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He's coming to a sandwich shop near you. Adam Richman, 38, star of Man v. Food and now host of Best Sandwich in America on the Travel Channel, is bringing millions of hungry viewers with him in the coming weeks to watch him take a savage bite out of the Maine Coast. Already a fan of many local restaurants, he can't wait to taste and tell about Summer 2012.

Earl of Sandwich

Interview by Colin W. Sargent

Travel Channel's Adam Richman visits Maine in search of the Best Sandwich in America.
How will your show connect with Maine as summer unfolds? It’s called *Adam Richman’s Best Sandwich in America*. Basically, we did this like March Madness, with ten regions, three sandwiches per region, one pick being from a celebrity friend, two picks being mine. Then, ten regional winners plus two wildcard entries will go head-to-head in our national championship one-hour finale special. [We’re going to be] taping in Portland and surrounding areas [in the coming weeks].

**Lobster Shack**’s lobster roll: “A perfect **portable** seafood **sandwich** served in **Nature’s most beautiful dining room**.”

You’ve had America’s best sandwich—the lobster roll at The Lobster Shack in Cape Elizabeth. You’ve gushed over the view and how the lobster meat is fresh and perfect there. Would you call this gastro-pornography? Gastro-pornography, wow. I’m going to have to steal that. For me, the thing about The Lobster Shack at Two
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Lights is the fact that it’s a completely immersive New England experience. You see the lighthouses, the amazing coastline. You hear the foghorns and see the ships. No frills, ball-real. You get your lobster or lobster roll on a plastic tray, go outside into this beautiful scenery, grab a table, and chow down.

The great thing about the lobster roll, especially the one at The Lobster Shack, is its simplicity and purity. The meat is the real star here. It’s not overly mayonnaise[d], and for me, I was very lucky to be told by a local to put the pickles on top. As you bite down, there’s a rush of flavor: sweetness, a little bit of meatiness from the lobster, and slight smokiness. And from the dusting of paprika, sourness of the pickles, and the crunch they impart, it all balances with the velvetiness of all the other ingredients. The really cool thing is that a whole new flavor develops as you chew and make this amazing new flavor in your mouth. It is at once light and heavy, savory and sweet, delicate and substantial.
Portland’s the birthplace of the Italian sandwich. It’s not a hoagie, it’s not a submarine, it’s not a hero. On top of that, we at Portland Magazine are on record for claiming the Italian sandwich is the inspiration for the Philly cheesesteak. We doubt the Philly guys mentioned this during your episode there.

Inspiration is always a tough thing to claim. I’m sure there’s a publication in Philly that says the inverse.

To me, it’s always fun to delve into the hidden histories of foods, even if all you’re left with is more questions—either way, we have two kick-ass sandwiches now. I’m grateful for wherever they sprang from.

Another of your local hangouts here is Nosh, where you downed the Apocalypse Now. What was that like?

Actually, though it was a great filming location, staffed by awesome people, serving stellar [food], Nosh is not one of my “local hangouts.” I don’t say this to distance myself…but just to clarify. They’re comfort foods taken to the max and executed with considerable skill. Any place with burgers comprised of four meats, that serves bacon-dusted fries, tempura-fried bacon, and top
notch ibérico among its charcuterie is A-OK in my book.

That said, my real local hangout is the exquisite Street & Co. I love their mission, their raison d’être, their menu, staff, decor, and so much more. It is, in many ways, what a restaurant can and should be when love and honesty are the central ingredients.

New Orleans owes a debt to Maine. Cajun cuisine is descended from Acadian (Longfellow’s Evangeline traces Acadian families who resettled in Louisiana in the mid-1700s). Do you taste an echo of Franco-Maine in their zesty po boys?

No—but there’s mayo and hot sauce.

What sandwich, or what culinary experience, has given you the most vivid nightmares after eating it?

In Singapore, at the Raffles Hotel, I ordered a prawn noodle soup dish from room service. The hotel was exquisite—why wouldn’t the food be, right? I can only say that the head-on prawn—normally not something I mind—looked truly sketchy: gray, mealy in the mouth, and left an awful taste. [It] would not go away—up to and including after I puked it up like a champ.
Harvest on the Harbor is October 25-27 this year. Are you going?
I’d love to visit during the festival!
I must admit that apart from the burger at Nosh and lobster rolls, I’m rather uninformed with Portland’s sandwich offerings. But the chance to walk around Portland, shop at Rogues Gallery, try Fore Street or Duckfat, eat the Baby Octopus and Lobster Fra Diavolo at Street and Co. again, put Creole sauce on anything, and have an ice cold Allagash White with a lobster roll is far too good to pass up.

Have Peter [Wetzel] and the good people from the Portland Harbor Hotel set me up with one of those sweet fireplace rooms with the whirlpool bath, and you might have heaven.

Tell us about your trip to the Kennebunks.
The one thing I remember is the motorcycles [near the corner of Log Cabin Road and Route 1]. Every five seconds! We did about seven to ten takes for each on-camera read because a roaring chopper engine would rip through our take. My director—
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defeated and exasperated—asked the crowd, “Does everyone in Maine have a motorcycle?”

What food trends do you see on the horizon? And on that note, what’s your favorite diet food?
I think the slow integration of offal has become more pervasive, as is street food from Indonesia, Africa, and the Middle East. *Huîlacoche* is certainly having its moment as “the new saffron.” And small-batch artisanal condiments and accompaniments are everywhere.

Diet food? Well, if I’m dieting, I swear by raw veggies. If we’re talking reduced calorie thingies, I like 60-calorie sugar-free Jell-O pudding cups.

Yankee dogs or Fenway Franks?
Yankee Garlic Fries! I’ll never go to Fenway, ever! Well…unless it’s game seven and my Yanks are in it!

For more, visit portlandmonthly.com/portmag/2012/05/richman-extras.