Big Food Gets Jacked How protein mania took over the American grocery store.

By Chris Gayomali

Photo-Illustration: Eddie Guy

0:00 / 0:00

Audio: Listen to this article.

A few years ago, dreading the slow but inevitable approach of my 40s, I began working out five times a week. I became one of those guys who know what a psoas is and settled on a preferred brand of moisture-wicking T-shirt. And a brand-new fear wormed its way into my subconscious: the worry I wasn't getting enough protein.

Put simply, despite my virtuous exercise habits, I still felt like shit most of the time. After rigorous research (listening to some health podcasts), I figured that eating more protein would give me more energy and steer the fragile container that is my body in the right direction. I decided to shoot for 120 grams daily: a nice round number that, according to online macro calculators, still felt ambitious for someone of my modest stature. But hitting that number, I soon found, required a moment-to-moment calibration that structured the rhythms of my day. Let's call it low-grade protein anxiety.

At the grocery store, I wouldn't even look at a product if it didn't promise me double digits. Despite our lack of cabinet space, I started to purchase enormous tubs of whey protein and collagen. I started cooking a lot more meat — especially grass-fed beef — which required me to meal plan carefully and treat our freezer like a Jenga puzzle. At the bodega, I found myself drawn to items like the Core Power Elite High Protein Milk Shake, which contains 42 grams of protein, the rough equivalent of a six-ounce sirloin. Then my wife and I had a son, after which at least 30 percent of my anxiety became focused on what we were feeding him. He's a picky eater, and often the protein-specific foods — the string cheese, the scrambled eggs, the chicken adobo — would be what he threw to the dog. His resistance to eating protein touched on another latent worry: If he didn't eat enough, would he grow up to be a short guy like me?

These preoccupations aren't specific to me. The protein insurgence is all around us. Just take a stroll through your local grocery store and you'll see protein is being jammed into all kinds of unlikely places. In the snacks aisle, you'll find Quest Tortilla-Style Protein Chips (18 grams a bag), which come in zesty flavors like Nacho Cheese and Loaded Taco. In the freezer aisle,

you'll see an emergent category of protein ice creams by brands like Smearcase, which offers 39 to 44 grams of protein and is "powered by cottage cheese and boosted with collagen." There are protein cookies, protein freezer waffles, protein cheese puffs, protein Moon Pies, protein Snickers bars, and protein truffles; in the beverage aisle, protein water, protein soda, protein beer. And I was gobsmacked to learn of protein seasonings, like Devious Foods' Protein SZN, which comes in flavors like salt and pepper and can be sprinkled on top of other proteins, like a chicken breast, for additional gains.

Some of this stuff tastes pretty good. I've become a fan of Immi instant ramen, specifically the black-garlic "chicken" flavor that has ingredients like pea protein, wheat gluten, and sunflower-seed protein (23 grams per serving). Friends are fans of Magic Spoon, a low-carb Froot Loops–ish cereal start-up that claims 12 to 14 grams of protein per serving and that, in just over five years, has managed to raise more than $200 million in funding. Of course, there's plenty of bad to barely edible stuff as well. A bag of Wilde Protein Chips, made from a slurry of chicken breast, egg whites, and bone broth, was found to be revolting by everyone in my household except the dog.

None of these quirky food brands, however, surprised me more than what I stumbled upon last fall while roaming the cereal aisle of my local Brooklyn grocery store. Sandwiched between the Cap'n Crunch Oops! All Berries and Trix With Marshmallows was a box of Wheaties, the 100-year-old General Mills cereal that helped launch the acting career of Ronald Reagan and has become synonymous with rose-tinted Americana — the edible equivalent of standing for "The Star-Spangled Banner" before a ball game. But there was a key distinction. This was a box of Wheaties Protein with the word *protein* printed much larger than *Wheaties*. And while the old version offers three grams of protein per serving, this version contains 21 to 22 grams, a sevenfold increase that seemed if not chemically unstable, then at least gustatorily risky. At this grocery store, the original Wheaties was nonexistent, seemingly replaced overnight by the svelte insurgent.

