

# Bread Winner



**I USED TO EAT** the best bagel in America every Sunday. I'd get in line at The Bagel Emporium in Tarrytown, New York, and know that it didn't get better.

Those bagels were boiled quickly, so that they were crispy outside and fluffy inside, and baked so well that the flavor of the malt and grains popped. They could handle a generous smear of scallion cream cheese, a couple of layers of salted Nova lox, a few red onions, and plenty of briny capers. Somehow they let all the ingredients shine, while standing out on their own.

Those days are gone now, not that I mind. Instead of mourning the Emporium, after moving from New York to Houston, I set out to comb the streets for a *new* best bagel.

Now, I'm not here to talk down to Texans about their dough. It's just no easy thing to master. I asked Heath Wendell, owner of Houston's Slow Dough Baking Co., about why bagels in cities like New York and his native Chicago are so good. His answer made perfect sense: Outstanding



bagels are the product of consistency over generations. New York bakeries have been making them since the turn of the 20th century, while bagels have been popular in Houston for only a few decades.

That doesn't mean ours are bad; on the contrary, they're pretty good! Still, as I hit the road to search for Houston's best bagel, I was careful not to compare them to anything on offer in my previous home, but rather to each other—a bagels-to-bagels approach, if you will. And while I found several worthy contenders, my investigation ended after I'd driven 35 minutes west of town.

Yes, reader, the best bagel in Houston is in Katy. After I arrived at The Bagel Cafe late one weekend morning and ordered a plain, just one bite sealed it. The contrast of toasty crust to pillow-soft dough was perfect. I closed my eyes and *almost* thought I was back on the East Coast. I didn't even bother with lox and capers that day; there was no time. Just a light brushing of cream cheese was enough. —TM

## Three more worthy contenders:

### GOLDEN BAGELS & COFFEE

Be patient while looking for parking here on the weekends, when seemingly all of the Heights descends. Why? Lots of work goes into these bagels, which are baked in an oven sent from New York.

They have a honey-like, malty flavor—delish.  
Hours: 6 a.m.—2 p.m. Mon-Fri, 7 a.m.—3 p.m. Sat-Sun  
3119 WHITE OAK DR. | THE HEIGHTS | GOLDENHOUSTON.COM

### HOT BAGEL SHOP

The line often starts outside at this legendary spot, known for its awesome variety (jalapeño bagels for the win). The plains, too, have beautiful flavor, including an underlying sweetness, perfect for a big ol' breakfast sandwich of ham, eggs, and cheddar.

Hours: 6 a.m.—2 p.m. Mon-Fri, 6:30 a.m.—2 p.m. Sat-Sun  
2015 S. SHEPHERD DR. #900 | MONTROSE | HOTBAGELSHOP.WEBSTARTS.COM

### NEW YORK BAGEL SHOP

Leave it to ex-East Coasters to make some of the city's best bagels. The Kornhaber family's offerings are crispy and a little salty. Just smear some scallion cream cheese on top, and you're good to go.

Hours: 6 a.m.—3 p.m. Mon, 6 a.m.—5 p.m. Tues-Fri, 6 a.m.—4 p.m. Sat-Sun  
9720 HILLCROFT ST. | MEYERLAND | NYBAGELSANDCOFFEE.COM —TM



## OLD TOWNE KOLACH

The plump kolaches at this old-timey stop taste just like *babička's*. Made with an authentic Czech-style pastry dough, the fresh-baked treats come fully loaded, whether with jammy apricot, blueberry, poppy seed or sweet cheese. On the savory side, tasty options include egg hot sausage, and chicken fajita.  
Hours: 6 a.m.—1 p.m. Mon-Sat, 7 a.m.—1 p.m. Sun  
8821 WESTHEIMER RD. #107 | NORTH HOUSTON | OTKBAKERY.COM



## KOLACHE BAR

This haunt has a growing thanks in part to "The Bored" a delightful, highly addictive stuffed with breakfast sausage, bacon, and jalapeño. Try on forget the boudin, chicken or Philly cheesesteak, or spicy.  
Hours: 5 a.m.—noon Mon-Fri, 6 Sat-Sun  
MULTIPLE LOCATIONS | 713-471- (ENERGY CORRIDOR), 832-926-92