



Boston Cream Pie

Sweet Stops

Savor the cookies and the filled-after-you-order cannoli at **Modern Pastry Shop** in the North End. modernpastry.com

Order a dinner you wouldn't want to spoil with sweets at the **Butcher Shop** in the Back Bay. (Hint: steak tartare, pâtés and terrine, and a bottle of wine.) thebutchershopboston.com

Sweat off your Boston cream pie with a Zumba class at **Boston Athletic Club** in the Boston Harbor Industrial Park. bostonathleticclub.com

IF YOU ANSWERED **MOSTLY C**, YOU ARE A:

Cream Puff

"Boston cream pie isn't really pie," says Stephanie Mallea, and I don't argue. She's not only a local pastry chef who trained at the Culinary Institute of America but also a friend with strong convictions about many things—especially food. "Pies have crusts. The Boston cream pie doesn't have a crust. It's really a cake."

We start our search for the perfect Boston cream (so-called) pie—a tender sponge cake paired with vanilla pastry cream that isn't too thick, all topped by a chocolate ganache that isn't too sweet—at the place that invented the dessert nearly 150 years ago, the Omni Parker House (omnihotels.com). At the hotel's informal lounge, the Last Hurrah, Stephanie takes a few judicious bites and

pronounces the pie "good." She wishes the filling had more vanilla, but credits the dark chocolate for cutting the cream.

Next, we try a non-traditional entry from Finale (finaledesserts.com). Boston's dessert-oriented eatery uses Bavarian cream instead of pastry cream—a risk, because Bavarian cream is more fragile. But Finale's tasty version makes Stephanie talk in phrases between bites: "the softness of the cream...the firmness of the cake...really good."

Our hunt ends at another Beantown institution: Dunkin' Donuts (dunkindonuts.com). Stephanie nibbles skeptically on the Boston Kreme Donut but eventually gets over its super sweetness. "It's made to go with coffee," she says.