General Mills has long been emblematic of our love of the convenient carb — its name refers to its origins as a flour mill — the pioneer of Bisquick mixes and Betty Crocker boxed cakes and, more recently, the steward of the Pillsbury Doughboy and Totino's Pizza Rolls. Now, the conglomerate is doubling down on convenient protein, an undeniable sign of the nutritional event horizon upon us. Wheaties Protein debuted this past April as one of a trinity of new protein cereals offered by General Mills. In December, the company released Cheerios Protein for families with children; then there's Ghost Protein Cereal, the box of which looks not unlike a MrBeast thumbnail and seems designed to target nerds (its strongest appeal has been to "teens and younger adults," per the company). Ghost, made with soy and dairy protein, offers 17 to 18 grams per serving and comes in two flavors: peanut butter and marshmallow, which synergistically uses the same marshmallow recipe as Lucky Charms.

In some ways, protein was biding its time. Unlike the other core macronutrients, fat and carbohydrates, which have at various points been demonized by pop-science journalism and fad diets, protein is something people can largely agree on regardless of identity or political affiliation. Still, there's something that feels inherently suspect about food we're told is good for us but looks like a Pop-Tart. "I feel like this is just a rebrand of Y2K Atkins," says Andrea Hernández, a food-and-beverage expert. The food industry, she suggests, exists within a quantum of extreme pendulum swings, and high protein may be the latest in the dialectic of low-fat, high-fiber, low-sugar, and other buzzwords before it. Many nutritionists have argued, too, that people in the western world already get way more protein than what our bodies require. Was I actually nudging my health in the right direction, or was I just an easy mark for a megaindustry pulling invisible levers to shape our food preferences? I figured a journey into the heart of corporate America's everything-is-protein movement could help me find out.

One of the origins of the modern protein boom can be traced to the period after World War II when industrialized agriculture turbocharged dairy production. This led to an abundance of whey, the liquid by-product of turning milk into cheese. It was often regarded as waste; farmers would feed it to their pigs and cattle or scatter it on the ground as fertilizer, and a lot of it was just dumped into rivers or sewers. By the middle of the 20th century, it became a significant source of water pollution in cheese-making capitals like Vermont and Wisconsin. One cheese plant discarded its excess whey in an abandoned drinking well, and in 1942, the substance had produced enough gas that the pressure blew the well's cover off.

According to a sociological history of whey protein by Gavin Weedon and Samantha King, dairy producers and the food industry grew desperate to figure out what to do with the surplus, especially as the 1970s brought a swell of environmental legislation that often made simply dumping it a no-go. That decade, a technological breakthrough arrived in the form of membrane filtration, a technique by which whey proteins could be separated and purified from the liquid while staying soluble (up until then, whey was mostly available as a gritty, water-insoluble powder that nobody really knew what to do with). Early iterations of protein supplements existed — Hollywood nutritionist Rheo Blair is often credited with inventing an early protein powder using milk and egg — but whey came to be seen as the gold standard owing to its "complete" chemical composition, which means it contains all nine essential amino acids.

All the while, protein's stock was rising. Arnold Schwarzenegger's cult 1977 documentary, *Pumping Iron,* inspired a bodybuilding craze. An enterprising doctor named Robert Atkins had begun publishing books advising a low-carb, high-protein weight-loss regimen, which 30 million Americans would try by the early aughts. Body ideals evolved too. "Since about the 1990s, we've seen the popularization of the 'thin, but toned' ideal in which women

were expected to be skinny yet display a certain amount of muscle tone," says Julie Brice, a kinesiology professor at California State University, Fullerton. And "the masculine body ideal has become increasingly large and muscular, reflected by movies, television, magazines," says Jason Nagata, a pediatrician at the University of California, San Francisco. He cites studies that show how, over the past 30 years, boys' action figures have grown more jacked.

