

Top 100

Windows 8.1 Apps

And 200+ More!

Michael
Miller

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Top 100

Windows® 8.1 Apps

Michael
Miller

que®

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Top 100 Windows® 8.1 Apps

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Contents at a Glance

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| | Introduction | 1 |
| 1 | Getting to Know Windows 8.1 Apps and the Windows Store | 4 |
| 2 | Games | 15 |
| 3 | Social Apps | 44 |
| 4 | Entertainment Apps..... | 60 |
| 5 | Photo Apps | 67 |
| 6 | Music and Video Apps..... | 76 |
| 7 | Sports Apps..... | 96 |
| 8 | Books and Reference Apps | 105 |
| 9 | News and Weather Apps..... | 113 |
| 10 | Health and Fitness Apps..... | 121 |
| 11 | Food and Dining Apps..... | 130 |
| 12 | Lifestyle Apps | 138 |
| 13 | Shopping Apps..... | 145 |
| 14 | Travel Apps | 151 |
| 15 | Finance Apps..... | 163 |
| 16 | Productivity Apps | 178 |
| 17 | Tools..... | 194 |
| 18 | Security Apps | 205 |
| 19 | Business Apps..... | 212 |
| 20 | Education Apps | 221 |
| 21 | Government Apps..... | 229 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Understanding Windows 8.1 Apps | 1 |
| How to Find New Apps | 2 |
| How This Book Is Organized | 2 |
| How I Picked the Apps | 2 |
| Keeping Up to Date | 3 |
| 1 Getting to Know Windows 8.1 Apps and the Windows Store | 4 |
| Finding Apps on Your System | 4 |
| Browsing for Apps on the Start Screen | 4 |
| Browsing All Your Apps on the Apps Screen | 4 |
| Searching for Apps | 6 |
| Working with Modern Apps | 7 |
| Viewing and Configuring App Options | 7 |
| Snapping Open Apps | 8 |
| Closing an Open App | 9 |
| Examining Windows 8.1's Built-In Apps | 9 |
| Shopping for New Apps in the Windows Store | 10 |
| Opening the Windows Store | 11 |
| Browsing the Windows Store | 12 |
| Searching the Windows Store | 13 |
| Downloading an App | 13 |
| Pinning New Apps to the Start Screen | 13 |
| Updating Your Apps | 14 |
| 2 Games | 15 |
| Best Kids' Game | 15 |
| Where's My Perry? | 15 |
| Honorable Mentions | 16 |
| Best Kids' Action Game | 17 |
| Angry Birds Star Wars | 17 |
| Honorable Mentions | 18 |
| Best Kids' Painting Game | 19 |
| Fresh Paint | 19 |
| Honorable Mentions | 20 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Best Puzzle Game | 21 |
| Flow Free | 21 |
| Honorable Mentions | 22 |
| Best Matching Game | 23 |
| Bejeweled LIVE | 23 |
| Honorable Mention | 24 |
| Best Word Game | 25 |
| WordGap | 25 |
| Honorable Mentions | 26 |
| Best Card Game | 27 |
| Microsoft Solitaire Collection | 27 |
| Honorable Mentions | 28 |
| Best Casino Game | 29 |
| Slots | 29 |
| Honorable Mentions | 30 |
