

APPETITE FOR THE

World

40 meals that built the practice



By Brad Perkins

One of the more enjoyable aspects of working nationally and internationally since starting Perkins Eastman has been my opportunity to experience the incredible variety of great food across the United States and in countries around the world. Often, sampling so many exotic foods is within the context of dining with co-workers, friends, clients, government officials, and others. Moreover, sharing meals with clients and staff at home and abroad has proven to be an important ingredient in the building of a successful practice. Forty of my favorite memories follow.

1. Brazilian Seafood Feast: Perkins Eastman's first international client was a Brazilian family that hired us to master-plan a major destination beach resort in Bahia, Brazil. Our client would bring us together at his house on the property, which was adjacent to a small fishing village. Each morning as the fishermen would set out to sea, our client would tell them what he wanted. One day, the catch included 30 small lobsters. Lunch that day—plus the Caipirinha cocktails—was followed by a long afternoon siesta.

2. Brazilian Steak: Our Bahia client's brother hired us to do a ranch-based resort on the family's 45,000-acre cattle ranch that spanned the Brazil-Paraguay border. Dinners in the main ranch house were with the cowhands and featured massive steaks. Brazilian beef can rival the best beef of my hometown, Chicago.

3. Planked Salmon in Vancouver: Russell Vandiver, an architect friend in Vancouver, introduced me to the culinary highlights of the Pacific Northwest. One such highlight that became part of my own repertoire was salmon grilled on a wetted, untreated cedar shingle. This method protects the fish from the direct fire and keeps it moist while the smoke from the shingle gives the fish a nice smoked flavor.

4. Herring in Oslo: We were invited by one of my Stanford friends to be part of the Norwegian team competing for the World Bank project in DC. Breakfast in my Oslo hotel allowed me to sample at least a dozen different varieties of herring.

5. A Project in Milan and a Hotel on Lake Como: Russell Vandiver moved from Vancouver to London to work as a design manager for Lehrer McGovern. One of his assignments was to manage a master-plan charrette for 300 acres on the north side of Milan where a steel mill was being decommissioned and cleared. I was one of five architects and planners invited, and we each brought one of our staff. The entire team stayed in a small palazzo on Lake Como that normally operated as a luxury boutique hotel. The kitchen cooked whatever we requested and we had the run of a well-stocked wine cellar. Bellissimo!

6. Tapas: Another early international client was a major engineering and construction company in Madrid. We were retained to bring American programming, master-plan, and concept-design experience to a series of their design-build contracts. As a result, I commuted to Madrid for several years, where my hotel was surrounded by tapas bars. I asked my client which were the best and how to navigate a meal.

He said he would bring his wife and replicate the route he followed when he was courting her. They showed me which ones were best for appetizers and fish courses; jamón Ibérico; vegetable dishes; and desserts. I have impressed friends and family ever since with my local culinary knowledge.

7. El Passadis del Pep: My colleague Roland Baer, a former Perkins Eastman principal who had worked in Barcelona, told me of a Catalan insider's favorite restaurant, El Passadis del Pep. They serve what they think is best that day at each meal. The dishes and local wines keep coming until you say Stop. Each dish is usually a beautifully cooked example of one of the major Barcelona classics. I always return whenever I'm in Barcelona.

8. Paella in Mallorca: Our client for the Antara retirement community in India authorized my colleague Joe DesRosier and me, along with our wives, to have a work session in Mallorca with our associate architect Tomeu Esteva. Tomeu and his wife Gemma made sure we sampled the wonderful food of the island. For one of our last meals, Tomeu generously provided an unforgettable Mallorcan paella cooking lesson for us.

9. Continuing Education in Tuscany: Mary-Jean Eastman, (vice chair and co-founder of Perkins Eastman) came into my office one day and announced that the AIA had come up with a brilliant way for us to get a year's worth of continuing-education credits. The European chapter was offering a series of courses in Florence. In addition to revisiting our favorite Florence restaurants, my wife Phyllis and I made a side trip to Monteriggioni to try Mary-Jean's favorite Tuscan restaurant, Il Pozzo, which now ranks as our favorite Tuscan restaurant as well.

