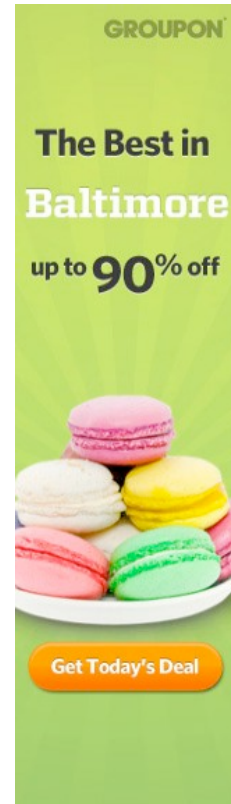


SMART LIVING IN BALTIMORE  
**STYLE**  
 MAGAZINE



**Table for One**

Compiled by Laura Wexler Photographed by Kirsten Beckerman



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If you ask chefs and foodies why they slave over a hot stove and hunch over a countertop for hours to create a meal, they'll tell you it's simple: they love to feed people, and feed them well.

But we at Style wondered what such folks make when there are no people to feed, when there is no audience. When they're just cooking for themselves, do they whip up filet mignon or frozen french fries? Eat coq au vin on china or cold cereal out of a plastic cup? We surveyed a bunch of local food lovers whose answers ranged from the healthy and high-brow to the casual and quirky.

**> Bonnie Matthews**

*Personal trainer and chef and Wellness Warrior blogger, "The Doctor Oz Show"*

I work out so hard at the gym that when I come home, I have to eat. But I'm not going to just eat a power bar. I'm going to sit for a minute and eat something that's healthy and good. One of my old standbys is my easy vegetarian open-faced taco, which is a flat corn tortilla with Cuban style black beans, sautéed peppers, avocado, hot sauce and a dollop of non-fat Greek-style yogurt to cut the heat. I sit at the kitchen table with all the different bowls around me in a half-circle so I can add things as I go. It's a messy montage of color and flavor. Delish!

**> Michael Marx**

*Chef/owner of Miguel's Cocina y Cantina and RUB*

A cheese quesadilla with salsa was the first thing that I learned to cook in a pan. It was always, and will forever be, the go-to meal. I can do without meat, but not cheese. Another fall/winter favorite is a good Pinot or Syrah with a rustic crusty bread, sliced apple, pear, cucumber and at least three types of cheese. I spent 14 months cooking in Paris. The paycheck wasn't huge, so my all-time favorite sandwich was created: baguette with light mayo, brie and sliced cucumber... awesome!

#### > Diane Feffer Neas

*Restaurant consultant*

I like to make an open-faced melted sandwich and take everything I can find in the [fridge](#) and melt something on it.

I always eat at the table— I don't like to stand and pick. My parents are proper Bostonians and I was raised to believe mealtime is sacrosanct. I might use a linen napkin or really nice cocktail napkins. (I have a serious linen problem. And I love really nice paper napkins—I must have 50 packs of them.)

I keep a box of Kirchmayr truffles in the [freezer](#). I take them out and let one or two defrost and bring it to room temperature and then I eat them. It's not every day. It's once or twice a week. It's my little treat. Even my husband, Stephen, doesn't know about it!



#### > Lars Rusins

*Founder, Baltimore Foodies*

In my younger days, when I ate alone at home, I ate mac 'n cheese out of the box, popcorn and peanut butter sandwiches. As I got older, I'd cook basic comfort food and sit at a little table in my kitchen where I could see the TV. I'd make meatloaf or get a little pack of pork chops and fry those up. I'd make pasta and meatballs. In the winter, I'd make vegetable or bean soup. This was stuff I saw my mom make. My mother made sure I knew how to cook and clean and sew before I left the house. I was single all through my 30s and very good at it. I also do dishes very well— to this day I still rarely use the [dishwasher](#)!

#### > Mick Kipp, aka "Mick the Pirate"

*Proprietor of Whiskey Island Specialty Foods and Catering*

My go-to meal is egg noodles covered in cream of mushroom soup with lima beans smothered in butter and fresh ground black pepper. My mom used to make this when I was growing up— my brother and sister hated it, but I loved it.

I eat it out of a big bowl. My grandfather had these great big bowls and I always wanted a bowl as big as his. Now I have lots of them! Nothing rolls off the plate when it is in a bowl. My favorite place to eat is on the floor, picnic-style. I throw down a blanket and I am good to go. I still don't own a dining table!



#### > Irena Stein

*Owner of Alkimia and Café Azafran restaurant and catering*

In January of 2009, I went to Cambodia with my brother and our two daughters. We ate such wonderful food that I did not want to stop eating these flavors. Now, if no one is around, my consolation is a comforting bowl of Southeast Asian noodles.

Good old Pad Thai turns glorious when made at home. Prep time takes on meditative form when you have to put together 21 condiments and accompaniments in bowls of all sizes, including dried rice noodles, salted radish, tamarind pulp, Thai fish sauce, tofu, eggs, dried shrimp, bean sprouts, peanuts, coriander, pork, lime, etc., and finally gather them all in a wok in consecutive order to end the cooking in about six minutes.

#### > Sergio Vitale

*Co-owner, Aldo's Ristorante Italiano*

I won't lie: my quick fix is a PB&J and a glass of 2 percent milk. I like to grind my own peanut butter at Whole Foods. I just picked up some great fresh fruit conserve at an awesome farmers market in San Francisco. And I prefer whole wheat bread. But when all else fails, Skippy and Welch's will do.