| Best Arcade Game | 31 |
| Pinball FX2 | 31 |
| Honorable Mentions | 32 |
| Best Chess Game | 33 |
| The Chess Lv.100 | 33 |
| Honorable Mentions | 34 |
| Best Role Playing Game | 35 |
| Skulls of the Shogun | 35 |
| Honorable Mentions | 36 |
| Best RPG Action Game | 37 |
| SoulCraft | 37 |
| Honorable Mentions | 38 |
| Best Shooter Game | 39 |
| Halo: Spartan Assault | 40 |
| Honorable Mentions | 40 |
| Best Racing Game | 41 |
| Asphalt 7: Heat | 42 |
| Honorable Mentions | 42 |
| 3 Social Apps | 44 |
| Best Social Aggregation App | 44 |
| People | 44 |
| Honorable Mention | 45 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Best Facebook App | 46 |
| Facebook (Official App) | 46 |
| Honorable Mentions | 47 |
| Best Facebook Utility | 48 |
| Share Photo to Facebook | 49 |
| Honorable Mention | 49 |
| Best Twitter App | 50 |
| Twitter (Official App) | 50 |
| Honorable Mentions | 51 |
| Best LinkedIn App | 52 |
| LinkedIn HD | 52 |
| Honorable Mention | 53 |
| Best Tumblr App | 54 |
| Tumblr HD | 54 |
| Honorable Mention | 55 |
| Best Chat/Messaging App | 55 |
| Skype (Official App) | 55 |
| Honorable Mentions | 56 |
| Best Texting App | 57 |
| TextNow | 57 |
| Honorable Mention | 58 |
| 4 Entertainment Apps | 60 |
| Best TV & Movies App | 60 |
| Netflix | 60 |
| Honorable Mentions | 61 |
| Best Movie Finder App | 62 |
| Flixster | 63 |
| Honorable Mention | 63 |
| Best Karaoke App | 64 |
| Red Karaoke | 64 |
| Honorable Mention | 65 |
| 5 Photo Apps | 67 |
| Best Photo Viewing App | 67 |
| Photos | 67 |
| Honorable Mentions | 68 |
| Best Photo Editing App | 69 |
| Adobe Photoshop Express | 69 |
| Honorable Mentions | 70 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Best Special Effects App | 71 |
| Artistry | 71 |
| Honorable Mentions | 72 |
| Best Photo Sharing App | 73 |
| Photobucket | 73 |
| Honorable Mentions | 74 |
| 6 Music and Video Apps | 76 |
| Best Music Player App | 76 |
| MediaMonkey | 76 |
| Honorable Mention | 77 |
| Best Video Player App | 78 |
| PowerDVD Mobile | 78 |
| Honorable Mentions | 79 |
| Best Streaming Music App | 80 |
| Xbox Music | 81 |
| Honorable Mentions | 82 |
| Best Terrestrial Radio App | 83 |
| TuneIn Radio | 83 |
| Honorable Mentions | 84 |
| Best DJ App | 85 |
| edjing | 85 |
| Honorable Mentions | 86 |
| Best Piano App | 87 |
| Grand Piano | 87 |
| Honorable Mentions | 88 |
| Best Guitar App | 89 |
| Play Guitar! | 89 |
| Honorable Mentions | 90 |
| Best Drum App | 91 |
| Drums | 91 |
| Honorable Mentions | 92 |
| Best Video Editing App | 93 |
| ArcSoft ShowBiz | 93 |
| Honorable Mentions | 94 |
| 7 Sports Apps | 96 |
| Best Sports News App | 96 |
| The ESPN App | 96 |
| Honorable Mentions | 97 |