10. Eataly: My friend and longtime client Jules Demchick invited me to come with him, restaurateur Jeffrey Chodorow, and several others for a weekend trip to check out a new specialty market and restaurant complex in Turin called Eataly. They were considering becoming the American partners for Eataly in New York. We flew to Turin, toured the store, and sampled food at several of the excellent restaurants scattered throughout the complex.

11. Pulled-Pork BBQ in Arkansas: Perkins Eastman Principal David Høglund and I flew to Little Rock to interview for a new building at the University of Arkansas Medical Center. We were up against five

major healthcare firms and back then doubted we had a chance. We arrived early, so our local associates gave us a tour and asked where we would like to eat lunch. I said I wanted to eat BBQ wherever Bill Clinton went, so they took us to a shack where we had good pulled-pork BBQ. We went into the interview relaxed. One of the doctors asked why two guys from New York would be willing to come work on a project in Little Rock. I replied, "For the BBQ." They laughed and said, "What do you know about Arkansas BBQ and where would you go to get it?" I named the shack. We got the project and worked with this client for years.

12. Oysters in New Orleans: I have always enjoyed New Orleans—partly for the music, but even more so because of the food. My clients, friends, and associate architects always went out of their way to introduce me to the many great restaurants in the city. But some of my favorite meals consisted primarily of oysters (in season).

13. Beef BBQ in Texas: When working on a project in Houston, I would often stop by Luling City Market and pick up sausage and brisket to bring home. After one trip, we were hosting the partners of Larsen Shein Ginsberg and their wives prior to our merger. I over-grilled the squabs for our main course. I thought, "No problem!" and substituted the sausages. The meal was an apparent success, and the merger talks proceeded. Only later did I learn that Bob Larsen's wife was a vegetarian. She was very polite and graciously did not comment.

14. A Tour of China's Major Cuisines with Shuping: No consensus exists on how many major cuisines there are in China. The most common version recognizes four major and four secondary cuisines. In 25 years of travel in China—much of it with my two expert guides Shuping Hou, managing director of our Shanghai studio, and Phyllis—I have been able to enjoy great meals in every category. At their best, all are among the great cuisines of the world.

15. Shanghai vs. Nanjing Soup Dumplings: During our first trip to Nanjing to see my grandfather's seven buildings at Nanjing University, later the site of our first completed building in China, Shuping arranged for Phyllis to go behind the scenes into one of the restaurant kitchens. She wanted to learn the subtle differences between Nanjing and Shanghai soup dumplings. (I love soup dumplings!)



Left
With giant hams stacked behind them, Andy Rifkin, left, and Jules Demchick took us on a tour of Eataly in Turin, Italy, before this concept came to New York.

Right
Shanghai or Nanjing dumplings? It's hard to tell the difference, but they are both a favorite breakfast or lunch.



16. My Daughter's Introduction to Hunan Cuisine: I took my daughter Rebecca to China as a graduation gift. On one of our last nights in Shanghai, we were to attend a dinner hosted by our client K.K. Chung. He asked Rebecca what type of food she would like. She knew he was from Hunan and replied, "Hunan." He arranged for an elaborate banquet featuring classic Hunan dishes. Halfway through the meal, the waiter appeared with a bag that clearly had a restless occupant. He opened it to show Rebecca a very large, live snake. She looked at it and calmly commented, "That is a very nice snake." Shortly thereafter, a platter of fried snake appeared on the table. It does sort of taste like chicken.

17. Peking Duck in Beijing: I have eaten a lot of roast duck in my life, but Peking duck in Beijing remains my favorite. On an early trip, we discovered the Dadong Roast Duck Restaurant near our regular hotel in Beijing. I have been back many times.