Prompted by concerns about the climate and animal welfare, the food industry also started making strides in wringing protein from all kinds of plants, like peas, hemp, mung beans, rice, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, sacha inchi (a star-shaped seed native to parts of the Caribbean and South America), and even algae. As Mahfuzur Rahman, a professor of food science at the University of Arkansas who used to work at Kraft Heinz, puts it, the challenge with isolating protein from plants has historically been its low extraction yield and taste, which skews "beany, grassy, or nutty." For the first dilemma, Rahman says, enzyme technology has gotten much more effective with plants, allowing manufacturers to pull out more protein without damaging its quality. And according to University of Massachusetts food-science professor David Julian McClements, manufacturers are now using selective breeding and genetic engineering, especially in pea and soy plants, to remove undesired flavor profiles. Kathleen Hefferon, a lecturer at Cornell who also runs a protein company, says that researchers are even finding ways to take the crops associated with protein and breed them to contain more of the macronutrient, and some companies are trying to grow animal proteins in plants. "There's a company using potatoes to make egg proteins," Hefferon says. (Despite these biotechnological innovations, fundamental challenges remain. Many plant proteins are not naturally water soluble, one reason some powders still tend to clump. And chalkiness and bitterness haven't fully gone away, though manufacturers have gotten better at masking them.)

Food scientists acknowledge that companies wouldn't have invested so much effort if the hunger for protein hadn't kept pace. In the wellness-podcast ecosystem, which flourished during the pandemic and post-pandemic years, figures like Andrew Huberman and Peter Attia routinely plug the power of protein for maintaining muscle function and living a long, happy, ambulatory life. Nor is protein still the province of men who know what their resting heart rate is. Prominent doctors like Gabrielle Lyon and Mary Claire Haver, both of whom have large social-media presences, argue that women need to do resistance training and consume much more protein, especially as they enter menopause. That recipe — protein paired with exercise — has also emerged as essential for staving off sarcopenia, or the loss of muscle mass as a result of age and inactivity, which has strong associations with many diseases, including Alzheimer's and other forms of cognitive decline.

Recently, the adoption of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs has opened the door for new categories of protein products. The medicine dramatically curbs appetites, and some doctors encourage high-protein diets to prevent the loss of muscle while losing weight. I spoke to Vy Cutting, a former fashion

designer at Louis Vuitton based in London who in 2023 founded a line of protein sodas called Feisty. The first batch involved just stirring in some pea-protein powder; it tasted bitter, she says, with notes of burned tire and Tylenol. Since then, she has been approached by Selfridge's and Whole Foods Market about stocking her sodas, and she recalls talking to someone high up in the beverage industry who told her semaglutides are already reshaping retailers' decision-making. "He had loads of data from all these big retailers, and he was like, 'In a few years, they're going to completely change what they're buying because Ozempic people are eating less but they're looking for nutrient-dense food,'" Cutting says. Her own journey into protein began with a brutal knee injury that led her to discover the pleasures of weight lifting, and she thinks anyone can become a protein convert. "I was sitting on the tube recently," she says, "and I saw this goth eating a protein bar."

***

In November, I booked a trip to Minneapolis to visit the General Mills headquarters, a Tony Stark–esque megacampus surrounded by duck ponds, birch-tree groves, and a sculpture garden. It's here that the company's engineers and branding experts figure out how to make and market its vast portfolio of products, which includes Chex and Chex Mix, Annie's Mac & Cheese, Dunkaroos, Yoplait, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, and Old El Paso Taco Shells.

Doug Martin, General Mills' chief marketing officer, first saw the protein incursion coming more than a decade ago, when he was working on the General Mills brand Nature Valley. Protein wasn't yet mainstream, he claimed; in those days, "you had granola bars for families in the grocery aisle and performance bars over by the pharmacy. They were thought of very separately." Still, Martin said, "something we realized even back then was there are only a few bits of nutrition knowledge that everyone picks up from their mom, and one is, 'You gotta have some protein.'" In 2012, he helped launch the Nature Valley protein bar, the company's first. Because the bar was targeted at families, the team wagered that maybe it didn't need the 20 grams of protein of a bodybuilder's bar — ten might suffice. In year one, it exceeded expectations, earning $100 million in revenue.