- Best Football App 99
 - NFL Mobile 99
 - Honorable Mentions 100
- Best Baseball App 101
 - Baseball Pro+ 101
 - Honorable Mentions 101
- Best Coaching App 102
 - TacticsBoard 102
 - Honorable Mentions 103
- 8 Books and Reference Apps 105**
 - Best eBook Reader App 105
 - Kindle 105
 - Honorable Mention 106
 - Best Comic Book Reader App 107
 - Comics 107
 - Honorable Mention 108
 - Best Audiobook App 109
 - Audible 109
 - Best Research App 110
 - Wikipedia 110
 - Honorable Mentions 111
- 9 News and Weather Apps 113**
 - Best General News App 113
 - Bing News 113
 - Honorable Mentions 115
 - Best News Aggregator App 116
 - News360 116
 - Honorable Mentions 117
 - Best Weather App 118
 - The Weather Channel 119
 - Honorable Mentions 119
- 10 Health and Fitness Apps 121**
 - Best Fitness App 121
 - Gym Guide 121
 - Honorable Mentions 122
 - Best Health and Medical Information App 123
 - Bing Health & Fitness 123
 - Honorable Mentions 124

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Best Health Tracking App | 125 |
| HealthVault | 125 |
| Honorable Mentions | 126 |
| Best Nutrition App | 127 |
| Restaurants & Nutrition | 127 |
| Honorable Mentions | 128 |
| 11 Food and Dining Apps | 130 |
| Best Recipe App | 130 |
| Allrecipes | 130 |
| Honorable Mentions | 131 |
| Best Reservations App | 132 |
| OpenTable | 132 |
| Best Restaurant Review App | 133 |
| Urbanspoon | 133 |
| Honorable Mentions | 134 |
| Best Wine and Cocktails App | 135 |
| Cocktail Flow | 136 |
| Honorable Mentions | 137 |
| 12 Lifestyle Apps | 138 |
| Best Horoscope App | 138 |
| Daily Horoscope | 138 |
| Honorable Mentions | 139 |
| Best Relaxation App | 140 |
| Serenity | 140 |
| Honorable Mentions | 141 |
| Best Religion App | 142 |
| Bible | 142 |
| Honorable Mentions | 143 |
| 13 Shopping Apps | 145 |
| Best eBay App | 145 |
| eBay | 145 |
| Best Craigslist App | 146 |
| Craigslist+ | 146 |
| Honorable Mentions | 147 |
| Best Online Shopping App | 148 |
| Amazon | 148 |
| Honorable Mentions | 149 |

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 14 | Travel Apps | 151 |
| | Best General Travel App | 151 |
| | Bing Travel | 151 |
| | Honorable Mention | 152 |
| | Best Maps App | 153 |
| | gMaps | 153 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 154 |
| | Best Flights App | 155 |
| | Skyscanner | 156 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 157 |
| | Best Hotels App | 158 |
| | Expedia | 158 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 159 |
| | Best Travel Tools App | 160 |
| | My Trips | 160 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 161 |
| 15 | Finance Apps | 163 |
| | Best General Finance App | 163 |
| | Bing Finance | 163 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 164 |
| | Best Personal Finance App | 165 |
| | Mint.com Personal Finance | 165 |
| | Best Portfolio Tracking App | 167 |
| | SigFig Portfolio | 167 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 168 |
| | Best Home Budget App | 169 |
| | All About Money | 169 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 170 |
| | Best Financial Calculator App | 171 |
| | Loan & Mortgage Calculator | 171 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 172 |
| | Best Currency Converter App | 173 |
| | XE Currency | 173 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 174 |
| | Best Bill Pay App | 175 |
| | Mobilligy Bill Pay | 175 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 176 |

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 16 | Productivity Apps | 178 |
| | Best Note Taking App | 178 |
| | Evernote Touch | 178 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 179 |
| | Best Task Management App | 180 |
| | Hot Tasks | 181 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 182 |
| | Best PDF Reader App | 183 |
| | Adobe Reader Touch | 183 |
| | Honorable Mention | 184 |
| | Best Email App | 184 |
| | Mail | 185 |
| | Honorable Mention | 186 |
| | Best Calculator App | 187 |
| | Calculator ² | 187 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 188 |
| | Best File Management App | 189 |
| | File Brick | 189 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 190 |
| | Best Cloud Storage and Sharing App | 191 |
| | Microsoft OneDrive (SkyDrive) | 191 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 192 |
| 17 | Tools | 194 |
| | Best Windows Toolboxes | 194 |
| | Toolbox for Windows 8 | 194 |
| | Honorable Mention | 195 |
| | Best File Compression App | 196 |
| | WinZip | 196 |
| | Honorable Mention | 198 |
| | Best Sticky Notes App | 198 |
| | Sticky Notes 8 | 199 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 199 |
| | Best Alarm App | 200 |
| | Alarms | 201 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 202 |
| | Best Internet Speed Test App | 203 |
| | Network Speed Test | 203 |
| | Honorable Mention | 204 |

18 Security Apps 205

- Best Password App 205
 - LastPass 205
 - Honorable Mentions 206
- Best Surveillance Camera App 207
 - SecurityCam 208
 - Honorable Mentions 209
- Best Device-Tracking App 209
 - neuTracker 210
 - Honorable Mentions 211

