves cut side up on the baking sheet. Cover each biscuit half with 1 cheddar slice and 1 ham slice. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 8 minutes.

3. In a large nonstick skillet, heat the canola oil. Crack 4 eggs into the skillet and cook sunny side up over moderately high heat until the whites are set and the yolks are runny, 2 to 3 minutes. Set the fried eggs on 4 of the biscuit bottoms and keep warm while you fry the remaining eggs. Close the sandwiches and serve immediately.

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the coconut in an even layer on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and toast until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Let cool, then transfer to a bowl; reserve the baking sheet. Reduce the oven temperature to 200°.

2. In a large bowl, whisk the flour with the baking powder and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the buttermilk, whole milk, eggs, coconut extract, honey and the 4 tablespoons of the butter until smooth. Whisk into the dry ingredients just until combined; there will be a few lumps. Let the batter stand for 10 minutes.

3. Heat a griddle or large nonstick skillet until hot, then brush with canola oil. Ladle ¼ cup of batter per pancake onto the griddle and spread into 4- to 5-inch rounds. Sprinkle each pancake with 1 tablespoon of the toasted coconut and cook over moderate heat, flipping once, about 1½ minutes per side. Transfer the pancakes to the reserved baking sheet, cover with a kitchen towel and keep warm in the oven. Repeat with the remaining batter and more toasted coconut to make 18 pancakes total. To serve, stack the pancakes on plates, sprinkling additional toasted coconut between the layers. Dust with confectioners' sugar and top with blueberries. Serve immediately with butter and maple syrup.

----- *Reinvented* -----
Pancakes

For brunch at Miss Lily's in Manhattan, chef Adam Schop sprinkles a little shredded coconut onto the pancake batter as it cooks on the griddle, so the coconut gets nicely toasted. The finished pancakes get a layer of extra coconut before serving.

Coconut Pancakes

 Total 35 min; Serves 6

2½ cups sweetened shredded coconut (10 oz.)

4 cups all-purpose flour

2 Tbsp. baking powder

2 tsp. kosher salt

2 cups buttermilk

1½ cups whole milk

3 large eggs

2 Tbsp. pure coconut extract

1½ tsp. honey

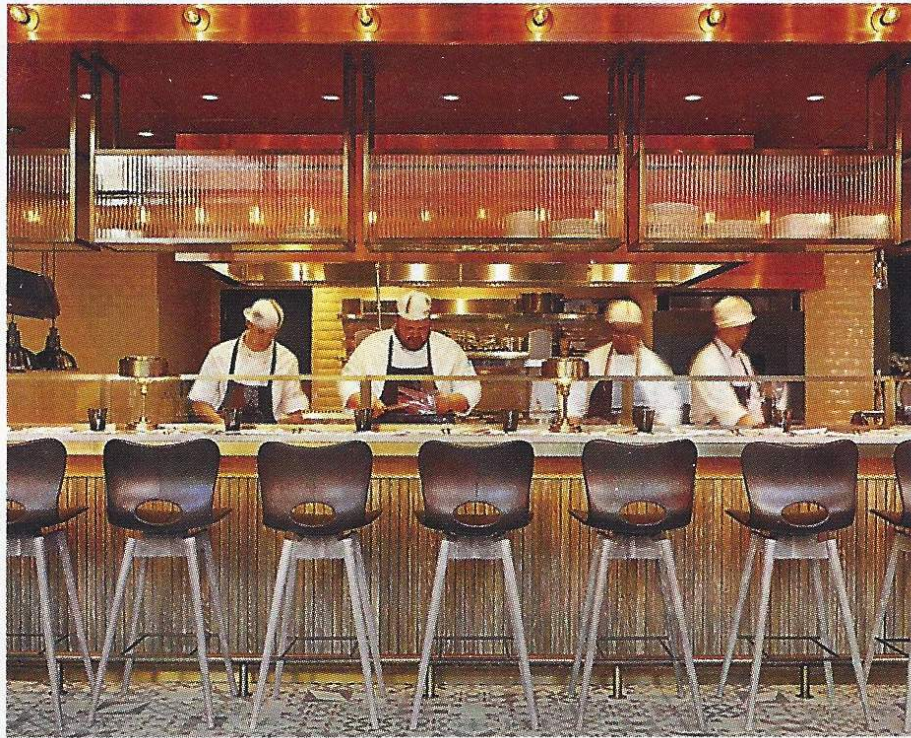
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted and cooled, plus more for serving

Canola oil, for brushing

Confectioners' sugar, blueberries and pure maple syrup, for serving

“Chefs had already rethought comfort food like burgers. It was time to bring that ingenuity to brunch.”





Brunch Black Book

SUPERBA FOOD + BREAD, LOS ANGELES

Best-ever toast with prosciutto and cultured butter. 1900 S. Lincoln Blvd.; superbafoodandbread.com.

NICO OSTERIA, CHICAGO (ABOVE)

Awesome pastries, like kouign amann and croissants. 1015 N. Rush St.; nicoosteria.com.

BOOTY'S STREET FOOD, NEW ORLEANS

Global dishes from ramen to ricotta doughnuts. 800 Louisa St.; bootysnola.com.

BRENNAN'S, NEW ORLEANS

Reopened institution famed for dishes like bananas Foster. 417 Royal St.; brennansneworleans.com.

PINEWOOD SOCIAL, NASHVILLE

Modernist-inflected favorites. 33 Peabody St.; pinewoodsocial.com.

MISS LILY'S, NEW YORK CITY

Jamaican-inspired dishes like jerk pork hash. 132 W. Houston St.; misslilys.com.

PURITAN & COMPANY, CAMBRIDGE, MA

Outstanding pastries like babka, on a communal table. 1166 Cambridge St.; puritancambridge.com.

CAKES & ALE, DECATUR, GA

Stellar warm scones at this hometown favorite. 155 Sycamore St.; cakesandalerestaurant.com.