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food & drink



Top 100 Best
Things to Eat



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Contents

Features

- 6 Top 100 Best Things to Eat or Drink**
The eighth annual
- 16 Spring Lamb**
Treat yourself with delicious chefs' recipes | Mary Bailey
- 22 2020 Canadian Culinary Championships**
Vancouver, Montreal and Winnipeg top the podium in Ottawa
- 26 Getting Lost in Ireland**
Where to eat on the Emerald Isle | John Gilchrist

Departments

- 5 Dish**
Gastronomic happenings around town
- 14 Beer Guy**
Beer knights | Peter Bailey
- 20 Feeding People**
Restaurant confidential | Jan Hostyn
- 24 Wine Maven**
Mary Bailey
- 28 Kitchen Sink**
What's new and notable



On the cover: chef Christine Sandford, Biera. Curtis Comeau Photography photo.



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Modern Canadian Cuisine

drink up with davin

Whisky expert Davin de Kergommeaux has just published a new book and it's a winner. He profiles over 200 historic and modern distilleries, and offers spirit trails, cocktail recipes, tasting notes and features about the unique distillers making waves today. It's not just about Canadian whisky anymore—witness the explosion of high-quality gins, moonshine and liqueurs made across the country now. Drink up!

The Definitive guide to Canadian Distilleries: The Portable Expert to Over 200 Distilleries and the Spirits they Make (From Absinthe to Whisky, and Everything in Between) by Davin de Kergommeaux and Blair Phillips, Appetite by Random House, \$32.



a new private club for edmonton business people

Consider it a rebranding—behind Edmonton City Club is the Petroleum Club which operated for over 70 years, closing its Kingsway location two years ago. The idea is to attract a younger, vibrant clientele centred in downtown, who could benefit from a modern space for working, meeting, events and, especially, dining. Edmonton City Club plans to offer several levels of membership, including age-based and non-resident. As part of the current membership drive, there is a lovely incentive—sign up by April 30 and get 50 per cent off the entrance fee.

flavours of somalia at nait

What a great idea: Flavours of Somalia, March 21, at Ernest's at NAIT. Jamila Osman, Mulki Ali and Nadiifa Omar are the host cooks and Maryan Hussein is in charge of the desserts. The dinners are organized by Edmonton Eats, a newish social enterprise created to share the skills, passion and knowledge of newcomer home cooks with the rest of

the community. The idea is to create new economic opportunities for families and build community at the same time. Another benefit is that Culinary Program students learn about Somali cuisine and spices. Edmonton Eats is supported by the Edmonton Heritage Council and City of Edmonton, organization sponsors are Bannerman

Community League, e4c and Communities United. Event sponsors are NAIT, Bannerman Giant Tiger and Belmont Sobeys. Tix: \$75, Evenbrite. 🍷

cibo bistro's new spring menu

Pop into Cibo Bistro sometime soon to enjoy new menu items such as the toothsome pappardelle and roast pork cheeks and classics like the house-made mortadella crostini. Don't miss the sublime pistachio gelato with Sicilian cannoli for dessert.



it's back! downtown dining week march 11-22

Here's a chance to try something new or revisit an old fave during downtown dining week. Menus are two-course lunches and brunches, \$20 and multi-courses dinner, \$35 or \$50, depending on the location.

As well as discounted menus at almost 50 restaurants there are events: Lunchbox Shorts with the Edmonton International Film Festival on March 11; Kitchen by Brad lunches and suppers on March 12, 16, 17 and 19; Queen's Brunch at Match Eatery on March 15 and a Craft Cocktail Tour March 16. Find all the deets, menus and prices at edmontondowntown.com



From top: Davin de Kergommeaux' winning new book; Cibo Bistro's cannoli; Somali cuisine at NAIT; a Downtown Dining Week option—Revel Bistro & Bar scallops.

Photos supplied.



THE EIGHTH ANNUAL TOP ONE HUNDRED BEST THINGS TO EAT OR DRINK IN EDMONTON



Welcome to the annual Tomato Top 100 where we ask readers to tell us what was the best thing they ate last year. Burgers and pizza were so often nominated we gave them their own section. Breakfast sandwiches are popular, pasta is a perennial favourite and this year, we notice more plant-based dishes being recommended.

Our readers recognize exceptional food when they taste it, yet many nominations were accompanied by ‘for my birthday,’ ‘for our annual big night out.’ We love to hear about your special occasions, and we invite you to visit Edmonton’s great restaurants

more often. Why not go for lunch (both the Marc and Biera are open for lunch); go out mid-week; or after work, slip in early for a glass of wine and one plate. Hard to do with a family, but what about brunch at a good local resto instead of a chain? Cook more at home to save up for a monthly (or seasonal) dinner out. Somewhere really good. Taste what the best chefs are up to, more often.

Biera’s winter salad has top billing this year. Chef Christine Sandford goes from strength to strength. We love the commitment to local sourcing, the seasonal menu, the love of great cheese.

See the full list at thetomato.ca. All photos by Mary Bailey unless otherwise credited.



Dong Kim photo

1. Winter Salad, Biera

This is one sexy salad—a riot of texture, from the apple pear shavings draped languorously over the goods beneath, and the crunch of sunflower seeds throughout, to the creamy, tangy, cheesy dill dressing. A thing of beauty. Nominators waxed rhapsodic about the grilled chicken, the tartare, the various permutations of the excellent house-made sourdough on the menus; we remember a particularly thrilling mushroom dish last summer. We love chef Christine Sandford's commitment to local sourcing; the seasonal menus; the love of great cheese. Each dish not only demonstrates fine technique and mastery of flavour and subtlety, each supports and highlights the Blind Enthusiasm and the barrel-aged Monolith beers. We are fortunate people to have Biera.

2. Roasted Farro Pappardelle with Mushroom and Parmigiano, Corso 32

This deeply fragrant and savoury dish was a hit with nominators. Farro, an ancient grain much used in central Italy, is roasted, then milled into flour, creating a pasta with earthy flavours and a slightly chewy texture, so good with the toothsome sauce. "I recently took two work colleagues to Corso 32, and when they mentioned they weren't sure if they liked truffle, we ordered the black truffle moliterno with black truffle honey for dessert. We were blown away by the combination of the salty hard cheese, sweet honey and the umami richness of the shaved truffle." We love the tasting menus (do try with the wine pairings), the fealty to Italian flavours and technique, the uncompromising rigour in the kitchen.

3. Grizzly Gouda Potato Pyrohy, RGE RD

"The pyrohy has been a staple on the menu since RGE RD opened and I still order them to this day—they are fantastic!" says Deborah Munro. Also, the road trip menu filled with surprises and delights, the farm dinners, blini with sustainable Canadian caviar—so many delicious bites and forward-thinking food from a crack kitchen.

4. Parisienne Gnocchi, Bündok

"Insanely delicious," says Jared Domino. "The gnocchi melts in your mouth, and with the mushrooms; it is just perfection. Sooo delicious," says Andrea Doyle. "Had a fabulous dinner in Maui but the fresh local crudo just couldn't stand up to Ryan's," says Shauna Faragini. Also, the strip loin and the Parmigiano soup. "This is hands down the best soup, so delicious and creamy." Meighan Sommer.

Please see "Top 100" next page



Ryan Hotchkiss, chef owner Bündok, Curtis Comeau photography.