19 Business Apps 212

- Best Job Search App 212
 - getHired 212
 - Honorable Mentions 213
- Best Mileage-Tracker App 214
 - Track My Mileage 214
 - Honorable Mentions 215
- Best Hour-Tracking App 216
 - Timecard Pro 216
 - Honorable Mentions 217
- Best Invoicing App 218
 - Invoicing, Billing + Time Tracking 218
 - Honorable Mentions 219

20 Education Apps 221

- Best Math App 221
 - iMath 221
 - Honorable Mentions 222
- Best Reading App 223
 - First Words with Phonics 223
 - Honorable Mentions 224
- Best Preschool/Kindergarten App 225
 - GuruCool PlaySchool 225
 - Honorable Mentions 226
- Best Adult Learning App 227
 - Khan Academy 227

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|------------|
| 21 | Government Apps | 229 |
| | Best History App | 229 |
| | Top American Speeches | 229 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 230 |
| | Best Politics App | 231 |
| | Informed American | 231 |
| | Honorable Mentions | 232 |

About the Author

Michael Miller is a prolific and popular writer of more than 150 non-fiction books, known for his ability to explain complex topics to everyday readers. He writes about a variety of topics, including technology, business, and music. His best-selling books for Que include *My Windows 8.1 PC for Seniors*, *My Facebook for Seniors*, *Computer Basics Absolute Beginner's Guide, Windows 8.1 Edition*, and *Easy Computer Basics*. Worldwide, his books have sold more than 1 million copies.

Find out more at the author's website: www.molehillgroup.com

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Dedication

To my wife Sherry, who through no fault of her own has had to suffer through Windows 8.1 along with me and everybody else.

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Top 100 Windows 8.1 Apps*. That's both the title of this book and the description of what's inside—sort of.

I say sort of because there are more than 100 apps listed in this book. Oh, there are exactly 100 recommended apps, but there are another 200 or so honorable mentions. So there are a lot of apps to choose from, if that's what you're looking for.

And I presume that quality apps are indeed what you're looking for. There are tens of thousands of apps in Microsoft's Windows Store, with more added every day. Some of these apps are truly great; many are good; most are average; and more than a handful really stink. This book is all about separating the wheat from the chaff, as it were, and helping you discover the *best* apps in any given category.

Understanding Windows 8.1 Apps

Starting with Windows 8, and continuing into Windows 8.1, Microsoft introduced us to a new Modern interface. This tile-based, full-screen, touch-centric interface works quite well on tablets and a little less well on traditional notebook and desktop PCs. Whether or not you like it, however, it's what we now have to call normal, so you better get used to it. 'Nuff said.

Part and parcel of the Modern interface are Modern apps. These are apps that run in full-screen mode and perform specific tasks. (Don't confuse them with traditional desktop apps, which still exist but aren't what we're talking about here.)

Microsoft includes a handful of these Modern apps with the new operating system, and some of these built-in apps are quite good. Other apps, from Microsoft and third-party publishers, are available in the Windows Store. You get to the Windows Store by clicking the Store tile on the Windows Start screen. Once there, you can browse or search for apps and download the ones you like.

Many Modern apps are free, but others cost real money. Fortunately, most paid apps are relatively inexpensive—typically only a few bucks each. That makes Modern apps far more affordable than old-school desktop software, which typically runs in the three figures.

How to Find New Apps

The only place to find Windows 8.1 apps is in the Windows Store. It's kind of like how Apple does apps for its iPhone and iPad; you do all your purchasing from the relevant app store.

The easiest way to find the apps discussed in this book is to search for them. You could browse the Store categories and hope to trip over a given app, but it's just as likely that the one I recommend won't pop up first in the category list.

So use the Store's search function (it's the search box at the top right of every Store page) and search for an app by name. Make sure you get the specific app, as many apps have similar names. When in doubt, look at the app publisher in addition to the app title.

How This Book Is Organized

I've organized this book the same way that the Windows Store is organized. (That's after an introductory chapter that tells you all about Modern apps, of course.) There are 20 categories in the Store, so there are 20 app chapters (plus the introductory one) in this book. Simple enough.

That's not to say, however, that Microsoft's Store categories always make sense or are consistent. I can't help it if the geniuses at the Microsoft mothership put an app in a category that doesn't quite fit. I chose to be consistent with Microsoft's organization, even if it isn't completely consistent with itself.

