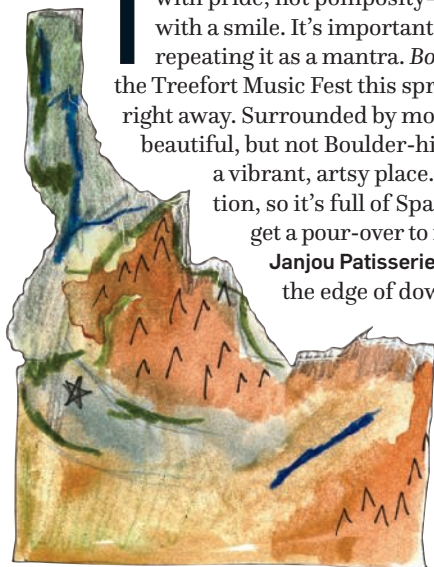


# Boy, Oh, Boise!

This spring, the chef, restaurateur, and *Top Chef* judge **Hugh Acheson** explored Idaho's lively capital city. Here's his journal of snapshots and sketches.

**T**he first thing I learned in Boise was that it is pronounced “Boy-see,” not “Boy-zee.” The locals I met explained this with pride, not pomposity—a friendly corrective offered with a smile. It’s important to Boiseans, so I practiced, repeating it as a mantra. *Boy-see. Boy-see.* I landed there for the Treefort Music Fest this spring, and the town grabbed me right away. Surrounded by mountains and rivers, it’s intensely beautiful, but not Boulder-hippie or Aspen-wealthy—just a vibrant, artsy place. There’s a large Basque population, so it’s full of Spanish food and markets. You can get a pour-over to rival any in San Francisco. At **Janjou Patisserie** ([janjou.com](http://janjou.com)), in a strip mall at the edge of downtown, I ate the best croissant I’ve had all year. There’s a gripping authenticity to the place, and it feels as if a movement is afoot—like it’s on the cusp of being a nationally beloved destination. I can’t wait to go back.



*I caught a trout (Big one) on the Boise River.*

**1.** I took this photo from the historic Owyhee building ([theowyhee.com](http://theowyhee.com)). I liked the mural on the white building. Street art is everywhere—even on the electrical transformers. **2.** The **Modern Hotel & Bar** ([themodernhotel.com](http://themodernhotel.com); entrées \$18–\$25) is an old motel that has been redone in a cool, contemporary style. There’s a great little restaurant with chef-y bistro fare. **3.** I got provisions at the **Boise Co-op** ([boise.coop](http://boise.coop)) and went fly-fishing. My guide was amazing, pointing out the best spots to wade. The cold water made my toes tingle, but it was such a beautiful place to get away to. →

PHOTOS AND ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF HUGH ACHESON



4. I always hunt for vinyl when traveling. The **Record Exchange** ([therecordexchange.com](http://therecordexchange.com)) is huge, with a nice mix of new and used mix of new and used albums. It just has a palpable realness.

5. My body is half coffee, so a good café is my first stop in a new town. **Slow by Slow** ([slowbyslow.com](http://slowbyslow.com)) was the best: quality beans from an array of roasters, and run by folks who know their stuff. It'd be impressive even in a city known for coffee. 6. **Idaho Candy Co.** ([idahospud.com](http://idahospud.com)) is an old-school place famous for one candy bar: the Idaho Spud, a marshmallow in a chocolate shell dusted with coconut. It's intensely sweet—like, peel-the-enamel-off-your-teeth sweet—but



it's good. 7. The food scene in Boise is in a phase where everything is possible. I had a killer breakfast at **Wild Root Café & Market** ([wildrootcafe.com](http://wildrootcafe.com); entrées \$9–\$16), simple Basque dishes at **Bar Gernika** ([bargernika.com](http://bargernika.com); entrées

\$8–\$11), and a very fun high-end meal at **State & Lemp** ([stateandlemp.com](http://stateandlemp.com); prix fixe from \$65), an intimate, modern place that is producing world-class cuisine. ■