TOP EDMONTON FOOD EXPERIENCES

Afternoon Tea at the Art of Cake

"Not only is every bite simply sublime, the presentation is beautiful, the service outstanding and the decor lovely. I have been a fan of Gloria's for years. Her wedding cakes are works of art, but how often can you have a wedding cake? Tea can be had on most any weekend. What a treat and worth every cent. Arrive hungry, you will leave full and happy," says Leanne Smoliak.

Cheese School at Cavern

Several times a year Cavern, the cheese shop on 104 Street, offers cheese school. It is a unique way to explore cheese—by comparative tasting, or how to pair it with wine and beer; or a primer on a certain kind of cheese, like washed rind for example and other useful cheese info. They are also relaxed and fun, usually on Sunday afternoons with wine and sometimes with guests.

Kitchen by Brad

"It is such a unique venue, with so much to offer. I have attended a cooking class there, picked up meatball lunches, attended special events such as a gin tasting, long table dinners and we hosted our son's rehearsal dinner there. Every experience is different, new and exciting and I can't wait to see what he is up to next." Aubin Nixon. Chef Brad Smoliak's custom space is ideal for classes, meetings, wine dinners, fundraisers and special occasions.

Ruby Apron/Awn Kitchen

Whether it's soups and stews, fermentation, or pasta—Kaelin Whittaker makes it oh-so-doable. Kaelin, the sourdough whisperer, has taught legions of folks the ins and outs of sourdough. One problem though, classes generally sell out the day they are posted. Lucky for us Kaelin is moving to a new location in the fall. The new name is Awn Kitchen, which refers to the stiff bristle-like appendages found on cereals like barley, rye and other grasses, fitting for an expert baker!

Get Cooking

Classes at Katherine Joel's modern space on the MacEwan campus are a delight. Often there are special guests (the Soup Sisters from Calgary; Sui To, the green onion cake man, Mai Nguyen, dumplings; Scott Iserhoff, indigenous cuisine; Aditya Raghavan, Indian); special events like Date Night Fridays, special dinners (Earth Day Dinner, April 22) and, this fall, a tour to Vietnam.

Farm Dinners:

Get outside for a long table dinner this summer

RGE RD started doing amazing long table dinners on the pristine prairie at Nature's Green Acres about a decade ago. Now both RGE RD and Get Cooking hold dinners with Tam Anderson at Prairie Gardens and Riverbend Gardens. Brad Smoliak (Kitchen by Brad) created dinners for several years at Elk Island National Park, and, will continue this summer with the Old Barn. Open Farm Days in August creates several farm dinners across the province.

The new Downtown Market on 97 Street

The new space is clean, bright and roomy with an eclectic mix of new and former vendors. After a few years of uncertainty, this is a terrific new home, and, it's back to its roots. The original city market was 100 years on 97 Street. "We participated in a really great thing on 104 and left it in a better place than we found it. To have a place where people can be inside in the winter is wonderful," says Jenny Berkenbosch, Sundog Organic Farm.

Please see "Experiences" on page 9



5

Dong Kim photo

Top 100

Continued from page 7

5. Cod with Cannellini Beans, Mint and Chile, Uccellino

The toothsome Icelandic cod, the agrodolce butternut squash crostini with mint, chile and pistachios (that perfect blend of sweet and spicy); the Sicilian anchovy, butter and rosemary crostini and the spicy Abruzzo lentils were all chosen by nominators as their favourite dishes. Neha Sharma-Prabhakar said this about the *cacio e pepe* pasta; “It is the best pasta dish I have ever had in my life.” Also, “amazing chickpea fritters. Perfectly fried and wow flavours,” Beatriz Plaza Pannelle.

6. Polpette, Cibo Bistro

“The *polpette* (meatballs) at Cibo are incredible. Beautiful veal and pork meatballs with dried apricots and a little bit of spice,” says Alysha Evans-Singh. “Slathered in Cibo’s amazing tomato sauce, every bite is fantastic,” AJ Lissey. “The mushroom arancini are mouth-wateringly delicious. They are perfect for anytime of the day, especially in winter, warms the soul,” Amy Catalano. “Crostini with house ricotta and mortadella—the best bite I had all year.” We also love the hand-pressed rigatoni with braised short rib, radicchio and toasted hazelnuts—unctuous and satisfying.



6

7. Bear and the Flower Pork Chop, Smokey Bear

“It is simply the most delectable, rich, flavourful, uncomplicated, and satisfying bite of meat that I can remember having ever tasted. Sweet maple glaze, aromatic maple wood smoke, exquisite umami factor,” says Ryan Dupas. “The food is innovative,” says Sarah Hodgson. Nominators also loved the “chef’s selection with paired wines is well crafted;” by resident wine lady Ashleigh Smith—not to be missed.

8. House-cultured Butter and Sicilian Anchovy Crostini, Bar Bricco

The umami of this dish cannot be denied—the combo of the anchovy and the tangy butter rockets to the taste buds like nothing else. But there’s more. “Who needs meat and dairy when vegetables taste this good?” says Anna Fen about the roasted Romanesco. “The egg yolk raviolo has always been my favourite dish, since the restaurants inception—perfectly cooked pasta, a runny egg, some ricotta, brown butter, sage and grana. It’s pure heaven,” says Ian Breitzke. Also, the house-made focaccia our friend Amanda calls her birthday cake; the Sicilian caponata ricotta crostini, the rye and speck crostini; the amazing culatello sourced from a special Apulian pig; the salumi and formaggi plates and the surprize of the oat milk panna cotta (dairy and gluten free). Lots to love at Bar Bricco. Oh, and the extensive amari and digestivo on offer.

9. Pommes Frites, The Marc

The scrumptious crispy fries with truffled mayo was most often nominated, but there’s more—the daily fish, the plate-covering pork schnitzel, the beignets, the warm welcome and consistent service. We also love Sunday Night Supper Club, Tour d’Alsace and the other great dinners the Marc puts throughout the year.

10. Butter Chicken, Glass Monkey

“The butter chicken is the perfect blend of spices and the naan bread is delicious,” says Gregory Mowbrey. “The pappardelle with pork shoulder is fall apart meaty goodness—the noodles are made from scratch and the ingredients are fresh and gorgeous,” says Christin Firth. “The Jack’s bread pudding is over the top fantastic. Glass Monkey never disappoints,” Sharon Brown.



8

Dong Kim photo

11. Sablefish with Ramen, XIX

“The flavours in this unique dish are deep, rich and explosive. The sablefish is lush and delicate, while the al dente ramen provides the perfect foil. This dish, which we had as part of XIX’s tasting menu, was the first time I truly understood umami—it awakened my senses. In my opinion, it’s the best thing you can put on a fork in this town,” says Misty Harris. About the tuna twists. “It is such a well-balanced dish! I never liked tuna, but the way XIX makes it, it’s like butter paired perfectly with the tangy coleslaw and spicy noodles. So yummy,” says Sophie Deepeos.

Please see “Top 100” on page 10

Experiences

Continued from page 7

Coffee Flights at Rogue Wave Coffee

“Ply and the Daves take a meticulously scientific approach to sourcing, selecting, roasting and serving coffee. From fruity, juicy and jammy washed Colombians, to rich, chocolatey and full of caramel character Guatemalans and heirloom Ethiopians full of wine-like character, you are guaranteed to find a coffee you love from these dudes. Getting to sample three little ones at a time, means you aren’t gonna leave the shop vibrating,” says Ian Breitzke.

BURGERS

We had so many nominations for burgers, we gave them their own section (in alphabetical order).