Within each Store category, I then came up with categories of my own. That's how we get 100 categories out of the 20-category Store. In the Social category, for example, I devised 8 separate app categories—Best Facebook App, Best Twitter App, Best Texting App, and so forth. I hope that my more focused categories prove more useful to you.

How I Picked the Apps

Within each focused category, I offer a single recommended app. This is the app I like best, pure and simple. It may be the most popular app in the category, in terms of downloads, or it may not. It's just the one I find that does the best job.

After the recommended app I often offer a few honorable mentions in a given category. These are apps that are also worth your consideration, and that some people might like better than my main recommendation.

By the way, not all of my recommended apps are free. If two apps are functionally identical, I tend to recommend the free or lower-cost one, but otherwise I just went for what's best, not what's cheapest. (And sometimes that's the app that Microsoft bundled with Windows—go figure!)

Keeping Up to Date

You should also know that publishers are constantly adding new apps to the Windows Store. That's good; there's always something new to consider. I chose the best apps available as of the beginning of 2014, but no doubt there will be some newer and better apps available by the time you read this book. That's just the way it goes.

(For that matter, it's likely that some of the apps I recommend will get updated over time. Hopefully that will make them even better.)

If you want to keep up with all the latest apps in the Windows Store, look for my monthly New Windows Apps articles on the Que Publishing website (www.quepublishing.com). Each month I focus on the best new apps released to the Store. You should find it useful.

Finally, know that I made every effort to present accurate and up-to-date information in this book. It's possible a few mistakes crept in, or that things changed from when I wrote the original text. That happens, and I apologize in advance for issues you may encounter.

Food and Dining Apps

Everybody has to eat. Whether you're cooking at home or eating out, you can use your Windows computer to help you find healthy and delicious choices for your next meal. There's even a food and drink app included free with Windows 8.1!

Best Recipe App

Whether you're into simple home cooking or you're a budding gourmet chef, you need the right recipes to be successful. Fortunately, there are a number of recipe apps in the Windows Store, and they're all worth checking out.

Allrecipes

App: Allrecipes

Publisher: Allrecipes.com Inc.

Price: Free



Best Recipe App: Allrecipes.

The quality of a recipe app rests on how good its recipes are, and the **Allrecipes** app features some very good recipes, indeed. This one comes from the folks at the Allrecipes website and features tens of thousands of different recipes, which you search for via ingredient. That is, you choose one or more primary ingredient, and Allrecipes lists recipes that use that ingredient.

You can also search the Allrecipes database, using Windows' built-in search function. Just press Windows+Q, enter your query, and see matching recipes. It's a faster way to look for Shrimp Etoufee or Orange Chicken.

Each recipe is rated by other users, so you have some idea whether it's any good or not. At the top of every recipe you see a summary that lists prep time, cook time, total time, calories, total fat, and cholesterol numbers. You can also adjust the recipe for different serving sizes, and save your favorite recipes for easy access in the future.

