

# New guard NOLA chef shares her favorite spots

Text by Carly Fisher, video by Alice Xue Yu, Robert Sevilla and Joseph Coleman, CNN  
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Courtesy Compère Lapin

**(CNN)** — New Orleans is a city with a rich history and tradition, but it's also a place with an evolving identity. Though many chefs have contributed to its much-loved culinary culture, Nina Compton is among the strongest forces representing the new guard.

As the daughter of St. Lucia's three-time former Prime Minister, Sir John George Melvin Compton, Nina spent her time growing up between St. Lucia and England before leaving the Caribbean to study at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York.

After training in the kitchens of renowned chefs such as Daniel Boulud in New York and Norman Van Aken and Philippe Ruiz in Miami, she finally

made her mark while working at Scott Conant's Scarpetta at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach when she starred as a finalist on Bravo's "Top Chef."

Name recognition and shining culinary skills helped her get tapped to open her first restaurant, Compère Lapin at the Old No. 77 Hotel & Chandlery in New Orleans, with immediate success. Here, she combines classic Caribbean and Creole with refined French technique, evolving the culinary narrative of New Orleans.

In just over three years in New Orleans, Compton has picked up an award for Food & Wine's Best New Chef 2017, the 2018 James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef South and now serves as the culinary ambassador for St. Lucia. She recently opened her second New Orleans restaurant, Bywater American Bistro.

Compton has wasted no time in finding her own NOLA hot spots and has great suggestions for when you travel here:

## Bacchanal Wine



EJ Ruane at Bacchanal

Bacchanal is home to a lively courtyard in New Orleans' Ninth Ward.

A true local spot in every sense, beloved Ninth Ward wine bar Bacchanal serves a curated selection of bottles from around the world – best enjoyed in the secluded courtyard when local musicians are playing.

As a testament to its greatness, the bar earned a 2018 nomination for Outstanding Wine Program from the James Beard Foundation Awards. "Bacchanal is one of my favorite local spots," Compton says. "It's very close to where I live, and I love the laid-back ambiance, great wine, cheese and charcuterie and live music."

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## Rouses Markets

It's like your local supermarket but better. Since 1960, this small Southern family-owned grocer has grown from a humble market to a gourmet

It's like your local supermarket but better. Since 2009, this small Southern family-owned grocer has grown from a farmers market to a gourmet chain, with locations scattered along the Gulf from Louisiana to Alabama.

And Compton absolutely loves to shop at Rouses. "They have a ton of amazing local Louisiana products, great fresh produce and the people that work there are friendly and helpful," she says.

## Hansen's Sno-Bliz

Hansen's Sno-Bliz has been serving frozen treats since 1939.

Hansen's Sno-Bliz/Facebook

Hansen's Sno-Bliz has been serving frozen treats since 1939.

New Orleans doesn't just get hot in the summer – it gets sweltering. To cool off, Compton picks up sno-balls from this third-generation sweet treat spot. Along with classic root beer and wild cherry flavors, the shaved ice shop has a number of specialty syrups such as ginger-cayenne, honey-lavender and cardamom.

"Sno-balls from Hansen's are my favorite – they are the New Orleans version of shaved ice, but they're soft, flavorful and a great way to beat the summer heat."





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## New Orleans Jazz Market

There's no shortage of places to find music, but New Orleans Jazz Market is where you can listen to some of the best. This modern performing arts center is outfitted with impressive acoustics for showcasing the latest local jazz musicians making waves.

"New Orleans Jazz Market is a great place to catch some of the incredible music New Orleans has to offer," Compton says. "You can see top names, jazz trios and more. And the space is beautiful."

## Pêche

For local seafood, Compton turns to her friend Donald Link's award-winning restaurant for cheffed-up area catch on the coal grill and raw bar.

"Pêche is a great spot in the Warehouse District, and I love going there for lunch. The fish, the oysters and all of the seafood is just incredible quality. And the atmosphere is great."

Carly Fisher is an award-winning journalist and author whose work has been featured in publications like GQ, CNN, Fodors Travel, Bon Appetit, Food & Wine, Brides, Saveur, Edible and NBC. She lives and works in Brooklyn, where she is currently working on her first book through The Countryman Press due 2019.

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