Maccas Burger, The Buckingham

“Most vegetarian burgers are gross, let’s be honest. Not this one. You will find no better vegan burger anywhere else. Not to mention the bitchin’ beer to go with it,” Elizabeth Gaumont.

Aloha Burger, Delux Burger Bar

“It’s delicious! The pineapple is grilled and it’s on a toasted bun with the perfect amount of teriyaki sauce,” says Janet Shostak

Chori Burger, Filistix

House-made beef and pork patty, with banana ketchup, fresh tomato and dijonaise on a toasted pandesal bun (gives a bit of sweetness). This is one delicious burger.

Bacon Pepper Smash Burger, Fox Burger

“A little spicy and smoky, a lot tangy. Chef Sean O’Connor and the kitchen crew truly get the most out of their flat top—the patties are crispy and craggy delivered between a toasted house-made sesame bun. The toppings take it to the next level—smash sauce, pickled peppers, bacon, iceberg lettuce and that gooey American cheddar,” Ian Brietzke.

Cheeseburger, Glass Monkey

“Cooked to perfection. Juicy, flavourful, mouth-watering, deliciousness. Toppings add freshness, crunch, surprises to the taste buds. So yummy,” says Kim Kelly.

Brisket Burger, The Local Omnivore

This deeply-flavoured burger, served on a brioche bun with their special sauce and house-made pickles is still a big favourite of burger hounds. We like it with Grizzly Gouda and onion too.

Burger, The Next Act

Nominators loved the PB & J (crunchy peanut butter, bacon jam and cheddar) and the Agent (blue cheese, hot sauce, crispy onions and bacon), though pretty much every burger got at least one nom. The Next Act is a YEG fave.

CHZ Burger, Rebel

“It reminds me of an In-N-Out burger. Just the right amount of grease and cheese,” says Craig Colvin.

The Royale with Cheese, Royale Burgers and Beer

Nominators loved the loaded Royale was the top burger on the menu—two cheeses, Dijon aioli, ketchup, pickle, etc. Burgers here come as a choice of one large patty or two smashed patties. The veggie burger also saw some noms, dressed like the Royale but with a black bean patty.

Bourbon Burger, Wilfred’s

“An amazing burger short rib, white cheddar, aioli, lettuce, tomato and onion. Big enough for two. With fries!”

Please see “Experiences” on page 11



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BAR BRICCO

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Top 100

Continued from page 8

12. Tam's Squash, Butternut Tree

Nominator's loved the squash (from Tam Anderson at Prairie Gardens) on the winter menu, with whey glaze, barley, ricotta and grilled kale. The Butternut Tree's steadfast commitment to pan-Canadian ingredients leads to unexpected discoveries. "The first time I ever ate moss," said one nominator. Love the seasonal menu listed by ingredient, and the all Canadian wine beer and spirits (seven gins!) lists.

13. Duck Tots, Why Not Café

"Duck tots at Why Not Café are the best damn thing I've put in my mouth," says Donna Barnhardt. "Didn't ever think I would like duck until I tried duck tots." says Sasha Nickel. "The vegan the avocado toast and the brussels sprouts—the sear on them was kick-ass. It's hard to find quality vegan food with great flavour." "The flavour profile is off the charts. Levi takes things that were once ordinary and turns them on their head making them extraordinary," says Caroline Wendtland.

14. Parmigiano Reggiano Salad, Cavern

"The combination of seasonal greens, veggies, fruit, olive oil and white balsamic with an epic portion of Parmigiano cheese is healthy and heavenly at the same time. I love the well-curated menu and go out of my way to come downtown whenever they have Epoisses de Bourgogne cheese in stock—a wonderful treat with a great glass of red wine!" says Cindy Gange-Harris.

15. Smoked Ham, Meulwy's

The well-made and delicious smoked ham, available in two sizes at the holidays and generally in the case all the time, garnered lots of nominations. As it should. "Meulwy's prepared grainy mustard is so good that I would eat a jar of it on its own. I use it on my sandwiches and they go from good to outstanding," Karin Fodor. Also, the hot dogs—"bring on summer, hot dogs are great again!"

16. Stuffed Pork Tenderloin, Popowich Meats

"My wife and I were arguing between the garlic and herb or the pizza stuffed. In fact I can't really pick just one thing. We have tried everything and keep coming back each week to get more," says Dennis Kovacs. Popowich's sausage-stuffed jalapeño poppers can be eaten as a meal or an appetizer, but most importantly very tasty," says Art Angielski. "The sausage creations are unique and imaginative, and delicious. My favorite would be the jalapeño cheese beef. It has great flavour and the right amount of kick. My sons love the buffalo chicken sausage and the pork pot-sticker sausage. The pork masala is absolutely fantastic. Great flavour and aroma when cooking," says Satpal Athwal.

17. Vanilla, Kind Ice Cream

The sweet little ice-cream-shop-that-could continues to impress with tasty and seasonal feature flavours, the vegan selections and the standards like maple bourbon pecan, deep dark chocolate and real deal strawberry, and, their vanilla is just right. (Not too sweet, said nominators.) "The vegan lemon and jammy raspberry actually tastes like great regular ice cream," says Todd Bondar.

18. Double Banana Pancakes, Wilfred's

Brunch is a big deal at Wilfred's and nominators chose the double banana pancakes, the Dutch baby benny and the soft scrambled sandwich as their top three. Nominators also love the daily features at Wilfred's, the wine and cocktail list, the beef tenderloin and the delish brown butter roasted beets at dinner.

19. Wienerschnitzel at Bauernschmaus

"Consistently excellent meal and service," says Cathryn Heslep. The Bauernschmaus is one of those restaurants that quietly goes about its business (in its case, since 1975.) We're glad nominators remembered it.



Shaun Hicks photo



20. Cashew Cheese, Truffala

"It's everything. It makes you feel so good and it tastes so indulgent. Completely vegan but can satisfy any omnivore. It is a real blessing for those with dietary restrictions, because the product is so pure," from one reader. "It is the best cheese alternative that I have tasted (and I've tried a lot). It is deliciously creamy, smooth, and is jam packed with flavour. It's perfect for a casual night in (I've literally eaten it by the spoonful) or to share with some friends. This soft, savoury cashew cheese is too dreamy for words."

21. Hand-held Bennie, Juniper Bistro

"I am not a poached egg fan but when it is nestled in a Portuguese bun with roasted vegetables and lemon aioli it beats an omelette any day," says Diane Davies.

22. Traditional Sourdough, Bonjour Bakery

The pain au levain breads at Bonjour are always delicious. The long and slow fermentations create superior flavours and texture. Also, the sesame bagels and the cheese counter according to nominators.

23. Grilled Octopus, Shojo Izakaya

"The octopus is sous vide for hours to get that melt in your mouth bite," says Lan Bui. Nominators also love the thin-cut Shoju fries, seasoned with togarishi and nori at this newish spot in the Brewery district.

24. Belgian Chocolate Gelato, Little Bear

The Belgian chocolate garnered the most noms, but the sour cherry has fans as do the hazelnut gelato and the passion fruit, raspberry and Champagne sorbets. We're sad Franck Bouihol's Fan Fan Patisserie is no more, but happy that he is making ice cream.

Please see "Top 100" on page 12

Experiences

Continued from page 9

Double Beef Burger, Wishbone

The two thin patties have American cheese, pickles, iceberg, mayo, Dijon, all on a brioche bun—a must try according to nominators.