That bar was a trial balloon demonstrating to the C-suite that protein was moving away from the fringe realm of meatheads and toward the center of the nutrition universe. And breakfast — especially for General Mills — was fertile territory. About a decade ago, the R&D team enlisted thousands of testers, the kinds of fitness enthusiasts who might work out multiple times a week, to give feedback on new products. All of them were looking for more protein, said Nicole Ayers, the business-unit director of General Mills' "morning foods" division, and the specific number R&D heard again and again was "at least 15 grams per serving," the equivalent of a protein shake.

Wheaties, with its history of marketing to athletes and fitness junkies, was a natural candidate to undergo renovation. According to Ayers, about two-

thirds of Wheaties consumers were 55-plus, people "who've been eating this product for 30 years." Increasing the protein quantity was also an attempt to reach a younger audience. But multiplying an existing product's protein content can be tricky. Protein changes the fundamental taste and texture of a cereal flake, and in the case of Wheaties, mimicking the old flake was paramount. The cereal couldn't stray too far from its original hardness rating, a number on a scale of one to nine assigned by an expert panel of cereal sommeliers (representatives declined to share the hardness rating of Wheaties Protein). Another consideration was "tooth pack," which refers to how much of the stuff gets stuck in your teeth per bite. Plus there's the inconvenient fact that cereal undergoes phase changes after sitting in milk.

Over two years, General Mills went through 40 iterations of Wheaties Protein trying to pump as many grams of protein in each single-cup serving as possible. "Fifteen grams was a threshold, but we really pushed ourselves to hit 20," said Brandy Edmonds, who heads its "morning foods" R&D. In its first attempt, her team tried to take advantage of the protein the cereal already contained in a concentrated form of wheat called vital wheat gluten. Could more just be added? "There's a limit to how much we can add that actually tastes good," Edmonds admitted. We were in one of the company's test kitchens in a remote corner of the campus. In front of me was a museum-quality arrangement of dozens of little glass containers, each of which held a different version of cereal in the R&D phase. Some flakes were hexagonal lattices to help fight sogginess, some were puffed up with rice, a few were balls.

When describing the quest for a bowl of Wheaties with 20 grams of protein, Edmonds slipped into fitness-speak. "You've got to push to failure," she said. "You've got to find the bounds." The R&D team then tried combining wheat bran with other proteins, like those from peas or milk. Some of the results were chalky or dry or cardboardlike or brittle to the point of being crushed to dust in the box. Ultimately, the team landed on soy, which has a slightly nuttier flavor and, when baked, didn't compromise the flake's texture and stability. (Soy is one of the few plant-based proteins that is considered complete; when using other plant-based proteins, Rahman says, many companies will combine two or three to mimic the amino-acid profile of an animal source.)

Cheerios presented a different calculus. It's one of the most popular cereal brands in the country, selling around 260 million boxes a year. And by polling customers, the company learned any changes to the shape or texture would be controversial. "They want their *O* unadulterated," Edmonds said. More than for Wheaties, people had a clear sensory expectation for Cheerios and didn't want a whiff of protein. Because so many children would be eating it, allergens like dairy and soy protein were out. Luckily, Cheerios eaters "were not seeking out double digits; it wasn't like we had to hit ten or 15," Edmonds said. Most were happy with a bowl containing the protein equivalent of an egg. The reinvented Cheerios deploys pea protein with cinnamon or strawberry flavoring, perhaps to mask the supplement's beany taste (the original Cheerios flavor isn't an option).

