

RECIPES FROM OUR FAVORITE CHEFS

OCTOBER 2006

# Gourmet

THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

egg drop soup  
SCALLOP & fruit salsa  
SYNTHETIC champagne  
GOAT CHEESE snow & balsamic

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# AMERICA'S TOP 50 RESTAURANTS

This delicious little tidbit is small enough to snuggle into the palm of your hand. When you pull out the pin, the truffle-topped, parmesan-encrusted potato puff drops into the smooth, creamy soup, creating an astonishingly intense experience that engages all your senses. It is just one of the many delights awaiting you at our nation's best restaurant. And proof that American food as served in all 50 of our choices has never been so exciting. Or so new: More than half of these restaurants are making their debut on the list—you'll recognize them by the star.

# TOP 50 RESTAURANTS

**19** **CANLIS** The next generation of the Canlis family is now running this venerable institution, and they've added Gen-X energy to Seattle's most romantic room without losing any of the style and refinement their parents originally brought to the restaurant. You can now have your view of Lake Union with new dishes like Kona Kampachi sashimi and Wagyu rib eye with shaved asparagus and truffle salt, or classics like the Peter Canlis prawns and Grand Marnier soufflé. Whatever you eat, the service will be faultless and the wine list will be huge.

2576 Aurora Avenue N., Seattle (206-283-3313)

**20** **L'AUBERGE CARMEL** Even as many a frazzled city chef is fantasizing about opening a little place in the country, Walter Manzke, previously of the high-powered Patina, in Los Angeles, is living the dream. But he's not cooking country at the intimate 12-table L'Auberge Carmel. From Thai-inspired riffs on *satés* and spring rolls to Syrah-braised Wagyu beef short ribs and a silky olive-oil-poached tilefish that appears to have washed ashore in a Meyer lemon foam, the dishes on his elegant tasting menu reveal his mastery of pure, focused flavors and faraway cuisines.

Before Manzke, no one would have expected to find a dinner they'd talk about for weeks in the sleepy village of Carmel.

Monte Verde at 7th Street, Carmel, CA (831-624-8578)

**21** **BARTOLOTTA RISTORANTE DI MARE** When many people dream of Italy, they imagine themselves at a sun-splashed seaside table eating fish that have just been pulled from the ocean. Paul Bartolotta has translated that vision to the desert. Although his restaurant is neither small nor modest, it's where you'll find the widest variety of seafood

A pillar of good taste: Restaurant August, in New Orleans.



this side of the Amalfi Coast—dozens of unusual creatures imported from Italian waters and cooked in every imaginable way. For those otherwise inclined, there is also the opulence of truly great pastas, like tiny *agnolotti al plin* with butter and sage, or perfect risottos.

Wynn Las Vegas, 3131 Las Vegas Boulevard S., Las Vegas (702-770-3305)

**22** **★ RESTAURANT AUGUST** At this time last year, New Orleanians, some of them literally homeless, were eating terrines of duck foie gras drizzled with honey vinegar, grilled wild salmon anointed with fennel “kraut” and bread dumplings, and plates of fried oysters draped in a creamy dressing flecked with Louisiana caviar. In the chandelier light of Restaurant August, it felt as if nothing had happened. Of course, something had: John Besh, the city's most ambitious young chef, had returned. Now he's picked up where he left off before Katrina, intelligently updating the Louisiana dining tradition while exploring a vision of something New Orleans truly needs: a future.

301 Tchoupitoulas Street, New Orleans (504-299-9777)

**23** **THE INN AT LITTLE WASHINGTON** What sets this extravagant inn apart is that you, the diner, are the star—not the waiter, the maître d', or even the chef. They are all here to make you happy. “How big is the lobster?” queried a diner one night. “How big would you like it to be?” responded the waiter. The staff is well trained in grace and timing, and chef Patrick O'Connell is a master when it comes to transforming southern favorites into more-polished dishes: Soft-shelled crab receives a pecan crust and a sauce of Italian mustard fruit, while country ham finds a home next to veal sweetbreads braised in ruby Port.

Middle and Main streets, Washington, VA (540-675-3800)

**24** **★ THE DINING ROOM IN THE RITZ-CARLTON, BUCKHEAD** It's been a breeding ground for Atlanta's best chefs, who wow the locals here before moving on to open their own impressive places. Joël Antunes did it. So did Guenter Seeger. Now Arnaud Berthelie is making his mark on the Ritz-Carlton's kitchen. Sitting in this dignified dining room, with its oil paintings and damask, just doesn't seem very stuffy when you're eating wild ramp soup with frogs' legs and chicken *jus*, or licorice-studded sweetbreads with candied pears and Fourme d'Ambert polenta.

3434 Peachtree Road N.E., Atlanta (404-237-2700)

**25** **★ VETRI** Mario Batali loves the place, and so does just about everyone else who's lucky enough to snag one of the 35 seats in this casual but rarefied room. “Simplicity,” says the menu, quoting da Vinci, “is the ultimate form of sophistication.” Here, this idea is exemplified by dishes like spinach gnocchi with shaved ricotta and brown butter, and pork shank with saffron risotto for two. Many chefs venture into their dining rooms to make a triumphant tour, but Marc Vetri is more likely to leave his kitchen to bus a table or slice some prosciutto on his beloved antique machine.

1312 Spruce Street, Philadelphia (215-732-3478)