The Woodshed, Woodshed Burgers

"A juicy burger par excellence," says a nominator. It was a race between The Woodshed (Irving's bacon and wine braised onions) and the Juicy Lucy (barbecued short rib-stuffed and garlic aioli). The beef is local from Nonay farms and the toppings and condiments are made in house.

PIZZA

Cotto e Funghi, Artisti

The simple Margherita and the Formaggi with blue cheese garnered nominations for this newish pizza place near the Local Omnivore.

New York Spice, Ragazzi

"It's so simple but so delicious. Perfect crispy thin crust, delicious cheese and spices. The restaurant itself is fantastic. Small, cozy but vibrant," says Diana Varvis.

The Rosso, Rosso Pizzeria

The Rosso (Taleggio cheese, soppressata and hot Italian sausage) is loved by nominators as is the Ortolana (eggplant and goat cheese) and Rosso's toothsome crust. "Beautiful chewy and charred crust, just as delicious cold the next day." Rosso's secret? The wood fired oven. There are 11 pizza bianca (without tomato sauce) on the menu as well.

Marinara, Sepps Pizza

The Marinara (capers, garlic, 36-month Parm) and the Canadian (prosciutto and pineapple) are the big hits. We also love the Margherita and the Apulo with hot peppers and Alberta honey. The crispy, slightly charred crust is thin enough to fold like a New York slice. Pick up at the back door of Café Leva, or have it delivered. 🍕





29

Mai Nguyen photo

Top 100

Continued from page 11

25. Roasted and Grilled Vegetable Salad, Zinc

“The tahini dressing and toasty pumpkin seeds complement this delicious array of vegetables,” said a nominator. Chef Doreen Prei wowed with her tasty People’s Choice dish at the Kitchen Party last fall, squash dumplings with maitake mushroom and smoked pine nuts. Zinc undergoes a retrofit this spring, expect a new look and new menu. We can’t wait.

26. Lobster Risotto, Sabor

“Big chunks of lobster and loaded with flavour. All around, an amazing risotto in a great environment with excellent service,” says Lillian Tse. Nominators also love the quick and tasty specials at lunch.

27. Saskatoons, North Saskatchewan river valley

“The weather and rainfall in 2019 created conditions for plump and plentiful saskatoon berries. It was a joy to take my child’s vacation care program on an adventure to pick berries. For many, it was their first time,” says Thea Moss. Yes, a rare pleasure that, forging for saskatoons.

28. Avocado Toast, Toast Culture

Avocado toast is still popular and this is the place to have it, according to many nominators. Also, the smoked salmon, the avocado blt; the Culture breakfast, the breakfast bowl, the granola and the lemon-roasted kale and artichoke pizza.

29. Mai’s Dumplings

“Happy that Gourmai Dumplings are available to take home—we’ve found them at Popowich Meats, at popups at Meuwlys, and at Prairie Noodle where I can always get a fix,” said one nominator.

30. Chicken Inasal, Filistix

Grilled meat on a stick is a Filistix signature and this one comes with a tangy vinegary dipping sauce. Nominators also loved the precise attention paid to the Japanese highball, with its custom ice; the crystal clear cube cut to the same height as the glass for less dilution and more aroma.

31. Garlic Fries, Otto

This easy-going northside spot has great sausages (the Otto with Sylvan Star gouda, the beef bratwurst) but it was the garlic herb fries with curry ketchup that were most nominated. We also love the pretzel with mustard.

32. Argula and Basil, West Country Herbs

“The arugula is mind blowing! The freshness, the crunch, the burst of peppery goodness,” says Jean Purscke. And how about those tubs of fresh basil sold at the Italian Centre Shops all year round? Your margarita pizza thanks you.

33. Devilled Eggs at Partake

Nominators also noted the well-seasoned-steak tartare, mixed tableside; the tasty bites of chef’s popcorn to start and the classic *croque mon soubise* made with Meuwly’s ham on La Boule bread.

34. Hot and Sour Soup, The Green Onion Cake Man

“This soup kept me happy through the cold snap this winter—just enough heat with the vinegar tang,” says Shauna Faragini. Also, the ginger beef, the pot stickers and of course, the green onion cakes, so good.

35. Olive Prairie Loaf, Brio Bakery

“Delicious and so flavourful. They use fresh and local ingredients and no preservatives! Every item I try at Brio exceeds the one before,” says Joanne Amyotte. We couldn’t have said it better.

36. Back Bacon, Irving’s Farm Fresh

“I’m from England and miss this type of bacon. We have bacon for breakfast and often as a bacon sandwich. Just because. Superior products from Irving’s,” says Ruth Siddoway.



40



47

37. Braised Short Ribs, Culina To Go

Nominators love the take-away dinners in enamel roasting pots, especially the short ribs and the chicken marbella. “Makes entertaining so easy,” said Colleen Fry.

38. Crispy Mushroom Bao at Baijiu

“All the baos are good here but this one is extra delicious. Leaves me craving for more. Yummy,” says Sandra Keating.

39. Pyrohy at Workshop Eatery

“The handmade dumplings with goat cheese and potato served with roasted winter mushrooms, leeks, and chive crème fraîche is perfect winter comfort food. My husband and I love having this gem in our neighborhood and are so happy to not have to go all the way downtown for a good meal,” says Cindy Gange Harris.

40. Chorizo Breakfast Sandwich at Caffé Sole

“Hot pretzel bun, gooey cheese, good egg and the chorizo is super flavourful. It’s the best thing to grab on my way to work. Love it!” says Craig Hewson. “Italian sandwich is lights out, but the soft jazz ambiance brings it to the next level,” says Dan Swanson. “Wonderful bite-size churros are a perfect complement to a classic latte. Delicioso!” says Drew Harrison.

41. Good Morning Bunwich at the Brown Butter Café

“Their bun is definitely the best part, but everything in this sandwich; egg, avocado, pickled onion and spicy mayo all go so well together.” “Delicious. Great ingredients. Eat it daily,” said two of the nominators and there were legion.

42. Ham and Cheddar Tartine at Lock Stock Coffee

A savoury slice of heaven. Or, try one of the outstanding house-made pastry such as *kouign anann*.

43. The Bacon, Tzin

“Everyone I have introduced to this dish takes a bite, closes their eyes and smiles. It is like nothing else,” says Cindy Cunningham.

43. Picanha, Pampa Brazilian Steakhouse

The rumpsteak at Pampa is the best steak in Alberta according to Anderson Ximenes. Dining at Pampa is glorious for the meat lover. Enjoy the rodizio experience—giant skewers of grilled rump steak and other beef cuts, pork, chicken, lamb, plus a salad bar with Brazilian specialties—it’s fun and delicious.

44. Ouefs-en-cocotte, Café Linnea

“This dish is absolutely delicious, well-executed and a rare find,” says Megan McKeage.

45. Bao, Kanto 98

“Who doesn’t love the pork belly bao, but the newish Karaboa Bao is my new favourite—a mildly spiced meatball with red pepper mayo,” says Shauna Faragini.

46. Butter Tarts, Gramma Bears

“They are best things around. Always fresh and delicious, would highly recommend them,” says Meredith Thompson. We agree!

47. Pão de Queijo, A Bite of Brazil

This cheese bread is described as “phenomenal, cheezy, tasty” by several nominators. Bonus: it’s made with tapioca flour and is gluten-free.

48. The Spicy Cauliflower, PIP

“This is the perfect dish. It has amazing texture, just the right amount of spice, a delightful crunch, and it makes me happy every damn time I eat it. And, as a vegetarian dish, it’s great for the planet,” said one of the nominators.