Honorable Mentions

App: Everyday Food

Publisher: Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia

Price: Free

App: Allthecooks Recipes

Publisher: Allthecooks LLC

Price: Free

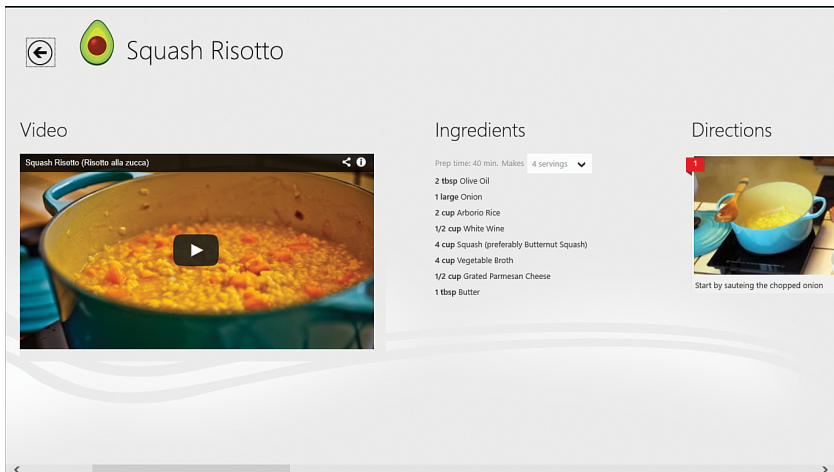
App: Bing Food & Dining

Publisher: Microsoft

Price: Free

As good—and as popular—as Allrecipes is, there are lots of other recipe apps in the Windows Store worth checking out. Let's start with **Everyday Food**, from the Martha Stewart conglomerate, which takes the same ingredient-based approach as the Allrecipes app. What I like about this one are the videos that demonstrate various cooking techniques. Hey, some of us need all the help we can get in the kitchen!

Allthecooks Recipes boasts more than 150,000 different recipes in its massive database, which is built on user submissions. (You can even submit your own recipes, directly from the app.) What's nice about this one is the vibrant Allthecooks community, which you access via the discussion forums built into the app. It's kind of a one-stop-shop for socially involved cooks,



Honorable mention: Allthecoooks Recipes.

Finally, don't dismiss the **Bing Food & Dining** app included free with Windows 8.1, which features lots of good recipes from a variety of sources. You can browse recipes by cooking method, course, cuisine, dietary requirements, difficulty, family, major ingredients, special occasion, or total time. The app also includes lots of videos demonstrating cooking tips and techniques, as well as information about and recipes from a number of celebrity chefs, including Wolfgang Puck, Tom Colicchio, and Marcus Samuelsson. Because you already have this one installed on your Windows 8 PC, you might as well check it out—you'll probably like it.

Best Reservations App

Do you like fine dining? Or do you prefer something more casual? Whatever type of food you like, if you want to guarantee a table at your favorite restaurant, you'll need to make reservations—which you can do from within Windows.

OpenTable

App: OpenTable

Publisher: OpenTable

Price: Free

When it comes to making reservations online, OpenTable pretty much owns the category. The **OpenTable** app does everything that the website and mobile app do—that is, schedule reservations at all your favorite restaurants.



Best Reservations App: OpenTable.

By default, the app displays panels for those restaurants closest to your current location. It's a snap, however, to enter a different location, along with desired time and date for your dining. You can also go directly to any given restaurant, just by entering the restaurant's name.

When you search for restaurants by location, you see a list of matching restaurants along with when they have tables free. Click a restaurant to see more information, read the menu, and make a reservation. All the reservations are within the app, no phone calls or emails necessary.

Best Restaurant Review App

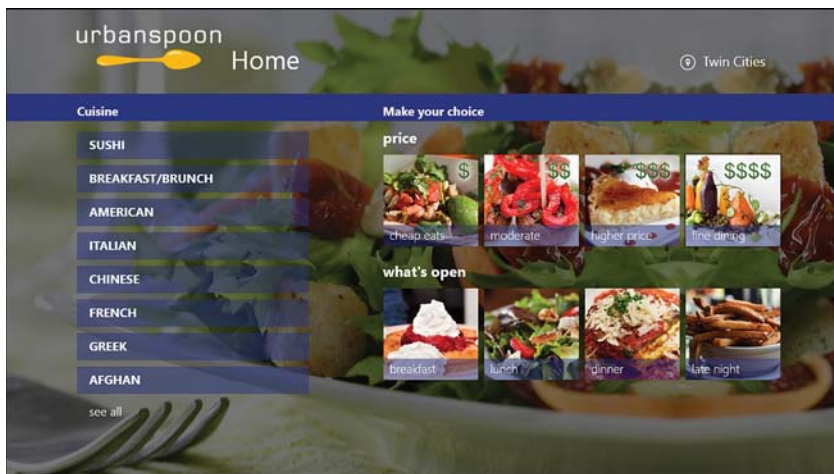
After you've visited a restaurant (after using the OpenTable app for reservations, of course), why not let other diners know what you think of the joint? Not surprisingly, there are apps for that.