The General Mills team seems to know what I discovered through my own protein journey — that it can often feel laborious to hit one's macros. No one should have to live on cottage cheese and Greek yogurt alone. Ayers told me about a friend who, in the morning, would eat six or seven eggs, followed by a Clif bar and protein shake for lunch, then chicken breast and broccoli for dinner. Not everybody can or wants to do this, nor could many stomach the monotony. "People still need some convenience," said Martins. "We're not all going to go homestead and milk cows. People need packaged food solutions."

Still, the company is careful to clarify it wouldn't officially call Cheerios Protein "high protein" — that label, a representative said, applies to food with 20 percent of the daily value. In 2014, the company launched a different version of Cheerios Protein that included both the original cereal and granola clusters. (Those clusters boosted the protein count; the innovation of the new Cheerios Protein, a spokesperson said, is that all the protein is contained inside the *O*s.) Four years later, General Mills settled a consumer-watchdog group's lawsuit alleging misleading marketing: Cheerios Protein, the suit claimed, offered only slightly more protein than the original (the front panel claimed 11 grams, and four of those came from adding milk) but a lot more sugar. As part of the agreement, General Mills conceded to print descriptors like SWEETENED WHOLE GRAIN CORN AND AND OAT CEREAL WITH CRUNCHY ALMOND GRANOLA CLUSTERS AND REAL CINNAMON on the front of the box in a font size at least half as big as the word *protein*. It also changed the protein quantity on the front of the box to seven grams.

It's true that a closer examination of labels at the grocery store suggests the protein trend has also brought some protein inflation. One box of Chickapea "high protein" pasta has two sets of nutrition facts, one for the official two-ounce serving size (13 grams of protein) and one for a larger serving that matches the box's claims of 24 grams. (Chickapea says the larger serving better reflects the amount people are likely to eat.) BHU Foods protein truffles contain only one gram each (two for the peanut-butter flavor). Protein SZN's advertised amount (ten grams) corresponds to a serving of two tablespoons, which is an awful lot to sprinkle on anything, let alone a piece of chicken.

Back in Brooklyn, while indulging in my daily doomscroll, I came across a category of people who drink chicken-breast smoothies. Rather than subjecting themselves to supplements or powders, they'll throw some shredded chicken breast into a blender with other smoothie ingredients.

I was curious. Maybe this concoction could offer a perfect marriage of the unprocessed simplicity of chicken breast with the convenient efficiency of a protein bar. So after picking up a pack of chicken tenderloins at the store and boiling three (150 grams uncooked, about 48 grams of protein), I tore the chunks of flesh into the blender and added a splash of water plus everything I could find in my freezer: the crumbly end of a bag of

raspberries, two bananas, some blueberries, a forgotten package of açai. The result looked like a normal berry smoothie and, on first sip, tasted like one. Then the back end arrived, coating my tongue in what I can only describe as a slick film with the viscosity and taste of a can of Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup. That's when I realized my tactical error: Having added all these extra ingredients, I was left with a Venti-size chicken smoothie to finish. I offered some to my wife, who set her cup down barely touched. My son, I knew, would never go near it.

The recommended dietary allowance, or RDA, of protein has stayed roughly the same since 1941, when the U.S. National Research Council first set these nutrition guides as part of wartime food-relief efforts. "They basically wanted to check how much protein we needed to not go catabolic — in other words, to not break down our own tissue," says bariatric surgeon and author Garth Davis. In the decades since, the number has hovered around 0.8 to one gram of protein per kilogram of body weight. For a 130-pound woman who doesn't exercise very often, this would mean consuming at least 47 to 58 grams of protein a day. In the context of an American diet, where a Chipotle bowl can top 50 grams of protein, this is easy work.

