

Budget Travel

FOLLOW THAT TRUCK!

New York Food Trucks Go Gourmet

Street food has moved way beyond hot dogs and halal carts. Now you can get everything from red-velvet cupcakes to grass-fed burgers from these trucks.

By Heather Eng, Monday, August 10, 2009 | [▶ Subscribe to the magazine](#)

After a decade as an IBM management consultant, Belgian native Thomas DeGeest quit his corporate job in 2007 to bring a taste of his homeland to the Big Apple. DeGeest's bright yellow **Wafels & Dinges** truck serves two types of Belgian waffles: fluffy, rectangular Brussels-style waffles, from the northern part of the country; and chewier, round *liège* waffles, from the southern part. Through the truck's large front window, you can watch the waffles being made in large, cast-iron presses. Dress your waffles with *dinges* (Belgian slang for "toppings") like Nutella, Belgian chocolate, fresh strawberries and bananas, whipped cream, and *spekuloos* (a creamy cinnamon-ginger sauce). Or, order your waffle as DeGeest gets his—with just a light sprinkling of powdered sugar, so you can really savor the pastry. Tip: Check Wafels & Dinges's [Twitter feed](#) or call to learn the daily password or trivia question that will give you one free *dinges*. *Various locations in Manhattan and Park Slope, Brooklyn, 8 a.m.–10 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Check twitter.com/waffletruck or call 866/429-7329 for updates. From \$3. wafelsanddinges.com.*

New York City may be the country's unofficial cupcake capital, but Lev Ekster, a recent New York Law School graduate, wasn't impressed with the local offerings. He felt that he often waited on long lines at the big name bakeries for subpar cupcakes. Convinced that he could shake up the cupcake scene, Ekster shelved his fledgling legal career to start **CupcakeStop**, which works the Flatiron District and other pedestrian-heavy neighborhoods. Baker Manal Mady's airy red velvet and rich Oreo crumb cupcakes are the truck's staples. The menu rotates quirky flavors, such as the Elvis (banana and peanut butter), strawberry shortcake, peanut butter and jelly, and Key lime. *5th Ave. between 22nd and 23rd Sts., 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m., 23rd St. between 7th and 8th Aves., 6 p.m.–10 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, though locations are subject to change. Check twitter.com/cupcakestop for updates. \$1–\$2.25. cupcakestop.com.*

When Johnpaul Perrone launched the rice ball truck **Papa Perrone's** last year, he wasn't even sure there'd be a market for his Sicilian speciality. He only knew that he had been making rice balls with his mother's recipe for years, and for almost as long, friends and family had urged him to start a business. Luckily for Perrone, his loved ones' intuitions proved correct. The softball-sized concoctions—popular with Midtown's office workers and tourists—come stuffed with meatballs, three cheeses, or spinach and cheese. Despite their size, they're surprisingly light; Perrone "flash fries" the rice balls in extra virgin olive oil and then lightly bakes them to ensure a slightly crispy crust. Papa Perrone's menu also includes baked ziti, pizza, and meatball, chicken, and eggplant parmesan heroes. *55th St. between Madison and Park Aves., 11:30 a.m.–3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Rice balls from \$4, other menu items from \$1.50. papaperrone.com.*

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. six days a week, **NYC Cravings** churns out heaping plates of hearty Taiwanese snacks. The lunchtime combos feature one large piece of fried meat (chicken, a pork chop, or *tianbula*, a Taiwanese fish cake) topped with "secret pork sauce" and served on a bed of white rice with a side of pickled cabbage. Steamed pork and vegan dumplings are also available most days. Though NYC Cravings is owned and operated by 20-somethings Thomas Yang, Diana Yang, and Eric Yu, the culinary prowess of the Yang family is present in every dish. The secret pork sauce comes from the Yangs' grandmother, and the Yangs' uncle, Steven Yang, a chef who was trained in Taiwan and America, works behind the scenes beforehand to prepare and marinate the meats. *Various locations in midtown and downtown Manhattan and Park Slope, Brooklyn, 11 a.m.–2 p.m., Sunday through Friday. Check twitter.com/nycravings for updates. \$3–\$8. nycravings.com.*

If it weren't for the iconic rainbow-ice-cream banner, you might mistake the **Big Gay Ice Cream Truck** for a standard Mister Softee. But what the truck lacks in looks, it more than makes up in personality—from its toppings to its operator. The Big Gay Ice Cream Man is Doug Quint, who is a doctor of musical arts candidate with a specialty in bassoon and a freelance musician who has performed with the Boston Pops and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. In his truck, he's quick with witty quips and more than happy to load up cones and cups with premium toppings like cayenne pepper, wasabi pea dust, and olive oil and sea salt. Quint's signature cone is vanilla ice cream topped with *dulce de leche* and crushed Nilla wafers. Splurge on the "choinkwich," a special treat that only appears on the menu once a week: a few pieces of brown-sugar-and-maple-syrup-caramelized bacon sandwiched between chocolate soft serve and two chocolate cookies. *Various days and locations in Manhattan; the truck will operate through October. Check twitter.com/biggayicecream for updates. From \$3. biggayicecreamtruck.com.*

With a vibrant wraparound mural depicting brilliant blue skies and rolling green mountains, the **La Cense Beef Burger Truck** brings a bit of Big Sky Country to Midtown's busy streets. This truck is an outpost of a Montana ranch of the same name. There, cattle graze on 88,000 acres of land before...well, you know what happens next. At La Cense, there's only one thing on the menu: black Angus grass-fed beef burgers topped with caramelized onions and, for an extra 50 cents, cheese. The six-ounce patties are thick and juicy, but fans of rare or well-done burgers may be disappointed: La Cense's burgers only come medium. *Various midtown locations, 11 a.m.–3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Check twitter.com/lcbburgertruck for updates. \$7. lacensebeef.com.*

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MEALS ON WHEELS

Fuel up on cheap treats at these colorful trucks stationed throughout Manhattan.

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