Urbanspoon

App: Urbanspoon

Publisher: Urbanspoon

Price: Free



Best Restaurant Review App: Urbanspoon.

In the world of online crowd-sourced restaurant reviews, Urbanspoon is king. Its vast user base of diners ensures that most major restaurants are covered, and you'd be surprised how detailed most of the reviews are. I always check Urbanspoon before I make reservations at a place I haven't eaten at before.

Now you can access all of the site's reviews from the **Urbanspoon** app. There are a number of different ways to browse for restaurants—by cuisine, critic's picks, bargain gems, price, even what's currently open nearby. Press Windows+Q to search for specific restaurants, then create your own list of favorite establishments.

After you land on a page for a given restaurant, you see the ratings percentage (X% of users liked the place), user-submitted photos, pricing and offerings, and user reviews. Click or tap the Write a Review icon to write your own review and make it visible to the rest of the Urbanspoon community.

Obviously, the more popular the restaurant the more reviews it will have. And your tastes may differ from those of other Urbanspoon users. But when you want to know as much as you can about a restaurant, the Urbanspoon app is hard to beat.

Honorable Mentions

App: FoodGraphic

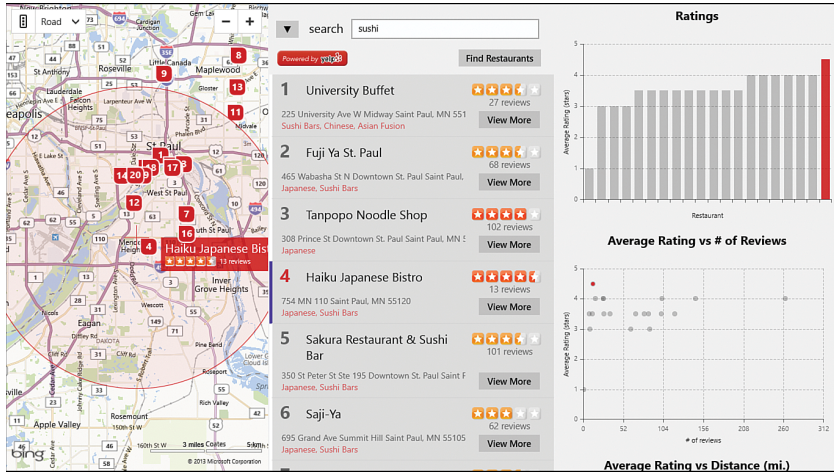
Publisher: Three Screen Studios

Price: Free

App: Zalp

Publisher: kk36

Price: Free

*Honorable mention: FoodGraphic.*

Yelp is Urbanspoon's biggest competitor in online restaurant reviews, and although there is no official Yelp app for Windows 8.1 (at least not yet), there are two apps that use the Yelp database. In addition to being able to find restaurants by searching or browsing a map for a given location, the **FoodGraphic** app provides a variety of visualizations to help you compare different restaurants. For example, you can graph ratings, reviews, and distance for selected establishments—and even compare rating versus distance and rating versus reviews. It's a nontraditional approach that appeals to data hounds.

The **Zalp** app takes a more traditional approach to finding specific restaurants; you can search by either name or location. What you get in return are Yelp ratings and Zagat scores for that location. Click the Yelp or Zagat logo to open the respective websites, or click the restaurant's logo to go to its site.

Best Wine and Cocktails App

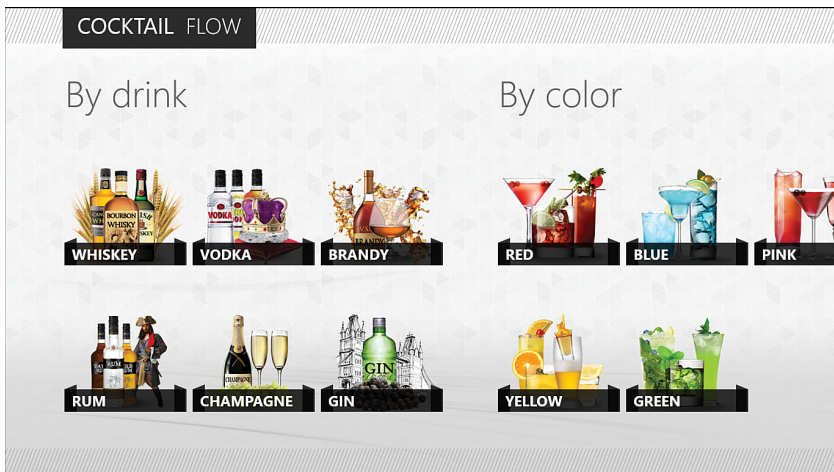
Want to make the perfect martini? How about something fancier, like a red rooster or Alabama slammer? Yeah, you know the answer—there's an app for that.