In recent years, though, some researchers have argued that the RDA is out of date, especially for those who are serious trainers or undergoing body recomposition. In 2018, a team of nutrition researchers from McMaster University and other institutions published a paper in *The British Journal of Sports Medicine* titled "A systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-regression of the effect of protein supplementation on resistance-training-induced gains in muscle mass and strength in healthy adults." Analyzing data from 49 studies and nearly 1,900 people, all of whom did some resistance training twice a week, the meta-analysis concluded that, for this group, an optimal amount of protein for growing muscle and gaining strength may be as high as 1.6 grams per kilogram (though the benefits seem to taper off after that point). The current RDA "is designed to prevent a protein deficiency in virtually everyone," says Jorn Trommelen, a professor and researcher who specializes in muscle mass at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. "But preventing deficiencies is not necessarily the ideal value."

One of the paper's co-authors, Brad Schoenfeld, graduate director of the Human Performance and Fitness program at CUNY's Lehman College, says that at least with regard to body-composition goals, it's probably better to eat a little more protein than you need, rather than too little. But with long-term health in mind, he warned against allowing protein to displace other necessary macronutrients like fats and carbs. And for those who aren't regularly strength training, many experts say that loading up on protein is, at best, pointless. Davis explains it like this: "For the average person not lifting a lot of heavy weights, when they're drinking all these protein shakes, it's basically delivering bricks to a building site but not having anyone there building the house, and you've just got a whole bunch of bricks building up outside. If you're not utilizing those bricks, it's not going to do you any good."

In the past, physicians sometimes warned about the relationship between consuming lots of protein and high rates of cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular kidney disease; now, the medical Establishment suspects these risks may have more to do with meat (for example, the animal fat) than the macro-nutrient itself. “We have even more data now that the source of the protein makes an important difference,” says Walter Willett, professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Like many in his field, he believes plant protein is superior for longevity and protecting against disease. Still, he cautions, “each of them needs to be evaluated critically because they might not be good if loaded with refined starch and salt.”

Indeed, the key to making a high-protein diet healthy is the form it comes in. Wild-caught sockeye salmon: good, probably! Individually wrapped protein cinnamon rolls you can buy at Target: maybe not so much. Substantial scientific literature has suggested many kinds of ultraprocessed foods contribute to a host of chronic diseases, largely because they can be high in sugar, salt, refined grains, and saturated fat, and maybe also because of their levels of advanced glycation end products, or AGEs, which form when food is cooked in high dry heat. Injecting these foods with more protein “is like putting lipstick on a pig,” says Michelle Davenport, a nutrition scientist who’s been studying AGEs for over a decade. “Millennials have this idea that we can reverse indoctrinate all these unhealthy habits of snacking,” says Hernández, the food-and-beverage expert. “We’re trying to do right by adding protein to a cereal and then slapping it with premium branding.”

It’s hard not to see big food’s high-protein makeover as a Band-Aid for a hopeless food system, an easy way to capitalize on people who may have a hard time giving up chips and candy. When I ask Alan Aragon, another of the authors of the 2018 meta-analysis, what he thinks, he considers for a moment “It’s both a money grab and a potential benefit for very specific populations who have trouble getting enough protein in the course of the day,” he says. Older adults especially have a hard time eating enough protein, he points out. This makes me think about my own parents, who are both around 70 and barely eat anything anymore unless it’s takeout or Diet Coke. Almost every time I go home to visit, they’re a step slower, seem a little more tired, and have a fridge full of groceries about to go bad. When I was growing up, our family often defaulted to cheap and convenient fast food like 99 cent tacos from Jack in the Box and fries from Wendy’s — a habit difficult to unlearn. I selfishly wondered what would have happened if I had eaten more stuff with protein in it growing up, especially during puberty. Is my son going to benefit in the long haul from having all these options, even if they’re not perfect?

Proteinified food is just slightly better junk. Whether you notice the “better” or the “junk” first is a Rorschach test: You see whichever you care about more in the moment. The morning after I flew home from General Mills headquarters, I unpacked my carry-on full of cereals and poured my picky 2-year-old a bowl of the cinnamon-flavored Cheerios Protein. Trying

something new at breakfast is always a gamble, as his hunger can set the tone for the rest of the day, but I was feeling wiped and my laziness won.

"What do you think, dude?" I asked as he sat down at his little stool. "Is it yummy?"