49. Pita, Baba Ghanouj and Hummus, the Happy Camel

“The products are fresh and delicious and the friendly owner cares about good quality.”

50. Sassy & Classy Brunch cocktail, PIP

“I first had this when seeking refuge during a downpour during the Art Walk on Whyte. It was so refreshing, epitomized summer on a patio,” Diane Davies. 🍷



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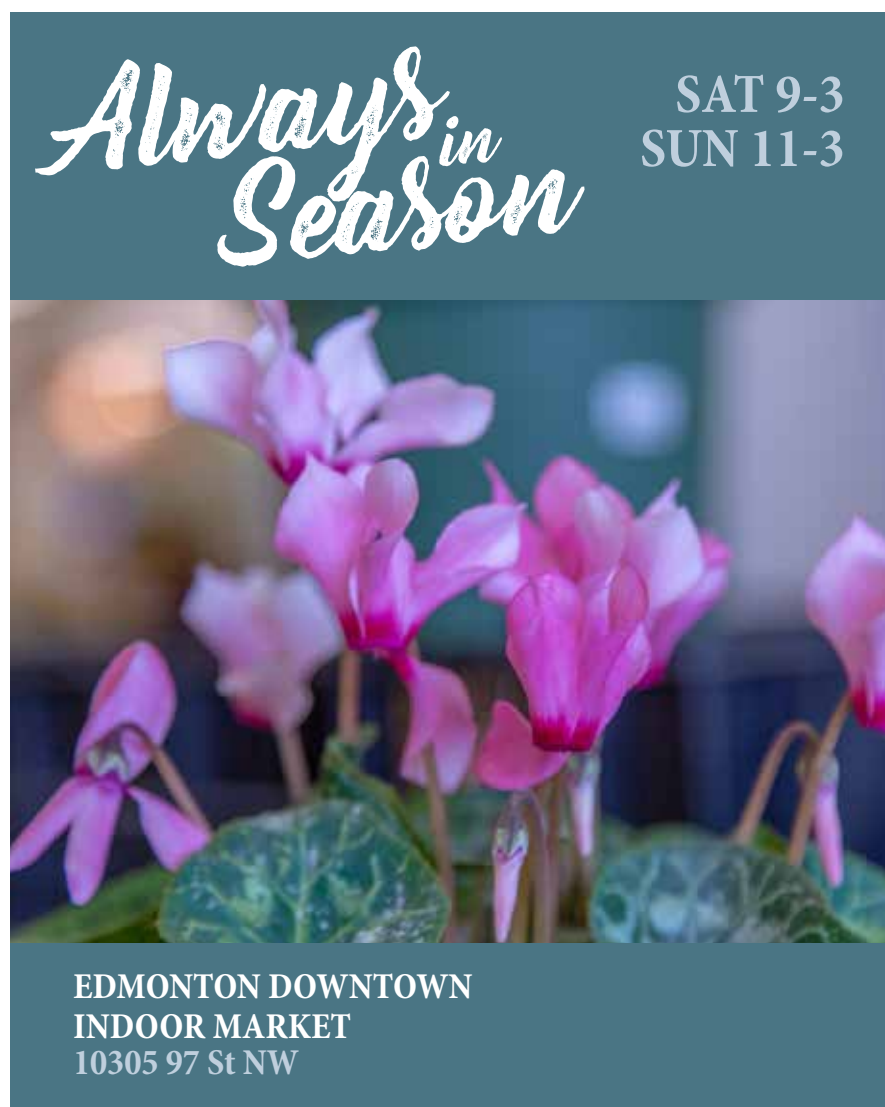
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Beer Guy

Beer knights

“The beers up here are outstanding. The overall quality of Alberta beer is pretty f*#@ing good.”

When Steve Dresler says Alberta beer is pretty f’ing good, you better believe it. He’s a brewing legend, the only North American to receive a knighthood in the International Order of the Hop. He worked for Sierra Nevada Brewing from 1983 until retiring as head brewer in 2017. Over those 34 years, Steve helped Sierra Nevada grow from 2,000 barrels to over a million barrels of beer a year. He oversaw the production of the ground-breaking Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, the beer credited with kicking off the craft beer revolution, growing it into the best-selling craft beer in North America.

I met Steve Dresler at the Jasper Beer & Spirits Festival at Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge in February. This was Steve’s second visit to the Festival, making the trek from Chico, California, Sierra Nevada’s home base, about two hours north of Sacramento. Jasper’s is a boutique festival, with just 19 breweries set up in the lovely Beauvert Ballroom on Friday and Saturday evenings for tastings, complemented by legendary JPL food buffets throughout. The cozy setup creates a convivial atmosphere that encourages passionate, yet unrushed conversations between beer enthusiasts and beer makers.

Daytime at the festival was for brewers and serious beer geeks, with keynotes and workshops. This is how I ended up sitting at a breakfast table with Steve Dresler and Bob Sutton of Rahr Malting. We listened to Matt Phillips, founder of Phillips Brewing, tell the charming story of how he went from sleeping on the floor of his brewhouse to owning BC’s largest craft brewery. Earlier I had heard Steve Dresler’s story. Steve had gone to university in Chico to become

a science teacher. Out of work in 1983, Steve wandered into the fledgling Sierra Nevada Brewery. With the brewery short of hands that day, he was put to work on the packaging line. A few months later, Steve began working in the brewhouse and he never looked back.

Steve attributes his and Sierra Nevada’s success to an obsession with quality. From the start, Sierra Nevada had a lab onsite. Every batch of beer was tested by staff sensory panels before release. “Bad beer can kill your business,” he says. “If you’ve been brewing awhile and you

haven’t poured out a batch, you aren’t doing it right.” His main advice for new brewers is to “always focus on quality. It is the key to success for all beers.” Quality also means sourcing the best ingredients. In 1998, Rahr Malting in Alix, Alberta began supplying Sierra Nevada with quality Alberta malt.

That’s when Bob Sutton met Steve Dresler, and they’ve been friends ever since.

On this trip north, Bob and Steve tried dozens of beers at Edmonton and Highway 16 breweries. Steve said many were outstanding, some were exceptional and that he “really didn’t have a bad beer at any of the breweries.” They hit Apex Predator, Folding Mountain, Sea Change, The Growler, Brewsters, The Monolith and Blind Enthusiasm and Alley Kat. Like many brewers around the globe, Alley Kat founder Neil Herbst looked to Sierra Nevada for inspiration when he was starting out. In 1995, Alley Kat released their first beer, Full Moon Pale Ale, modeled on Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. Twenty-five years later, this February Neil announced he and wife and co-owner Lavonne Herbst were retiring, selling Alley Kat to local buyers. We wish our local beer knight all the best.



Beer knights six pack



Six favourites from the Jasper Beer & Spirits Festival.

Sierra Nevada Torpedo Extra IPA, Chico, California

Steve Dresler was asked to design an IPA for Sierra Nevada's year-round portfolio in 2008. "Of course, the request came after hop harvest and I had already made my purchases for the year. I had excess Crystal and Magnum so I did my formulation around them." Torpedo Extra IPA became the number one selling IPA in America.

Phillips Citricity Grapefruit IPA, Victoria, British Columbia

Summer in a can. Phillips amps up the grapefruit flavour one finds in IPAs from hops by adding actual grapefruit zest. The aroma is freshly-squeezed grapefruit juice, the taste fruity, hoppy yet dry, clean and bitter. Quite simply a delicious and dangerously quaffable beer.