Cocktail Flow

App: Cocktail Flow

Publisher: Distinction Ltd.

Price: Free



Best Wine and Cocktails App: Cocktail Flow.

The very best cocktails app for Windows 8.1 is **Cocktail Flow**. You can browse recipes by type of alcohol (whiskey, vodka, rum, and so on), color, and type (classic, exotic, and so forth). Press Windows+Q to search for specific cocktails.

Each recipe gives you a nice picture of the finished product, a list of ingredients, and the necessary step-by-step mixing instructions. You even get a list of similar cocktails, which is nice for finding new drinks.

The Cocktail Flow app also lets you manage your bar inventory, as well as create a list of your favorite drinks. There are a few single-screen “bar guides” with very basic information, but these are better skipped if you know your stuff.

Bottom line, you use Cocktail Flow to learn how to concoct a variety of interesting and tasty alcoholic beverages. It’s good for that.

Honorable Mentions

App: Bing Food & Dining

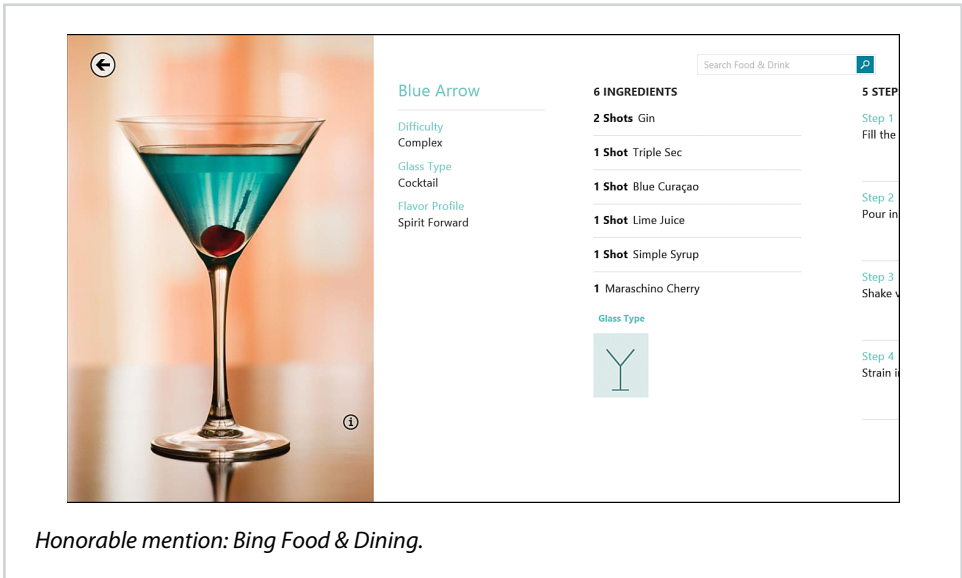
Publisher: Microsoft

Price: Free

App: BarStack

Publisher: Kurt Tomlinson

Price: \$1.49



Honorable mention: Bing Food & Dining.

The **Bing Food & Dining** app included with Windows 8.1 is also pretty useful for home mixologists. With the Cocktails section you can browse recipes by difficulty, flavor profile, glass, and ingredients, and the Wine section displays wines by category, region, type, and varietal. There's a lot of good information here, and it's already installed on your PC.

Then there's the **BarStack** app, which lets you manage all aspects of your home bar. When you go shopping, add your recently purchased ingredients to your inventory. You can then let BarStack analyze what you have on hand to determine what drinks you can make. Kind of neat.