He ignored me and took a bite. And then, miraculously, another.

RELATED

Who Can Make a Mocktail That Makes Money?

TAGS: TRENDS PROTEIN GROCERY STORES NEW YORK MAGAZINE MORE

LEAVE A COMMENT

LATEST NEWS FROM GRUB STREET

UNDERGROUND GOURMET | YESTERDAY AT 12:54 P.M.

Schmuck Is Unlike Any Other Bar in New York The Barcelona import sounds silly. It's actually pretty great.

By Tammie Teclemariam

GIFTS | FEB. 10, 2025

The 122 Best E-Gift Cards Not only is it better than nothing, but they get to pick out something they actually want.

By Kitty Guo

OPENINGS | FEB. 10, 2025

A New Spot Treats Its Kimchee Pairings Like Wine At Raon, chef Soogil Lim showcases the versatility and complexity of Korea's most famous side dish.

By Joshua David Stein

THE APPROVAL MATRIX | FEB. 7, 2025

The Approval Matrix: Planets Aligned, Everything Is Fine? Our guide to what's highbrow, lowbrow, brilliant, and despicable.

THE GRUB STREET DIET | FEB. 7, 2025

Liza Treyger Is Having a Time "I love to overorder, especially when I'm wasted."

By Zach Schiffman

INTERIORS | FEB. 6, 2025

Making a Bar Look Like Baz Luhrmann Catherine Martin on designing the E. 4th Street space with her director husband and Le Dive's Jon Neidich.

RESTAURANT REVIEW | FEB. 6, 2025

Zimmi's Only Looks Humble The West Village newcomer is like an Old Country inn where the details are just right.

By Matthew Schneier

OPENINGS | FEB. 5, 2025

The Revolving Restaurant Above Times Square Is Spinning Again Danny Meyer wants you to check out his View.

By Anna Hezel

UNDERGROUND GOURMET | FEB. 5, 2025

Delivery Tacos That Are Actually Fantastic A new Brooklyn shop has mastered the delicate art of barbacoa delivery.

By Tammie Teclemariam

RAIDS | FEB. 4, 2025

ICE Has Restaurant Workers Terrified Nobody is sure exactly what's going on, but any threat of deportation is too grave to ignore.

By Chris Crowley

GUIDES | FEB. 3, 2025

Where to Eat in February The best restaurants for right now.

By Grub Street

GETTING AROUND | JAN. 31, 2025

The Moped King How an ex-delivery worker upended the streets of New York City, for better and for worse.

THE GRUB STREET DIET | JAN. 31, 2025

Author Andrew Lipstein Believes There Are Two Kinds of Bagel Shops "There are those that try to dominate you, and there are those that want to be dominated."

By Paula Aceves

UNDERGROUND GOURMET | JAN. 30, 2025

Cheese Tea Is Frothy, Salty, and Absolutely Everywhere Waits for the fruity, layered drinks can stretch to an hour.

By Tammie Teclemariam

CHEF SHUFFLES | JAN. 29, 2025

Stephen Starr Has Bought Babbo And Lupa. And Mark Ladner is the new chef.

RENT DISPUTES | JAN. 29, 2025

'This Would Be Like Losing Our CBGB' Terraza 7, a Jackson Heights institution, is in trouble. Supporters — including Jessica Ramos and AOC — say it must be saved.

By Jack Denton

THE COST OF EATING | JAN. 29, 2025

Think Eggs Are Expensive? Try Buying 2,700 of Them Each Week. At B&H Dairy, soaring prices have become untenable.

DRINKS | JAN. 28, 2025

Natural Wine Grows Up Lee Campbell was an early advocate for the movement. At Borgo, she's put together a list that points to natural wine's more mature future.

OPENINGS | JAN. 27, 2025

Momofuku Swaps Pork Buns For Beef Patties At Kabawa, the company is staking its future on a chef not named David Chang.

By Tammie Teclemariam

MORE STORIES