SYC Pontificato Italian Pilsner, Edmonton, Alberta

Show Your Colours (SYC) Brewing was the People's Choice at the Jasper Festival, winning people over with their dizzying array of innovative beers. Here they jump on a hot beer style du jour, Italian Pilsner, brewing a Czech-style Pilsner and dry hopping it with European hops to create aromas of flowers and fruit, a rounded taste and soft mouthfeel.



The Growlery Vega West Coast IPA, Edmonton, Alberta

Kevin Danard and Jeff Pollock opened The Growlery near Kingsway Avenue in 2019, with a goal to be the local for residents of the Blatchford development. For Jasper, they brought Vega, an old school west coast IPA, hopped with new school Citra and Mosaic, a nice change from the IPA haze craze.



Apex Predator Porter, Edson, Alberta

Apex Predator was formerly Bench Creek and this Porter was formerly Black Spruce Porter. Got that? Whatever the name, this porter remains a beautiful—full-bodied with notes of coffee and chocolate, a touch of fruity sweetness and an herbal, earthy nose.



Folding Mountain Alpine Cranberry Sour, Hinton, Alberta

"I really enjoyed the beers at Folding Mountain," Steve Dresler told me. "12-14 taps there, which included three dark beers. All delicious." Here Folding Mountain adds wild Canadian cranberries to their kettle sour to make a tart, crisp beer that pours a distinctive bright red in the glass. 🍷



Peter Bailey is not a beer knight but he does like to tilt at windmills. He's on Twitter and Instagram as @Libarbarian.



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spring lamb

Lamb in the spring is a given in food cultures around the world. Young lamb has none of the mutton taste that people may remember (and didn't like). Roast or braised lamb is ideal for the Easter weekend or Sunday lunch. Make the stir fry, chops or ragu for a Thursday night; the Indian-style dishes for a dinner party; the cabbage rolls or meatballs for a casual get together.

Fine Alberta lamb is available from Haywire Farms online and Four Whistle Farm at the Downtown, Strathcona and Bountiful Farmers' Markets. Both raise Katahdin sheep which have less lanolin and makes for lovely mild lamb.



Roman Lamb Ragu by Daniel Costa, Dong Kim photo

Rose Petal Lamb Chops with Chile Herb Lime Drizzle

Kaelin Whittaker, Ruby Apron/Awn Kitchen

6-8	lamb chops
6 T	olive oil
5 T	dried rose petals, gently crushed
2 t	turmeric
3 t	ground cumin
3 t	cumin seeds
1 t	cinnamon
2 t	salt
3 cloves	garlic, thinly sliced
2 T	rose water

Chile Herb Drizzle

1	red chile, finely chopped
	good handful cilantro, finely chopped
2 t	dried mint
	juice of 1 lime
6-8 T	olive oil
1 t	salt
½ t	ground pepper

In a large bowl mix together the ingredients for the lamb chops. Stir well. Add the lamb chops and coat evenly. Cover with plastic wrap and leave to marinate in the fridge for a minimum of one hour.

Preheat the oven to 475°F. Line a baking tray with parchment, lay the chops on the tray and roast for 20-25 minutes, depending on the size of the chops.

While the lamb is cooking, combine all of the ingredients for the drizzle in a small bowl. Mix well. Taste and correct the seasoning if needed, adding more salt or lime juice.

Remove the lamb from the oven and generously dot with the drizzle. Serve immediately.

Serves 6.

Roman Lamb Ragu

“What makes this ragu particularly Roman and delicious is the addition of anchovies adding a subtle umami that works perfectly with lamb. I find that the absence of tomato in this recipe allows the flavours of the lamb to truly shine. A few cuts of pasta that work great with this ragu are pappardelle, tagliatelle, rigatoni or mezze maniche. You can also serve this ragu with slow-cooked creamy polenta as an alternative to pasta.” –Daniel Costa, Corso 32.

800 gr	boneless leg of lamb, cut into small pieces
1 med	carrot, peeled and finely chopped
2 stalks	celery, finely chopped
1 sml	red onion, finely chopped
1 clove	garlic, left whole
1 sprig	fresh rosemary, left whole
4	fresh sage leaves
3	olive oil preserved anchovy fillets (optional if allergic)
2 c	white wine
¼ c	extra virgin olive oil
3 t	kosher salt
10 cracks	black pepper
1½ c	water
2 c	milk
2 t	red wine vinegar

Season the lamb with 1 teaspoon of salt. Heat ¼ cup of olive oil in a medium-sized dutch oven or other heavy bottomed pot over high heat. Add the lamb, allow to sear until dark golden in colour. Using a slotted spoon remove the lamb from the pot. Discard the searing oil.

Return the pot to medium heat, add the remaining ½ cup of olive oil along with the carrot, celery, onion, garlic, herbs and anchovies. Fry the vegetables until lightly golden, stir frequently. Add 1½ teaspoons of salt and return the lamb to the pot.

Add the white wine and allow to simmer for 5 minutes. Add the water and allow to gently simmer over low-medium heat with a lid on for 30 minutes. Add the milk and continue to simmer with the lid on for an additional 40 minutes.

Remove the pot from the heat, with the back of a spoon check to see that the lamb falls apart easily. If the lamb is not tender enough continue to simmer until it is the desired texture.

Add the remaining salt, black pepper and vinegar and allow the ragu to rest for 15 minutes. Break the rest of the lamb apart with the back of a spoon. Season to taste with more salt if necessary.

Toss the ragu with pasta and a little grated Pecorino Romano.

Serves 4-6.

Quilon Lamb

Chef Joe Thottungal, Coconut Lagoon, Ottawa
We first fell in love with chef Thottungal's food when he podiumed at the 2018 Canadian Culinary Championship and again when he served this at the opening reception of the championships in Ottawa in February. Many thanks to Anne des Brisay, Ottawa's senior judge, for tracking down this tasty lamb dish.

1	lamb leg, boneless, 2 lbs, cut into ½-inch cubes
4 T	Kashmiri chili powder, divided
2 T	turmeric powder, divided
¾ c	coriander powder, divided
3 T	coarsely crushed black pepper, divided
	fresh curry leaves from 3 sprigs

Please see “Lamb” on next page.

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Lamb

Continued from previous page

- 5 c roughly chopped onion
- 1/3 c finely chopped ginger and garlic, equal amounts,
- 3 c fresh ripe tomato, chopped
- 3 T garam masala (recipe follows)
- 1 1/4 c coconut oil,
- 2 t black mustard seed
- 2 t cumin seed
- 3 T fresh lemon juice
- 10 c water
- 1/2 c cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
- salt to taste

Wash the lamb, pat dry and put in stockpot. Stir in the spices: 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1 tablespoon turmeric, 1/4 cup coriander, 2 tablespoons crushed pepper, 2 teaspoons garam masala and 1 teaspoon salt. Add the water, cover and simmer for an hour, or until meat is tender. This can also be done in a pressure cooker.

In a separate pan, heat the oil, then add the black mustard and cumin seed. Let them sizzle and crackle. Add the ginger-garlic mixture and cook, stirring, for one minute. Add the onion and curry leaves. Cook until the onions are lightly brown. Add the remaining spice powders and stir it until the spices are cooked (the oil will go from cloudy to clear when spices are cooked.) Add chopped tomato and cook for 12-15 minutes over medium heat. Add to the cooked lamb in the pot and let it simmer for another 15 minutes.

