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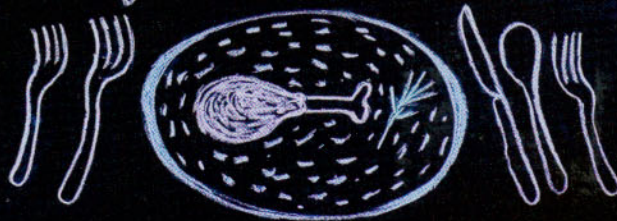
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Esquire's
BEST NEW RESTAURANTS
2008

Come inside for:
Coast-to-coast picks
The chef of the year
The best table (and how to get it)
Recipes you can make
a cocktail
And, of course, some bacon



Bar Blanc, New York ★ Bar Boulud, New York ★ Convivio, New York ★ Corbett's, Louisville ★ Distrito, Philadelphia ★ Kampuchea, New York ★ L20, Chicago (Restaurant of the Year) ★ Luce, San Francisco (Chef of the Year) ★ Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas
Mercat, Chicago ★ Pacific Time, Miami ★ Palate, Glendale, California ★ The Plumed Horse, Saratoga, California ★ Scampo, Boston
Scarpetta, New York ★ Spruce, San Francisco ★ Takashi, Chicago ★ Terra, Tesuque, New Mexico ★ Voice, Houston ★ Zahav, Philadelphia

By **JOHN MARIANI**
Photograph by **SETH SMOOT**
Illustration by **LEIF PARSONS**

with chile butter; yellowtail poached in olive oil with olive tapenade and artichoke béchamel; pork belly with farro grain and cherries; and a fabulous wagyu rib eye with sweet onions, charred carrots, and oxtail sauce—this last, the most expensive thing on the menu, is nineteen dollars. Whatever you spend on gas to get to Glendale, you'll save on the food and wines here and go home very happy, maybe even in a new car. 933 South Brand Boulevard; 818-662-9463; palatefood-wine.com.

THE PLUMED HORSE SARATOGA, CALIFORNIA

The new owners poured millions into gutting and transforming the dated Plumed Horse, and it's now one of the most beautiful restaurants



The Plumed Horse

to open in northern California in years. The wine rooms alone are some of the coolest in the world: You walk on a glass floor surrounded by walls of wine and look down into a two-story cellar below holding thousands more bottles. The dining room—with sycamore panels, fiber-optic chandeliers, an onyx bar, curved ceiling, and leather

er armchairs—could not have more polish. But what drives this place is the cooking of chef and partner Peter Armellino (most recently at the Aqua Restaurant in San Francisco). Skip the caviar service—Armellino's appetizers are much more interesting: Camembert fondue to dip fingerling potatoes fried in duck fat and showered

with black truffles, or foie-gras-and-onion soufflé with Armagnac-soaked prunes. Then move on to roast breast of duck with more foie gras, white peaches, the crunch of walnuts and cornichons, or a juicy rib eye of Colorado lamb with shallot-stuffed ravioli and a truffle jus. Even if you're just in San Francisco for the night, the Plumed Horse is easily worth the forty-five-minute drive from SFO.

14555 Big Basin Way; 408-867-4711; plumedhorse.com.

SCAMPO BOSTON

Two decades ago, at Seasons, Lydia Shire was at the forefront of "New New England Cuisine," and as her access to better local ingredients has grown, so has the authority of the menus at her successive haunts. At Scampo, located

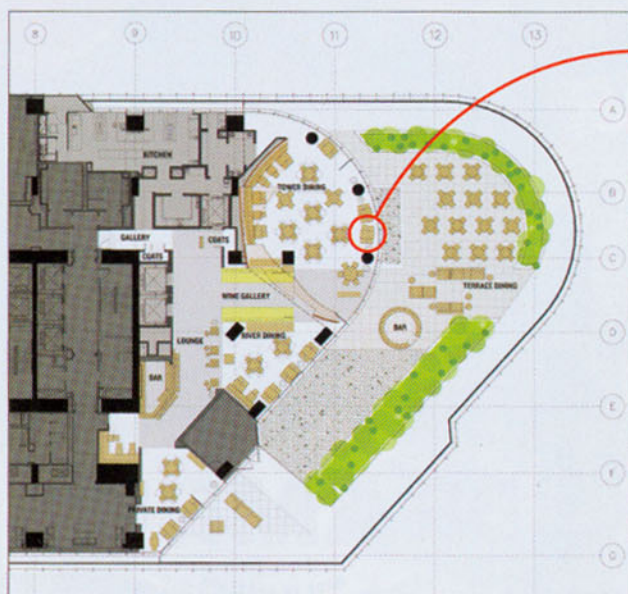


TABLE OF THE YEAR

TABLE 42, SIXTEEN TRUMP INTERNATIONAL HOTEL & TOWER, CHICAGO

Chef Frank Brunacci's menu is overall pretty good, from a juicy loin of lamb with a Moroccan tagine of vegetables to the praline croustillant with caramelized banana and lime-tequila ice cream. But it's the view that you will remember here. A shadowy, sexy bar on the sixteenth floor



leads to a wraparound dining room in three segments with thirty-foot windows, widely spaced tables, and a huge cylindrical crystal chandelier. Any window table here gives you a heart-stopping view of this most American city's majestic architecture, with a backdrop of Lake Michigan and the deep blue of a Chicago sky. But you want table 42, the most central up against the window. Unless, of course, the Donald is in town. Then it's all his. 401 North Wabash Avenue; 312-588-8030; trump-chicago.com.

way of gathering people for the purpose of sharing an experience. But it isn't all peace, love, and understanding. From her open kitchen at Beast, chef Naomi Pomeroy keeps a hard line: two seatings for

a six-course daily menu "based on what sounds great, right, and true"—in other words, whatever she wants to serve that night. Don't even think about asking for substitutions. —F.M.