18. Being Tested in Hainan: Some Chinese hosts like to test their foreign visitors. At a banquet with a client in Sanya, Hainan, I noticed everyone watching me when a new dish arrived. It looked like rings of sliced calamari stewed in a brown sauce. I tried two pieces, which had the texture of old rubber bands. Having swallowed them, I asked what I had just eaten. The answer was "pig's rectum." No one else touched the dish, but I gathered I had passed a test, because the client later gave us an award to plan a new city for 100,000 people. It is now built and fully occupied.

19. Street Food in Xi'an: Xi'an, the first capital of a unified China, is also the terminus of the Silk Road. The northwest quadrant of the old city is referred to as the Muslim quarter. During my first trips there, the main street of this quarter would transform itself at around five o'clock into a food street with dozens of vendors preparing and cooking a wide variety of dishes.



20. The Shanghai Office Dumpling Party: Each year Ron Vitale, managing principal of Perkins Eastman's Shanghai studio, hosts a party for the office staff where everyone makes dumplings, which are then steamed

and served. In addition to being a fun event, tasting all these homemade dumplings is always a culinary treat.

21. Dim Sum in Hong Kong: Today, you can get dim sum in restaurants across China and around the world. Originating in the area around Canton (Guangzhou), China, it serves as a staple of Cantonese cuisine. Hong Kong also offers particularly good dim sum, which I have sampled during my many trips there.

22. Sushi in Tsukiji: On a trip to Tokyo to work on some of the senior living projects for Half Century More, Phyllis wanted to see the giant tuna auction that takes place at dawn each day at the massive Tsukiji fish market. After seeing millions of dollars of tuna auctioned off in a matter of minutes, we had a delicious sushi and sashimi breakfast.



23. Omakase in Kyoto: After a week of participating as a speaker on age-friendly cities at a conference sponsored by the World Bank in Tokyo, Phyllis and I spent a long weekend at a ryokan in Kyoto. This well-known inn was famous for its food—deservedly. Each dinner—in particular, an exquisitely presented omakase (chef's choice) banquet—delighted us.

24. An Introduction to India: My client and friend Amba Sharma and his wife Renu invited Phyllis and me on our first trip to India. The Sharmas made sure we sampled the best of the many different regional cuisines throughout this wonderful trip. I have now returned more than 45 times and have grown to savor all its regional flavors.

25. The Perfect Mango: After returning from a work session on Antara senior living in Dehradun, Tara Singh (our client) called my room in the hotel, which was across from her family home, to see how the site visit had gone. I said the trip had been successful and the only disappointment was that the hotel did not have fresh mango at breakfast. I was just joking, but Indians take great pride in their mangoes. Thirty minutes later, there was a knock on my door, and one of the Singh staff presented me with a crystal bowl filled with perfectly ripe and delicious mango.

26. An Indian Wedding: When Tara Singh was getting married, she invited Phyllis, my three daughters, my colleague Susan DiMotta and her husband, Tomeu and Gemma, and approximately three thousand others for the five-day extravaganza. We dined beneath a 60,000 sf silk tent that was changed and redecorated every night after dinner. Lionel Richie and various other celebrities provided the after-dinner entertainment. Excellent Indian food, as well as a variety of other cuisines, made every meal a delicious experience. That was a week to remember.

27. Cooking Lessons in Kerala: Arun Nanda is a friend and client in Mumbai. He is the Vice Chairman of Mahindra, a giant conglomerate that owns dozens of family resorts. He invited Phyllis and me to stay at one of their resorts in Kerala, a southern state, which was lovely and restful. Phyllis wanted to learn more about Indian cooking, so she went down each day to work in the kitchen next to the main chef. The food and beverage staff went out of their way to make our dinners memorable on the hotel terrace overlooking a tea plantation.

28. Diwali in Mumbai: I always enjoy going out with the staff from our studios around the world. One lunch, where the entire Mumbai office wore their colorful Diwali finery, made a glorious impression.



29. Ceviche in Guayaquil: I have had many enjoyable meals in Guayaquil with friends, clients, and staff—many at tables next to the pool at our Hilton home away from home. One day, the father of one of the staff gave us a boat tour of the Guayaquil waterfront, and provided homemade ceviche, a mouth-wateringly tasty snack.