But, being Italian, every four days or so, I need my olive oil and tomato fix. I have an apartment above Aldo's, which has been the death of me and my waistline because at the end of the night, when everyone leaves, I like to prepare a perfect bowl of al dente pasta with a quick, fresh tomato sauce, basil, extra-virgin olive oil and a scattering of aged pecorino or parmigiano. I sit at the bar with a glass of red wine and thoroughly enjoy the silence. Having an apartment above a restaurant affords me the luxury of a staff to clean up afterward, so I usually eat on china and drink (even the 2 percent milk!) out of Riedel crystal glasses. I drop it off at the



dishwashing station, regret having eaten so late and go to bed.

#### > Donna Crivello

*Owner, Donna's Restaurants*

I love eggs, and a runny omelet or a quick frittata are my favorites. I toss in what's in the fridge. Luckily my husband shops at Whole Foods, so it's usually good sheep's milk feta, spinach and tomatoes with some fresh basil. Then I eat it either standing up in the kitchen reading the newspaper or sitting at my [computer](#).

During the day, I eat in the car going from one Donna's location to the next. I grab a little of my favorite "Sicilian Tuna Salad" in a paper coffee cup with some roasted cauliflower and carrots, a plastic fork and a napkin.

#### > Dara Bunjon

*Food blogger and consultant, Dara Does It: Creative Solutions for the Food Industry*

When I eat solo, my favorite thing is lobster because my husband has no patience whatsoever to sit the length of time it takes me to eat them. I'm very slow in picking every nook and cranny for the goodies. I'm pretty boring about where I eat: I watch a movie or TV and eat on a snack tray in the den. (Sounds like Mr. Mustard in the library with a candlestick, doesn't it?)

#### > Barbara Lahnstein

*Co-owner, Neopol Smokery*

What I usually do is steal a piece of salmon from my store, take it home and add seasonal vegetables and some rice. Even if I'm cooking for myself, I'll go out of the way to make a sauce. I might make a sauce with coconut milk, curry, lime and cilantro— cilantro is one of the flavors that makes me happy. I crave sauces. Even if I'm eating a piece of bread I'll do an aioli just for myself.

I sit at my kitchen island and eat. I never, never, never eat from a paper plate or drink from a paper cup. But I have been known to eat out of the skillet! Sometimes I can't wait for the food to make it to the plate.

#### > Bill Irvin

*Co-owner of Fells Point Hospitality Management and operator of Kooper's Tavern, Kooper's Chowhound Burger Wagon, Woody's Rum Bar, Slainte Irish Pub and Celie's Waterfront Inn*

I live with a beautiful wife and two starving children. Not much is in the refrigerator besides bottles of wine and mystery carryout. My wife, Rose, does not cook. So I have three stages of solo eating.

Stage 1: Raid the leftovers (I hope they ordered pizza).

Stage 2: Rose is still awake so we split a bottle of wine and talk. She gets tired and goes to bed... I say, "hmm," look into the refrigerator and see nothing. At this time I hope that we have a box of Cheez-Its and a glass of milk.

Stage 3: When I do have a chance to just chill, I fire up the grill. I drink two glasses of a great red wine and, by then, the coals are just right. Whatever I have in the produce bin is brushed with olive oil and garlic with a sprinkle of thyme, and grilled. My go-to is Trader Joe's herb-crusted lamb chops that we keep in the freezer, and red potatoes, butter and garlic wrapped in the Boy Scout tinfoil package tossed in the grill bed.

We don't have TV, so my place to hide out is our backyard by the pond. I turn on the music, pour another glass of wine and stare into the sky. I am a stickler for using fine china, Stieff Rose silver, Laguiole knives and my wine glass is always made by Riedel crystal. My food may not always be gourmet, but the [hardware](#) makes it feel so.

#### > Dan Rodricks

*WYPR-FM radio host and Baltimore Sun columnist*

I like to make spaghetti alla carbonara. Bacon, eggs, olive oil, a little butter, parmesan, spaghetti No. 7, lots of cracked pepper, a dash of nutmeg— what's not to like? I sit at the kitchen table, fold a page of the newspaper to exactly something I meant to read earlier— usually an op-ed or editorial from The Sun or The New York Times— and eat the carbonara out of a plain white Pier Six spaghetti bowl, twirling the noodles with a fork against a soup spoon. Then, once I inhale the pasta, I set the bowl on the floor for my dog Rocky. He finishes the carbonara and I finish my reading.

#### > Peter Keck

*General manager, 13.5% Wine Bar*

Breakfast for dinner is always a go-to. It will typically involve some smoked bacon or scrapple and some good handmade bread. Depending on the quantity of heavy cream I have (I need some for my coffee the next morning), I'll have an omelet or eggs over easy.



I've always got a few cans of tuna around— the emergency stash— so when push comes to shove, I make junked-up tuna fish or what I call 'utilization tuna salad.' My standard is with red onion, fresh ginger and equal parts mayonnaise and Dijon mustard. I've put jalapeno peppers, minced apple and cheddar cheese in there, too. I will take the time to put it on the plate, and if it's a nice night, I eat out on the stoop of my Fells Point home.

**> Marty Katz**

*local editor, Baltimore/Washington Zagat guide*

I like to eat fresh food as much as I can, even when I'm alone. It's harder during the winter months, but the Waverly Farmers Market offers some good choices. Potatoes from Cindy Yingling and Fuji apples from Dave Hochheimer are two of my favorites. After making a fire in the fireplace and turning on the TV or radio, I'll sit in the living room with a potato, microwaved on high until sizzling, with Earth Balance soy butter and sea salt on it. The soy butter makes me feel healthy even though I'm eating so many carbs.

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