» MOST PLEASANT SURPRISE IN OMAHA

In a city not known for gastronomic diversity, Bosnian chef and owner Dario Schicke has opened Dario's Brasserie, which serves twelve Trappist ales, five



Lambics, and the Popeye Platter (left): a big melty tray of eighteen briny open-faced mussels—Omaha's miraculous new trend—baked in a gratin of spinach, bacon, and cream and topped with smoky



EXPENSIVE TOOTH PASTE

By David Katz

➔ The sad truth is, you haven't brushed your teeth. Never. The dental assistant, maybe *she* has brushed your teeth—you can tell the difference, the way your incisors feel on the tip of your tongue when she's done with them. You don't get that feeling when you use your Colgate

antitartar or your Aquafresh gel. But you do get it when you use the potent Italian toothpaste Marvis—the cool chrome tube contains an almost painfully intense wintergreen paste that, for the first time after a home routine, will leave your mouth feeling clean. Dentist clean.

in a former prison transformed into the new Liberty Hotel (the bar doors still hang), she focuses on Boston's rich Italian-American heritage. With its brick walls and wooden floor, sports bar and open kitchen, the place rings with loud music and the joyful sounds of people passing around dishes like executive chef Mario Capone's spaghetti with cracklings and hot pepper. Don't miss the hazelnut risotto with sweetbreads and vin santo, the quail with a yellow-raisin sabayon and semolina gnocchi, or the massive black pig chop with a sweet spring-onion tart. Finish with a ricotta cheesecake with almond toffee and a shot of fiery grappa. If you can, get yourself seated in waiter Mario Depasquale's section—his crazy exuberance sets exactly the right tone for a night at Scampo. *The Liberty Hotel, 215 Charles Street; 857-241-1150; scampoboston.com.*

SCARPETTA NEW YORK

The name means "little shoe," an Italian colloquialism for the crust of bread used to sop up your pasta bowl. The word is also an alliteration of the chef and owner's name—Scott Conant, who has brought back



real culinary muscle to the Disneyfied Meatpacking District. At Scarpetta, you push your way past a crowded bar into a skylit room with close-set, trattoria-style tables and brown leather banquettes and find the menu picks up where Conant left off as chef and partner at L'Impero (now Convivio, page 86). His lusty regional Italian food, like his signature roast *capretto* (young goat), is revived here in all its succulent goodness, but with less pomp than before. Among the antipasti is that old Italian-American favorite mozzarella in *carrozza*—mozzarella oozing through a fried crust, cooked with stewed baby tomatoes. Meltingly braised

beef ribs cuddle next to farro risotto, and his simple spaghetti with tomato sauce elevates a dish you thought you knew. He doesn't shy away from pastas with complexity, either: Ricotta raviolini with a subtle salty benediction of anchovy butter and orange zucchini blossoms or big fat duck-and-foie-gras ravioli slippery with a marsala reduction are perfect before the seared pearl-white sea scallops with mushrooms and sunchoke puree, or the orata with leeks. You'll indeed be sopping up everything with a little shoe of bread. *355 West Fourteenth Street; 212-691-0555; scarpetta-nyc.com.*

A CHEF TO WATCH



Enzo Fargione

HAVING TAKEN OVER D.C.'s best Italian restaurant, Teatro Goldoni, Turin-born Fargione has transformed it into a highly evolved *cucina moderna*, taking risks like a carpaccio of branzino quickly smoked at the table in a cigar box and dressed with citrus and roasted garlic. *1909 K Street NW; 202-955-9494.*

SPRUCE SAN FRANCISCO

It took years for Spruce finally to open in the renovated 1930s brick auto barn it now occupies—the usual development hassles—but the wait has yielded a high cathedral ceiling and a manly series of dining rooms, including a charcuterie, a private dining area, and an eighty-seat dining room with dark moiré walls, black ironwork, and smooth faux-ostrich-skin chairs, plus a swank bar where you can order any-

Gruyère. Try it with the Orval, a hoppy and herbal ale from one of Belgium's oldest monasteries. —J. W.

» BEST TRIO OF ROUND FOODS

Here is what you need to order at Terroir, a new

Manhattan wine bar: the fried mozzarella balls, the beet-risotto balls with Gorgonzola, and the veal-ricotta meatballs.

» BEST REASON TO SKIP THE CONCESSIONS AT THE NEW

YANKEE STADIUM

The name Zero Otto Nove refers to the area code for Salerno, Italy, owner Roberto Paclullo's hometown. At this Bronx pizzeria, he makes great pies in a woodburning oven—

charred, bubbly crust, sweet tomatoes, fresh mozzarella.

—JOHN MARIANI

» MOST SOPHISTICATED VERY SIMPLE COCKTAIL

Between the Sheets, at

L20 in Chicago:

$\frac{3}{4}$ oz 10 Cane rum
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Hennessy VS
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Cointreau
1 oz lemon juice
Shake, strain, serve up.
Three liquors. Equal parts. Genius.