

The Flavors and "Sweet Little Treats" of NY



Top to Bottom, Left to Right: (1) The Meatball Shop, The Meatball Shop, Comedy Cellar, Victory Garden (2) Levain, Aria Wine Bar, Levain, Zachary's Smile (3) David's Tea, David's Tea, David's Tea, Levain

Okay, okay, I'm wayyy overdue for a blog post. In my unacceptable defense, I was working on a 6 Month Recap video for LocalizeAustin before the end of the year, and then taking my first travel break since I started the company in June...to NYC! I was there to celebrate sister Allyson's 25th birthday and catch up with some fabulous friends I wish I saw more often. The good news is, now I have more to blog about than time to blog about it! Here are the highlights - okay, just about everything we did moved to the top of my favorites list! I thought twice about blogging about the trip because let's face it, we can all ask for recommendations from family and friends of what to do in NYC (or in my case, the Austin Food Blogger Alliance), but there are SO many things to do and see that it's hard to get to them all. Plus, part of the beauty of the city is running into something fabulous while walking the streets while in an empire state of mind. But, these are all worthy of Rebeccammediations, so strongly consider visiting them on your next visit. You'll thank me!

Meals

The Meatball Shop - Thanks to my friends Molly and Aviva, we received this recommendation at brunch. My response was, "I don't really eat meatballs". (Before you jump on me, I don't eat a lot of red meat, so there's the explanation). Their response to mine was, "Trust me, think about it." So, on my last night, the night before Allyson's birthday, Aviva and I decided to take her here for her official birthday dinner. It was fan-tast-ic, not to mention the obvious humor with their menu terminology. Not only do they have options (meatballs by themselves + sides, mini meatball sliders, sandwiches with either 2 or 3 meatballs, pick your sauce (tomato, pesto, mushroom, and more), they have fabulous fresh and roasted vegetable sides, and fresh ingredients sourced from nearby farms. And, the meatball slider I had was seriously delicious. Tasty, fresh, juicy (I suppose meat eaters use that word as a positive), and just the perfect size. And, of course, their dessert is served in the same format, a ball of ice cream sandwiched between two cookies (you can mix and match). We went to the new location in the West Village.

Aria Wine Bar- Aviva, Lauren, and I went here on my visit a year ago (when our dining neighbors so graciously and tipsily covered our meal), and the food was so fantastic, I insisted we return. This wine bar and Italian bistro in the West Village is just right up my alley. It's quaint, has twinkle lights lining the outside pathway to the door, I love the long dining bench and the bar. The pasta and Italian dishes are so fresh and tasty. And, when we thought the waiter was pulling our leg when he said people say their Tiramisu is the best in the city, the joke was on us (this should probably go in the dessert section). We were the skeptics, and he was so right. It was. incredible. The place is so simple and quality, I just have to Rebeccammediation it for all that it is and hope you'll visit or agree with me.**Dessert**

Levain- All you really need to know about this compact bakery tucked below ground level on the Upper West Side is that it's

chocolate chip cookie was voted the #1 in New York city, and based on Allyson and I's visit, there's no contest, no debate, it doesn't get better than this cookie. Apparently each cookie is baked more than once. The crumb-y, crunchy outside perfectly houses the chewy, gooey, textured inside spotted with candied walnuts. The double chocolate cookie was more like a brownie but also so decadent, it induces speechlessness. It's oh-so-worth the slightly longer train ride uptown.

Victory Garden- Goat milk softserve? It exists in NYC, and I wouldn't be surprised if it makes its way to Austin in the next three years (just like fashion) (unless someone has seen it here - I want to hear about it!). There's finally a way to differentiate the gobs of frozen yogurt shops that have sprung up. And, I sampled the salted caramel (also a trend that I've noticed even in ATX, for good reason), and it was delicious, taking on the characteristics, texture, and essence of goat cheese. I'm going to be tracking this hope-its-a-trend.

Entertainment/Shopping

David's Tea - Allyson and I were walking in the West Village (notice a trend? My favorite NYborhood), and we noticed a tea shop steeping with people on a Saturday evening! We walked in (fun fact: I have a teapot collection and like to explore teas on my travels) and we had a fabulous experience! The white shop felt more like a salon or boutique than a retail store. The wall behind the salespeople was lined with tin canisters labeled with colorful and creative tea flavors almost in a rainbow like arrangement. The parallel wall included specialty teas, singular packets, and mod teapots and steeping accessories/reusable tea thermoses. We ended up talking to employees Max and an ex-Austinite who still dreams of living here. They told us this Canadian-based tea-gerrific group of stores is often called "the Apple store of teas". The clean lines, colorful tins, creative flavors scream design, innovation, and quality. I (lover of spice) fell in love with the Chocolate Chile Chai (but their eyebrow-raising flavors even included Lime Gelato!?), which apparently is in high demand and I was "that girl" who took most of the last of it (it's seasonal). It's worth a visit to this store. Even if you're not a tea-lover, even you will want to smell, taste, or buy some.

Comedy Cellar- I've been on a comedy kick lately with the arrival of Comedy Radio in Austin (102.7 FM). I realized life is much better when you laugh out loud to yourself in your car and start repeating jokes you heard to people who don't get it because the comedians are so much funnier. Allyson wanted to go to renowned comedy club: Comedy Cellar. Well-known comedians from late night talk shows and hot new acts frequent the stage. Allyson's favorite and Mr. Comedypopular right now, Aziz Ansari, tested out some new material for us the night we went! He is pretty hilarious and when he starts singing, you'll be laughing for sure. We were laughing pretty much from the beginning of the show when the host called Allyson and I "sweet little treats" to the audience. *If you plan to go to Comedy Cellar, reserve the time you want in advance online, the lineups are announced on their website on Thursdays for the weekend and week ahead, and arrive 30 minutes early to wait in line and claim your reservation. Also, note that there's a 2 purchase minimum in addition to \$25/person, but you can purchase 2 bottles of water (per person) - (or a half carafe of sangria like the Otis sisters).

Three Lives & Co. Bookstore- I'm into books lately. If you know me at all, this is a pretty big statement. I'm usually glued to online content when it comes to reading and my mind starts straying from the pages without focus typically, but lately I want a static release, a tangible page that doesn't jump out at me or have links I have to act on. Even more than books, I'm into independent bookstores these days. We stumbled upon this a-dor-a-ble little bookshop in the ... yes, West Village. It was so charming, it reminded me of [The Travel Bookshop](#) in the movie Notting Hill, which, as I just looked it up, am sad to learn it is closing even though volunteers are trying to keep it running. It's so cute and independent and unassuming and I can't figure out how the books are organized, but they are organized and the shop is just so put together, it just stuck in my mind as one of those off-the-beaten path, under the radar, winner finds. To you, it may just look like a bookshop, but it caught my eye, and I wanted to turn the page to know more.

Zachary's Smile- This adorable vintage shop in (ahem) the West Village is another spot Aviva introduced me to last year (where I bought my good luck scarf) and I had to return, bringing Allyson along this time. It's just a spot-on store, with carefully selected items and fantastic accessories at reasonable prices. It belongs on South Congress - maybe one day they'll open one in Austin, but then I'd have one less reason to visit New York!

Thanks for reading! Stay tuned for a recap of my soon-to-be-had adventures on my first trip to New Orleans!