30. The Mandarin in Hanoi: Phyllis discovered a restaurant named The Mandarin near the Intercontinental Hotel, my home during the 30-month-long Hanoi Master Plan. It served a particularly good and beautifully presented cross-section of Vietnamese classics. It became a favorite of Paul Buckhurst (of BFJ Planning) and mine to entertain team members, friends, and clients.

31. A Korean Banquet in Hanoi—North Korean Style: One of my Vietnamese friends took me for an excellent Korean banquet in Hanoi at a restaurant called Pyongyang. I learned it was owned by the North Korean government, which set it up as a source of hard currency.

32. A Street Food Court in Ho Chi Minh City: HCM is a good food city with a wide variety of excellent street food. One entrepreneur recruited a cross-section of the better vendors into a large enclosed courtyard with an adjacent area for diners, creating a curated street-food experience without the street.

33. Thailand: I have only had two projects in Thailand, but all the meals I've eaten there have placed this culinary destination high on my bucket list for future feasts.

34. Snails, Steak Tartare, and Soufflé in Paris: In July of 2018, we attended colleague Cannelle Legler's wedding in Provence and returned via Paris. That weekend, France won the World Cup and the streets of central Paris were jammed. It took 90 minutes to work our way

on foot to our restaurant, but this classic French dinner was worth the effort.

35. Oysters, Fish and Chips, and Guinness in Dublin: I've shared many meals over the years with Co-CEO and Executive Director Nick Leahy, a Brit by birth. While we were working together in Dublin, he took advantage of its good fish and chips, while I usually added oysters, which are particularly good there. Both of us, of course, drank Guinness.

36. Harrods Food Halls: Phyllis and I were in London over Christmas and New Year while working on the University of Buckingham Law School, and we did what we've done in the past—shopped in the incredible Harrods Food Halls and feasted in our hotel room on Christmas Day.

37. Neal's Yard Dairy: Phyllis has always insisted that any trip to London include a visit to the famous cheese shop Neal's Yard Dairy to purchase a good supply of English Stilton, Cheddar, and other great cheeses.



38. Port Tasting in Porto: In December of 2018 we went to Porto, Portugal, where I met our client Diogo Gaspar Ferreira over dinner. One memorable afternoon included a tour and tasting at Graham's Port 1890 Lodge.

39. Mezze in the Middle East: I learned to enjoy Middle Eastern cuisine in the '70s when I was working in Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran—particularly the great mezzes at dinners overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in Beirut. My last trip before the pandemic was in Dubai, where I shared a nice mezze lunch with Tarek Farid, principal and Perkins Eastman's regional manager of the Middle East.

40. Lavan's and Periyali: In the early years, we had little built work and a thin brochure. But we had Lavan's, a good restaurant half a block from our New York office. We were regulars, and the owner and staff always made our meals memorable—especially when we were entertaining clients. Since we moved to 115 Fifth in 1997, Periyali has assumed this same important role. **Continued...**

Opposite

A typical feast awaits us in China, where we've sampled dishes from each of the country's major cuisines.

At the end of the Silk Road, the Muslim Quarter of Xi'an comes alive with street-food vendors at the end of each day.

Phyllis and I feast on a breakfast of sushi and sashimi following the famed giant-tuna auction at the Tsukiji Fish Market in Tokyo.

