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## Book One of These 7 Chef's Tables Now

from [Startle.com](#), Contributor

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Chef's tables provide the ultimate front-row seat to the culinary action in the kitchen. When you're sitting at a chef's table within arm's reach of the master who's actually preparing each course, your dining experience is elevated to an entirely different level. The editors at [Startle](#) wanted to find some of the best spots to get up close and personal with the top toques across the country. We rounded up our seven favorite chef's tables, from an Israeli eatery in [Philadelphia](#) to a fine dining room in [Napa](#). Read on to find out where you need to book a reservation to watch the chef dice his way through your dinner.



Chef Patrick O'Connell at The Inn at Little Washington



[Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star hotel and restaurant The Inn at Little Washington offers more than chef's tables—it's the honeymoon retreat of choice for celebs like Ryan Reynolds and Blake Lively. Read more at Forbes Travel Guide's online home, Startle.com.](#)

### **The Inn at Little Washington, Washington, Va.**

Many restaurants retrofit their kitchens to accommodate a chef's table, but not at [The Inn at Little Washington](#). In 2000, the kitchen was moved to the rear of the building and designed to accommodate a chef's table. Two, six-person tables—former First Lady Laura Bush dined at one on her 60th birthday in 2011—have stellar views of chef (and [Startle.com Tastemaker](#)) [Patrick O'Connell](#) and his team while they prepare the restaurant's impressive prix fixe menus. Robert Mondavi called [O'Connell](#) “the pope of American cuisine” so expect courses such as the miniature filet of cod sautéed with a lemon vodka sauce served with Lilliputian pork dumplings to be extraordinary. Menus begin at \$375 per table charge plus the cost of food, wine and gratuity.

### **Salt at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island**

The small “Seat in the Kitchen” at Salt at [The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island](#) accommodates four and is set inside an air-conditioned private room where just a glass partition separates you from the action in the kitchen. Diners are encouraged to throw on an apron, walk the prep lines and chat up chef Rick Laughlin as he and the line chefs prepare your next course. Many of the dishes—be it the Key West prawns or the dark chocolate soufflé—are seasoned with one of the restaurant's 60 different salts. Want to experiment with the salt yourself? Choose from a half dozen or more flavored options—like the 250-year old pink Himalayan salt—which are explained in detail before you begin your meal. Meals are \$175 per person, or \$275 per person with wine pairings.

### **Restaurant at Meadowood, Saint Helena, Calif.**

Thanks to a renovation in early 2012, [Restaurant at Meadowood](#) now includes two new chef's counters—think two-person bar-height stainless-steel tables—where diners have bird's eye views of the kitchen's dinner service. But these seats aren't for the timid; chef Christopher Kostow is known to pull guests out of their seats to get up close and personal in the kitchen as he prepares each of the 18 to 20 courses. Kostow sources many, if not all of the ingredients from one of two nearby gardens. The result: fresh and flavorful cuisine such as whipped yogurt with black sesame and pickled plum shiso, and black cod with summer fig in a summer curry sauce. Dinner is \$500 per person, or \$850 with wine pairing.

### **Zahav, Philadelphia**

After four years, James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Solomonov opened his version of a chef's table with the Kitchen Counter, a bar-like dining area for two where diners are perched above the kitchen and prep areas for a private look into how Solomonov creates some of the best Middle Eastern food in the country. Expect a modern twist on Israeli cuisine at this [Philadelphia](#) hot spot where you'll choose from one of two tasting menus, which feature dishes such as a whole-roasted lamb shoulder grilled over coals, and then braised with pomegranate juice, and served alongside crispy Persian rice. Meals are \$90 per person, or \$140 with a cocktail or wine pairing.

**Slightly North of Broad, Charleston**

Keep your eyes peeled while you sit at one of the six chef's counter spots at Slightly North of Broad as chef Frank Lee prepares your six-course meal of some of the country's best Southern low country cuisine. These seats are so popular that reservations are booked weeks in advance. Chef Lee has developed a great rapport with the local [Charleston](#) fishermen, so the grouper in the Carolina grouper dish—served with creek goat cheese custard, caponata, sunflower sprouts and tomato coulis—or the flavorful shrimp in the classic shrimp and grits, are caught that morning and served that evening. Dine for \$49 per person, or \$69 with wine pairing.

**Rasika West End, Washington, D.C.**

The location might feel a bit odd, but once you're seated in the cool, modern room in Rasika West End's basement where the seven-person chef's table is located, you'll love the exclusivity the space provides. The glass-enclosed room—the only one on the same floor as the kitchen—gives you a 180-degree view of chef Vikram Sunderam and his team as they prepare the six-course, contemporary Indian meal. Palak chaat, chef Sunderam's signature spinach dish, is just one of the traditional Indian courses you'll find on the tasting menu. Reservations require a \$750 food and beverage minimum.

**Fearing's at The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas**

Chef Dean Fearing's chef's table (aka Table 321) is elevated about 20 inches on a platform in the bustling, 60-seat Dean's Kitchen, one of four dining rooms at Fearing's at [The Ritz-Carlton, Dallas](#). Guests at the 8-person table can expect visits from the chef as he checks in on each course. Chef Fearing will customize each menu, which means you can have a four-, six- or even 10-course gluten-free or vegetarian meal featuring some of his innovative takes on American cuisine. —*Blake Miller*