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# A Food Tour of Montreal

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*PHOTO: Montreal's famed bagels have their own distinctive flavor. (photo by Michelle Rae Uy)*

It's not hard to imagine that a city whose current economy is mainly fueled by innovation and creativity first flourished on the backs of agriculture and manufacturing.

Vestiges of [Montreal's](#) humble beginnings are still ever present and have made the city into the cosmopolis it is today. They're apparent in the cultures, the languages, the openness and tolerance and, of course, the food.

Nowhere is this more evident than along Saint Laurent Boulevard. It is the main thoroughfare to which many of [Montreal's cultural neighborhoods](#), as well as its eclectic, long-thriving food scene, are anchored.

Save poutine for last. First, let's take a stroll along the famous street's northern stretch through charming Plateau Mont-Royal, hip Mile-End, and bustling Little Italy.

While we go, we'll sample the foods of the world and feast on cuisines from some of the best foodie destinations. The beauty of [Montreal's gastronomy](#) is not only in its local delights but also its ability to take you places:

### **Le Plateau Mont-Royal**

We start our food tour of Saint Laurent Boulevard's northern section with morning fuel. Montreal has its share of great independent coffee shops, but [Café Melbourne](#) (4615 St Laurent Blvd) brings that legendary Aussie caffeine culture to the city. Pop in for a coffee and avocado toast fix.

Right next door is another important stop: [Aux Vivre](#) (4631 St Laurent Blvd) is possibly Montreal's first vegetarian restaurant and a favorite among Montréalais, even the carnivorous ones.

Their rice bowls, smoothies and gourmet chapati sandwiches are all worth sampling.

While Aux Vivre's baked goods are also a must try, feasting on luscious desserts at [Seraphin Boulangerie](#) (5008 St Laurent Blvd) is a better idea. Though three blocks away from Little Portugal and not originally a Portuguese bakery, it does make some of the best French and Portuguese pastries in the city.

The addicting pasteis de nata (custard tarts) and the white bean tarts are not to be missed.

### **Mile-End**

Walk farther up the block and make a left on Laurier Avenue where one of the best neighborhood pubs in the city sits. [Dieu du Ciel!](#) (29 Laurier Avenue) is a good spot for a drink or two. The pink and refreshing Hibiscus Dew is great for warm, summer months while the heartier, coffee-infused Imperial Stout is the perfect choice on cold days.

Soak up that alcohol with [Wilensky's](#) (34 Avenue Fairmount O) special-made bun. The family-owned Montreal institution on Fairmount O Avenue started as a cigar store and barbershop. However, for 85 years now, they've been making some of the best meat sandwiches in town. A must try is their five-to-one salami and bologna creation aptly called the Wilensky Special.

Or we could stop at [Fairmont Bagel](#) (74 Avenue Fairmount O), one of Montreal's two legendary bagel stops. Whether it's the sesame or the poppy seed coated bagel you eventually decide on, you'll realize that this city's faintly sweet, slightly sticky, golden brown bagels are a revelation and an entirely different experience.

Try to pace yourself as there are more shoulder-dropping, sigh-inducing stops left.

Jump in line, (even a particularly long one), for a couple of scoops of ice cream at [Kem Coba](#) (60 Avenue Fairmount O) next door. Known for their great flavors and textures, they serve some of the best ice cream in Montreal.

Don't leave Fairmont Avenue without sampling delectable Italian dumplings. Leave it to Drogheria Fine (68 Avenue Fairmount O), a family-owned tomato sauce plant, to serve fresh gnocchi—homemade following an old recipe that has been passed down for generations—smothered in luscious tomato sauce.

The last important stop before moving onto Little Italy is none other than [St.-Viateur Bagel](#) (263 Rue Saint Viateur O), Fairmont's biggest rival. Open 24/7, 364 days a year, this Montreal bagel institution has been honey-dipping, hand-rolling, wood fire-baking their bagels since 1957. Try the sesame bagels; they're delicious even without the cream cheese.

### **Little Italy**

For a midday energy booster and a bit of respite, we head back on Saint Laurent Boulevard and pop into [Caffe Italia](#) (6840 St Laurent Blvd) whose run-of-the-mill looking interior barely hints at the excellent coffee drinks they serve. Their espresso and cappuccino are fantastic. For a warm summer afternoon, however, their iced lattes are shoo-ins.

Most epicures will agree that a food tour along Saint Laurent isn't complete without a mini shopping spree at the Italian grocery store, [Milano Fruiterie](#) (6862 St Laurent Blvd).

This neighborhood supermarket founded in 1954 is pretty much stocked with Italy's best and most-beloved culinary products.

Veer off the main boulevard and head down Rue Dante where two gastronomic options await. For scrumptious contemporary, Italian fare with a bit of an upscale vibe, [Lucca](#) (12 Rue Dante) is a great choice. On the other hand, for no-nonsense, back-to-basics Italian meals, [Pizzeria Napoletana](#) (189 Rue Dante) serves terrific pizzas and pastas.

It also happens to be one of Montreal's best BYOB spots.

An Italian dessert is called for after a hearty meal under the same flag, so make a quick stop at [Pasticceria Alati-Caserta](#) (277 Rue Dante). The 49-year-old pastry shop has been creating some of Italy's sweetest delicacies.

Try the cannolis, amaretti cookies or their signature almond cake.

From Rue Dante, turn left on Henri-Julien Avenue and head up to [Jean-Talon Market](#), the most important stop on any Montreal food tour. Set in a repurposed lacrosse field, it's one of the biggest outdoor markets in Canada and perhaps Montreal's most well-known gastronomic institution.

Two of the market's must-stops are [Café Saint-Henri](#) (3632 Notre-Dame St W) for house-roasted coffee and [Le Marche des Saveurs du Quebec](#) (280 Place du Marché-du-Nord) for iced ciders and cheeses.

Hungry yet?

Or, better still: Full yet?