To finish the dish, add the lemon juice, garam masala, remaining black pepper and salt. Serve sprinkled with chopped cilantro.

Serves 6.

Garam Masala

- 5 T fennel seeds
- 1 T cloves
- 1 T green cardamom
- 2 pcs cinnamon bark, 1" long
- 3 star anise

Dry roast all spices until fragrant, and grind in a coffee grinder to a fine powder. Makes 1/2 cup.

Greek-style Lamb and Feta Cabbage Rolls

Adapted from a recipe from *Fine Cooking Magazine*.

- 1 lrg green cabbage, outer leaves discarded, cored
- 1 lb ground lamb
- 1 lrg yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 lrg egg
- 1 c crumbled feta
- 1/2 c short-grain rice, such as Arborio (don't use long grain, takes too long to cook)
- 1/4 c finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 T finely chopped fresh oregano
- 1 T fresh lemon juice
- 1 t ground cumin
- 1/2 t fennel seeds, crushed
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 c olive oil
- 1 lrg can crushed tomatoes (about 2 cups)
- 1 c home-made chicken broth or low-salt chicken broth
- 1/3 c ouzo or sambuca

Fill a large pot with enough water to submerge the whole cabbage and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil the cabbage until the visible leaves are bright green and start to pull away, about 4 minutes. Carefully pull them off with tongs and lay them on a baking sheet lined with a kitchen towel. Continue boiling the cabbage and removing its leaves in layers as they soften until the entire cabbage is cooked, 15 to 20 minutes total. Let cool.

In a large bowl, combine the lamb, onion, egg, feta, rice, parsley, oregano, lemon juice, cumin, fennel, 2 1/2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper.

With a paring knife, remove the hard ribs from the cabbage leaves. Cut the larger leaves in half lengthwise.

Coat the bottom of a large Dutch oven with the olive oil. Arrange several cabbage leaves on a work surface so they run lengthwise away from you. Working with one leaf, put about 1 1/2 tablespoons of the lamb mixture on the end closest to you. Fold the long sides in toward the lamb, and then roll away from you to enclose the meat. Put the roll in the pot, seam side down. Repeat with the remaining cabbage and filling, arranging the rolls in a snug single layer.

Combine the tomatoes, broth, and ouzo in a medium bowl, then pour the mixture over the rolls. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce to a gentle simmer, cover, and cook, shaking the pot

occasionally so the rolls don't stick, until the rice in the filling is completely tender, 60-90 minutes.

Serves 6-8.

Butter Lamb

"This recipe is best with a shoulder roast or shank. We make it both with raw roast or leftover roast—works great both ways."
—Trevor Riehl, *Haywire Farms*

Spice Mix

- 1 1/2 t salt
 - 1 t turmeric
 - 1 t chili powder
 - 1 t paprika
 - 1/2 t garam masala
- Combine all in a bowl and reserve.
- 3 T canola oil
 - 2 onions, chopped
 - 1 t garlic, minced
 - 1 t ginger, minced
 - 1/2 c water
 - 1/2 sml can tomato paste
 - lamb, see note above
 - 2 bay leaves
 - chicken broth to cover
 - 1 c whipping cream
 - 1/2 c fenugreek leaves, dried (*kasoori methi* is the Indian name)*
 - 1/2 t garam masala

Heat oil in a saucepan on medium heat. Sauté onions until golden, then push to the side of the pan. Add garlic and ginger to the pan and sauté for one minute; combine with onions after sautéed. Push this mixture to the side of the pan. Add the spice mix to the pan and stir constantly for 1-2 minutes until very fragrant. Add 1/3 cup water and the tomato paste; stir to combine everything in the pan. The oil will separate from the tomato paste. Add the lamb and bay leaves. Add enough chicken broth to cover the meat and bring to a simmer. Cooking time will vary between 2-4 hours depending on the size of the meat. Once the meat is tender, remove and debone (if necessary). Boil down sauce to a thick gravy consistency. Add the meat back to the sauce. Add heavy cream, fenugreek and the garam masala. Cook for 5 minutes. Serve with rice or naan.

*Dried fenugreek leaves can be tricky to find, but they are worth it. We buy our Indian spices in from the *Spice Centre*, 9280 34 Avenue. —TR

Classic Roast Leg of Lamb

Adapted from *Saveur 25th anniversary issue*

- 1 7-8 lb. leg of lamb, at room temperature
- 4 cloves garlic, medium-sized, peeled, divided
- 1/4 c fresh breadcrumbs
- 1/4 c finely chopped fresh rosemary
- kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 T Dijon mustard

Preheat the oven (with the rack positioned in the center) to 350°F.

If your butcher has not already done so, remove the excess fat from the lamb, leaving a very thin layer to protect the meat while cooking. Use the tip of a paring knife to make small incisions all over the lamb. Cut three of the garlic cloves into slivers and slip them into the incisions.

Mince the remaining garlic, then add it to a large bowl, along with the breadcrumbs, parsley, and rosemary. Toss to combine, then season with kosher salt and black pepper. Mix well. Rub the lamb all over with olive oil, then brush with the mustard. Sprinkle the breadcrumb mixture over the lamb and pat it with your hands to form a thick, even coating. Line a large roasting pan with aluminum foil, then place the lamb fat side up in the pan. Transfer to the oven and roast until a meat thermometer inserted at the thickest point registers 130°F, about 1 1/2 hours. Remove the lamb from the oven and set it aside to rest at room temperature for 20 minutes before carving.

Serves 8-10.

Lamb Kofta with Green Tahini Yogurt

Adapted from *Gourmet Traveller magazine*

- 70 g fine bulgur
- 2 T olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 1 Spanish onion, 1/2 finely chopped, 1/2 thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 500 g minced lamb
- 1 egg
- 1 t ground cumin
- 1 t ground coriander
- 1 dried mint
- 1/2 t dried chilli flakes

finely grated rind and juice of ½ lemon, plus lemon wedges to serve

chopped mint, coriander, flat-leaf parsley and Lebanese cucumber, and extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

Place bulgur in a bowl, cover with cold water and let stand for 10 minutes, then drain in a fine sieve. Heat oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat, add the chopped onion and garlic and sauté until softened (3-4 minutes). Cool, then combine in a bowl with lamb, egg, ground spices, mint, chilli flakes, rind and bulgur, and season generously to taste. Mix well with your hands, roll into walnut-sized oval balls, thread onto metal skewers, then cover and refrigerate to rest for 30 minutes.

Heat barbecue to medium-high heat.

Drizzle kofta with oil and grill, turning occasionally, until browned and just cooked through (4-5 minutes). Toss herbs, cucumber, sliced onion, olive oil and lemon juice in a bowl.

Serve kofta hot on flatbread with green tahini yoghurt, herb salad and lemon wedges.

Green Tahini Yoghurt

- 3-4 coarsely chopped kale leaves
- ½ c mint (firmly packed)
- ½ c coriander (firmly packed)
- ½ c flat-leaf parsley (firmly packed)
- 1 clove garlic, coarsely chopped
- ⅓ c extra-virgin olive oil
- 250 g Greek yoghurt
- 80 g sesame seeds
- juice of 1 lemon, or to taste

Finely chop the kale, herbs and garlic in a food processor. Add oil and process to combine. Add yoghurt, tahini and lemon juice, season to taste and process to combine.

