



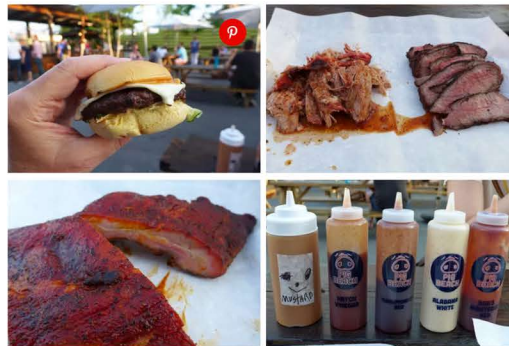
Some restaurants are made for summer. An outdoor space helps, for sure; in fact, some of our favorite summer places have no indoors at all. Others simply provide memorable views of river, sea, or skyscraper mountains. But it's much more than that. The most important aspect of a summer place is a summery outlook, partly expressed through the selection of food and drink, partly through a build-out that invites carefree lingering. Here begins an Eater series on New York City's greatest summer refuges, with some hints on what to eat and sip.

When summer arrives, many yearn for barbecue. That's the culinary purpose of **Pig Beach**, which **recently opened** for its second summer season. It's located on the rollicking banks of the Gowanus Canal, entered from the Park Slope direction by crossing the picturesque Union Street Bridge. Walk past a cinder-block wall painted like a vacation postcard, showing a pink pig relaxing in a hammock, and before you spreads a big yard dotted with picnic tables shaded with white umbrellas, seating 150. On the canal side of the yard stand a series of counters made of hardwood logs where you order your 'cue, and then sit down at a table waiting for delivery.



Pig Beach has an elaborate pedigree involving chefs and cooks from several well-known New York restaurants, more directly spawned by two teams that compete in national barbecue contests — **Ribdiculous Bar-B-Krewe** and **Salty Rinse**. The changing menu is notably limited, with few options for vegetarians. But the smallish cheeseburger (\$8) is top notch, its slice of white cheese flopping over a nicely charred patty, which is smeared with sweet orange dressing. The babyback pork ribs are good, too, varnished with a red lacquer that also provides a bit a sweetness, and dotted with crack black peppercorns.

If you're a fan of Carolina pulled pork, this is one of the few places in town that does it well, big moist hanks of pale meat glossed with a trickle of sauce. Like real whole-hog barbecue back on its home turf, smokiness is limited. Reach instead for the authentic mustard-based barbecue sauce, like the kind they use around Columbia, South Carolina, which is one of five sauces offered at Pig Beach. Avoid the tri-tip, which is a boring cut of beef on the grill compared to a smoked brisket or prime rib; it too absorbs little smoke flavor. Sides are limited to mayo cole slaw and cucumber salad, both good. This is nearly a no-carb barbecue, though a couple of slices of bread can be yours if you ask for them.



[Clockwise from the top: burger; pulled pork and trip-tip; sauces; pork ribs.]

Drink options include invented cocktails, wine, and beer, with the latter two preferred. Cocktails are strong, but some — the Smoke Stack (\$11), for example, made with mezcal, vermouth, Campari, and cold-brew coffee — can provoke the gag reflex. Pig Beach opens at 3 p.m. on weekdays and noon on weekends, and for the early part of the day the place is stroller city, with toddlers waddling around on unsteady legs while their parents enjoy a beer. As the sun sinks the strollers pack up and head for the Slope or Carroll Gardens. A mixed drinking and barbecue-eating crowd then appears and a cruise-ship atmosphere prevails. At either time, Pig Beach is a great place to relax and catch the cooling breezes of the Gowanus Canal. [480 Union St, Brooklyn, \(718\) 737-7181](#)