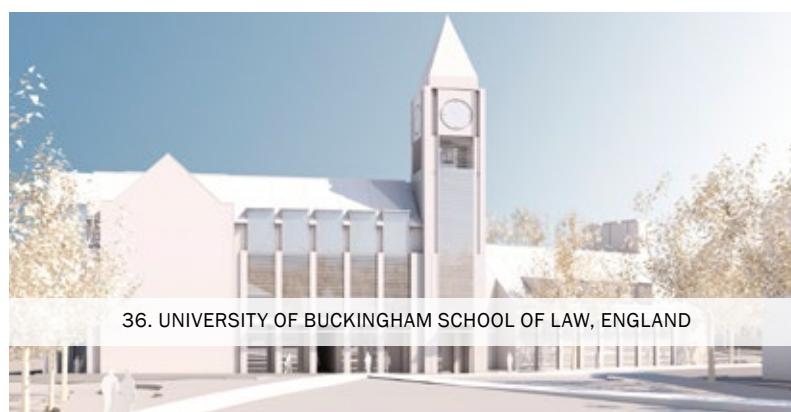
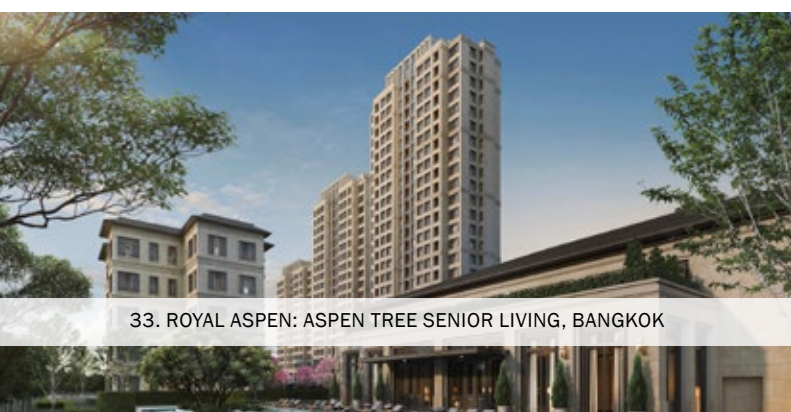
From Left

Perkins Eastman's Mumbai staff, dressed in Diwali finery.

We never go to London without visiting Neal's Yard Dairy for its fine selection of cheeses.

Meals that built the practice

While breaking bread in exotic places, I was also finding common ground and building relationships with clients which led to more work. A sampling of some of the projects that resulted from these repasts follow. - Brad Perkins





1. PRAIA DO FORTE MASTER PLAN, BRAZIL



8. ANTARA DEHRADUN SENIOR LIVING, INDIA

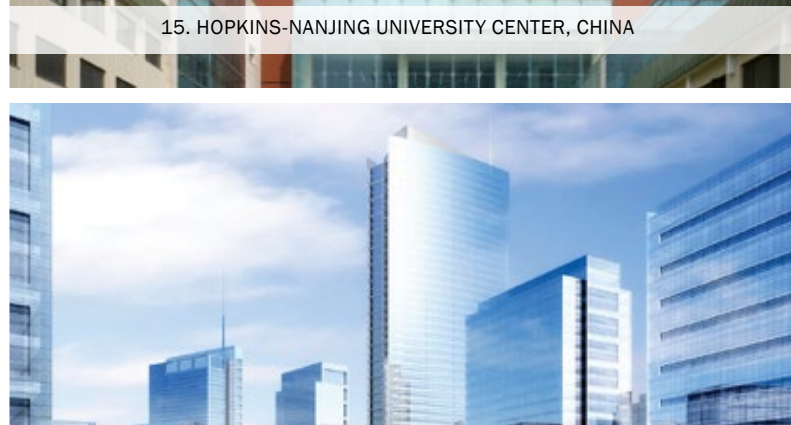


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15. HOPKINS-NANJING UNIVERSITY CENTER, CHINA



16. MAXDO UNIVERSITY MASTER PLAN, CHINA



19. BEIJING SCIENCE CITY MASTER PLAN, BEIJING



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22. GINZA EAST HCM SUN CITY, TOKYO



29. CIUDAD SANTIAGO MASTER PLAN, ECUADOR



31. NORTH AN KHANH NEW CITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT, HANOI

Bradford Perkins, Chairman and co-Founder of Perkins Eastman, published his latest book, *The Architect's Guide to Developing and Managing an International Practice* (Wiley), this year. In addition to his many chapters on business advice, he notes in Chapter Nine—Cautionary Case Studies—that “appreciation of a country’s cuisine and traditions usually is a mandatory skill set for successful international practice.” **N**