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BREAKFAST

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BREAKFAST AROUND THE WORLD

Start your day with globally inspired dishes

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While coffee and tea tend to be the default morning ritual for many and eggs are undeniably popular most everywhere, many countries boast their own unique and distinctive breakfast dishes that are sure to intrigue curious readers looking to change up their first meal of the day. The good news for all of us here in Northeast Florida is that a growing number of local breakfast and brunch restaurants are including many such items on their menu.

A variety of dim sum buns and tea at Lucky Cat Dim Sum in Jacksonville

Shakshuka, which originated in Tunisia and is now commonplace throughout North Africa and Middle Eastern countries, features a pairing of poached eggs with a spicy sauce of tomatoes, peppers, onions and garlic. Sunday Gathering Table in St. Augustine offers this on its all-day brunch menu. Be sure to enjoy it with house-made sourdough bread.

China offers a variety of regional morning dishes. "Dim sum is the de facto breakfast/brunch food for the Cantonese, always served with tea, while other regions of China have different morning traditions," says Guorong Fan, owner of Lucky Cat Dim Sum in Jacksonville. Breakfast at Lucky Cat offers plenty of traditional dim sum as well as their playfully conceived Everything Bun, a nod to the popular bagel topping. This steamed bun is filled with scallion cream cheese and sprinkled with "everything" seasoning.

Should you prefer foods that come from Latino cultures, there are a few places worth investigating. El Castillo Market & Restaurant in Jacksonville's Sunbeam area is open early, serving chilaquiles, a morning favorite characterized as breakfast nachos which are made with tortillas, eggs, cheese, and salsa, as well as burritos de desayuno, or breakfast burritos. Pupuseria El Paraíso in Baymeadows offers Salvadorian dishes with flavors that are a unique blend of indigenous and Spanish influences. As the name implies, the menu's focus is pupusas, a traditional Salvadoran breakfast item best described as a thick griddle cake made with corn or rice flour that's filled with cheese, beans and meat. A similar dish, arepas, are the specialty of the Venezuelan restaurant Arepa Please, which has locations in Jacksonville's Brooklyn neighborhood and Atlantic Beach. As versatile as bread, arepas are fried or baked flat corn cakes that are split and filled with a variety



of ingredients. Arepa Please's menu features an extensive selection with traditional ingredients, American favorites, and breakfast arepas filled with bacon or ham.

Heading out into the Pacific, Filipino breakfast includes a category of dishes called silogs. The name comes from the Tagalog words "sinangag" (fried rice) and "itlog" (egg). Kusina, a Filipino restaurant on Kernan Boulevard, serves a variety of silogs, each including garlic rice and fried egg along with a specific protein. Tapsilog features tapa, a thinly sliced, dry cured beef; longsilog includes longganisa sausage; and tosilog spotlights tocino, a caramelized pork. There's also an alluring selection of traditional Filipino baked goods including pandesal, ensaymada and pan de ube.

Other internationally inspired breakfasts around town include a traditional Irish breakfast served at Culhane's Irish Pub, consisting of smoked rashers, Irish bangers, black and white puddings, mushrooms, tomatoes, eggs, baby cakes and toast. "A hearty Irish breakfast was originally made for farmers heading out to work their fields," says Mary Jane Culhane, one of the restaurant's owners. "Black and white pudding, also known as blood pudding or blood sausage, is one of the most popular items served in a full traditional Irish breakfast, as are rashers, a thin slice of bacon that's less fatty than American bacon. Bangers are yummy too,"

In Cuba, a universally enjoyed breakfast is pan con mantequilla. "We call it a Cuban tostada," says Rebecca Gonzalez, owner of 1928 Cuban Bistro. "It's made with Cuban bread, butter both inside and out and toasted to perfection. And you can't forget the perfect companion – a steaming cup of cafe con leche."

Similarly, an iconic French breakfast consists of freshly baked croissants served with butter and jam, regularly accompanied by an espresso, latte or cappuccino. "Even when I was growing up, croissants for breakfast were my favorite," says Le Petit Paris owner Alexander Chezaud. "On special occasions, a chocolate or almond croissant would be even better, especially when dipped in hot chocolate or coffee." For those seeking more than a pastry, croissants can be the perfect vessel for breakfast sandwiches.

What's truly exciting is the level of global influence making its way onto the menus in these and many other restaurants around town. For those not afraid to try new dishes first thing in the morning, Northeast Florida restaurants offer no shortage of enjoyable, memorable and tasty ways to spice up your morning ritual.

Left: A tostada at 1928 Cuban Bistro; Silog, a Filipino breakfast dish which includes garlic rice, eggs and pork sausage, chicken or other meat. Right: Fresh croissants and a latte at Le Petit Paris.

