

Five Places to Go in Bantam, Conn.

[nytimes.com/2018/06/20/travel/five-places-to-go-in-bantam-conn.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/travel/five-places-to-go-in-bantam-conn.html)

By Gisela Williams

June 20, 2018

Image



Popular foodie hangouts, converted from old industrial buildings by two fashion executives, dominate a stretch of Bantam Road in the borough of Bantam in Litchfield, Conn. Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

The borough of Bantam has long been viewed as a traditionally blue-collar area among the rolling hills of picturesque Litchfield County in northwest Connecticut. Lately, though, Bantam has evolved into a compelling destination of its own; a place that offers everything any true gourmand needs, from artisanal yogurt and tasty bread to handcrafted charcuterie. Recently, its foodie stature has grown with the popularity of A Mano, an always-packed coffee shop that is the latest venture from two Manolo Blahnik executives who, in the mid-90s, revived an old dairy farm in Litchfield, then began turning industrial buildings in Bantam into ambitious food spots. The joke now is that Bantam is such a lively culinary destination that some longtime residents refer to the classy town of Litchfield as “East Bantam.”

Image

Mockingbird Kitchen and Bar, which opened three years ago, is a well-received culinary spot in Bantam. Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Mockingbird Kitchen and Bar

This three-year-old spot in a two-story, colonial-inspired house is kind of an upscale New England gastro pub. The chef and owner Samantha Tilley serves up something for everyone here, from burgers and Asian-spiced wings to dishes that appeal to a more international palette, such as Peruvian-inspired salmon tiradito and falafel fritters. Save room for dessert which is often a decadent treat like a banana-and-white-chocolate bread pudding.

810 Bantam Road; mockingbirdkitchenandbar.com

Image

Bantam Bread opened in the mid-1990s, becoming the area's first artisanal bakery. Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Bantam Bread

New Yorkers Niles Golovin and Susie Uruburu moved to Litchfield County in the mid-90s, and soon after opened the area's first artisanal bakery in an old house next to the Bantam River. Regulars come for the Pain de Campagne and loaves made of spelt and ancient grains. They also bake a delicious "dirt bomb," the sugary, cinnamon-dusted hybrid of a muffin and doughnut hole.

853 Bantam Road; bantambread.com

Image

Litchfield Distillery opened in 2014, producing small batch artisanal spirits. Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Litchfield Distillery

When this distillery opened in 2014, it gave a buzz to the entire county with its small batch artisanal spirits. Local brothers David, Peter and Jack Baker, who in their previous career distributed Crystal Rock water, produce award-winning tipples, including a smooth bourbon whiskey, vodka and gin. They host free tours and daily tastings from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Their newest offering is a maple-barrel finished bourbon.

569 Bantam Road; litchfelddistillery.com

Image

Arethusa A Mano, now two years old, features an impressive range of freshly baked goods. Credit Arethusa Farm

Arethusa A Mano

This popular coffee shop is owned by George Malkemus and Anthony Yurgaitis, the president and vice president of Manolo Blahnik USA, who have several foodie ventures on Bantam Road. The destinations began with the decade-old Arethusa Dairy, both a production facility for the company's dairy products and a popular ice cream shop that also sells Arethusa cheeses and milk. Next came Arethusa al Tavolo, a well-received restaurant serving Mediterranean-style dishes. A Mano, now two years old, features an impressive range of freshly baked goods, from seasonal doughnuts to Paris-worthy croissants and financiers.

833 Bantam Road; arethusafarm.com

Image

The Market is family-owned and stocked with upscale provisions. Credit Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

The Market

Devotees of this family-owned market drive from miles away to pick up their provisions at this upscale grocery with a popular deli counter and sushi chef. Shoppers can find sourdough bread from the popular bakery Bread Alone, a new refrigerated beer room that offers a wide variety of craft beers, as well as charcuterie and smoked meats cured and prepared by the on-site chef Jesse Cole.

793 Bantam Road; themarketct.com