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Portland & Oregon Dining

## Pollo Norte, Tapalaya, Boriken: Russell's Restaurant Three-peat

Pollo Norte is a new, Mexican-style rotisserie chicken restaurant at 5427 NE 42nd Ave.

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*The Three-peat returns for March with the trio of Portland-area hotspots Oregonian restaurant critic Michael Russell would return to soonest. Still hungry? Check out [Portland's best new restaurants of the year](#) and [Russell's top 40 chart](#), our roundup of the best restaurants in the city right now.*

### Pollo Norte

The crowds gather at this tiny Northeast Portland restaurant each night at dusk, like a Concordia neighborhood version of Vaux's swifts, for the Mexico City-style rotisserie chicken. These free-range birds, from Mary's in California, are soaked in lime juice, achiote, sugar and sea salt, rubbed with a trio of powdered chiles, skewered then thrown on Pollo Norte's imported Mexican rotisserie. It takes a [little planning](#) to ensure you get your bird. It's absolutely [worth it](#).

**Order this:** Two people can get away with splitting a half order of chicken, which comes with fresh tortillas, two medium sides (go for the frijoles charros, or "cowboy beans," plus the savory tomato-garlic rice) a pair of vibrant salsas and some meaty cabbage cooked beneath the rotating chickens. Pulled off the bone, nestled in a tortilla with a spoonful of beans, some tomatillo salsa and that cabbage, soaked in chicken drippings, tender and meaty, somehow the best thing on the menu ... this is probably the best take-out in the city right now.

5427 N.E. 42nd Ave., [503-287-0669](tel:503-287-0669), [pollonorte.com](http://pollonorte.com)

**Read more:** [Pollo Norte sells out: Can Portland's Mexico City-style rotisserie bring its birds to the masses?](#)

## Tapalaya



Tapalaya's Crawfish Anh Luu, a spin on New Orleans-style Crawfish Monica, is a must-order. Courtesy of Tapalaya

Tapalaya opened in 2008 with its own brand of fusion: Piggybacking on Portland's lingering Spanish small plates obsession, the restaurant took cajun/creole classics and scaled them down to shareable portions. Last year, New Orleans-born chef Anh Luu began shifting Tapalaya's menu in a different, more modern direction, blending cajun/creole food with the flavors of her parents' native Vietnam. The changes were subtle at first -- a little shrimp paste, lemongrass and lime juice added to the crawfish étouffée -- then less so -- a pork-belly banh mi smack in the middle of the menu.

**Order this:** The Crawfish Anh Luu, a shallow bowl of crawfish tails and creamy grits smothered in a rich, orange-colored sauce. For this dish, a play on Crawfish Monica (a signature dish of the New Orleans Jazz Festival), Luu ditches the traditional rotini in favor of pale white grits, then loads the sauce with garlic, white wine, lemon juice, shrimp stock, butter, cream and Crystal hot sauce. It pairs well with a frosty Sazerac cocktail stirred by one of the restaurant's two bearded bartenders. (It's also delicious on its own.)

28 N.E. 28th Ave., 503-232-6652, [tapalaya.com](http://tapalaya.com)

**Read more:** [Tapalaya's new Vietnamese menu leaves us wanting more -- literally](#)

## Boriken



Arroz con pollo at Boriken, Portland's only Puerto Rican restaurant. Stephanie Yao Long, The Oregonian

Boriken, a turquoise- and tangerine-colored restaurant on Beaverton's Southwest Canyon Road, offers the metro area its first taste of Puerto Rican cuisine, already attracting customers from as far away as Eastern Oregon and Washington State.. The menu, built around mofongos -- fried and mashed with various fillings -- is loaded with categorically tasty Caribbean comfort food.

**Order this:** Start with the rellenos de papa, two large, crisp balls of creamy potato and ground beef, or an order of bacalaitos, salt cod fritters, served with what a ketchup-mayo mix. The signature mofongos are delicious, each arriving in a hollowed-out coconut half lined with fried and mashed plantain and filled with chicken, conch or chunks of fried pork in a rich, creamy sauce. You can order a whole fried snapper for \$30, though you don't need to spend even half that: no matter how much I've ordered, I've left stuffed.

12800 S.W. Canyon Rd., Beaverton; 503-596-3571; [borikenrestaurant.com](http://borikenrestaurant.com)

**Read more:** [Boriken brings Puerto Rican comfort food to Beaverton \(and beyond\)](#)

-- Michael Russell