



PHOTO BY MIKE FORD

## Big Food, Big Laughs

As the host of *Big Food Bucket List*, John Catucci gets paid to travel constantly, eat at amazing restaurants, then talk about how great the meals were.

"I've had worse jobs," he says with a laugh.

Born and raised in Toronto, the affable comedian is no stranger to consuming calories for a living. He previously spent five seasons eating his way around Canada, the US and Europe on *You Gotta Eat Here!* Filming has just wrapped on his new show, which premieres this month. *Big Food Bucket List* focuses on Catucci's hunt for bucket-list meals in North American cities ranging from New Orleans to Halifax. His all-too-brief Vancouver visit took him to four popular restos.

First stop was Fat Mao (page 32). "It's an amazing noodle house, doing all kinds of different stuff," Catucci says. Most impressive? The dom yum soup. "They used rice sheets instead of noodles, so it had this really interesting texture in the soup. And it was just so delicious."

At Burdock & Co. (page 44), Catucci tried the buttermilk fried chicken. He

raves about the pickle mayo and dill powder on the chicken, praising the "acidity that cuts through the richness and the fat." He sums up the dish: "This had it all, and everything was included all in one bite."

Next was Guu (page 65), where Catucci devoured the yaki udon noodles. The pan-fried noodles, tender beef and bonito flakes created such a perfect blend of flavours that he finished the entire dish, even though he usually tries to sample just a few bites. And he wasn't inclined to share. "Keep your chopsticks on your side of the table," he warns.

Final stop was Via Tevere Pizzeria (page 34), a place Catucci visits every time he's on the West Coast. "They do Neapolitan pizza like it should be done," he says. "So. Bloody. Delicious."

The combination of mouth-watering meals and needing to look good on television must mean Catucci is committed to exercise, right? Wrong. "I had to hire a trainer because I'm lazy, and I needed someone to kick my ass."

*Big Food Bucket List* airs Fridays on Food Network Canada starting May 24.

—Sheri Radford