Braised Lamb Shoulder

"It's one of my favourites for a big get together."
—Riley Aitken, Smokey Bear

- 2-3 kg bone-in lamb shoulder
- 1 clove garlic, skinned
- 2 onions, peeled and cut in quarters
- 2 c red wine
- 3 c water
- 10 g dried thyme (fresh works if available)
- 10 g dried rosemary (fresh works if available)
- 10 g salt
- canola oil

Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).

Place a small amount of oil in a large frying pan and bring to high heat. Once the pan is hot place your lamb shoulder in and seal until golden brown, making sure to do all sides. Remove the shoulder from the pan and place in large pot or a Dutch oven. Deglaze the frying pan with 1 cup wine and pour the liquid into the pot with the lamb. Add the remaining liquid, onions, garlic and herbs. Making sure the lamb shoulder is at least ¾ covered with liquid. Cover and put in the oven. Set a timer for 2 hours. (It may need an additional 30 minutes depending on the oven—you should be able to pull the meat apart with a fork). Remove from the oven and let stand for 10 minutes.

Place the shoulder on a plate and pour sauce over (recipe below).

Sauce

- 25 g butter
- 100 g flour
- 2 c cooking liquid

Once the lamb is cooked strain off 2 cups worth of liquid. Place the butter in a sauce pot on medium heat. Rain in the flour slowly to form a roux. Cook the roux for 2-3 minutes stirring constantly. Slowly pour 2 cups liquid into the roux, whisking as you do so. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serves 6-8.

Crispy Cumin Lamb with Aubergine and Ginger

Adapted from an Ottolenghi recipe via The Guardian.

"Lamb and cumin are a pairing you'd normally associate with Middle Eastern cooking, but it is also a staple in the north-west of China, where there is a large Muslim community. According to my Taiwanese friend Gary Chang, there's only one heat when stir-frying, and that's 'very hot,' so keep the flame high to achieve a good sear. Use a wok if you have one, or a high-sided sauté pan if you don't." —Yotam Ottolenghi

- 700 g boneless lamb shoulder, silver skin and gristle removed, then cut into 6 cm x 5 mm strips
- 2 t corn flour
- 1½ T ground cumin
- 90 ml dark soy sauce
- 60 ml Shaoxing rice wine
- 1 T caster sugar
- 2 aubergines, cut into 6 cm x 2 cm pieces
- salt

- 60 ml vegetable oil
- 2 cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into thin strips
- 2 T cumin seeds
- 3 red chillies, finely sliced on an angle (deseeded, if you prefer less heat)
- 3 spring onions, finely sliced on an angle
- 15 g coriander, leaves and stalks separated
- 1½ t rice wine vinegar

Pat the lamb dry. Put it in a bowl with the corn flour, a tablespoon of ground cumin, half the soy sauce, half the rice wine and the sugar. Toss to coat and leave to marinate for at least 30 minutes and up to an hour.

Toss the aubergine with the remaining cumin and half a teaspoon of salt. Heat half the oil in a large wok or sauté pan on a high flame, then fry the aubergine, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes, until it's beginning to brown.

Add the ginger and 1 tablespoon of soy, and fry for 3 minutes more, stirring very often, until the aubergine is a dark golden brown. Remove the aubergine from the wok, wipe the pan clean, then return it to the heat. Put the cumin seeds in the hot

pan and, taking care not to burn them, dry fry for around 30 seconds, until fragrant, then tip into a saucer.

Return the pan to a high heat and, once it's smoking, add the rest of the oil and swirl around. Add a third of the lamb, separating the pieces with a spoon, so they don't clump together, then leave to sear undisturbed for 2 minutes. Stir-fry for another 2 minutes, until crisp and golden brown all over, then lift out of the wok with a slotted spoon, leaving the fat in the pan. Repeat with the rest of the lamb in two more batches, then drain and discard half of the fat.

Return all the meat to the wok and, over a high heat, quickly toss with the aubergines, the remaining soy and rice wine, the chillies, spring onions, coriander and toasted cumin seeds, for only a few seconds, to warm through. Transfer to a platter, drizzle over the vinegar and serve straight away.

Serves 4-6. 🍴



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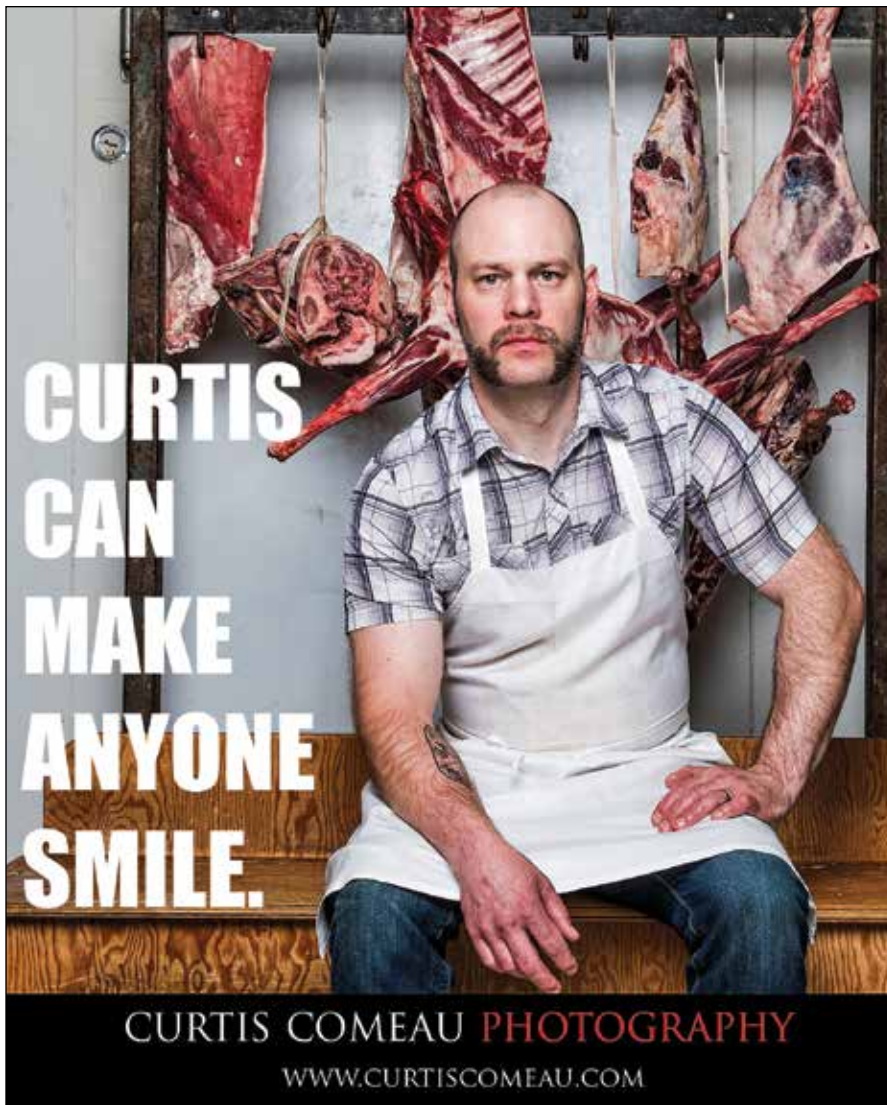
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Feeding People

Restaurant confidential

I stared down at my plate in confusion and sighed. My celebration brunch with one of my lovely daughters was not going as planned.

Yes, the deconstructed crepe with assorted roasted veggies I had ordered was sitting right there in front of me, but the soft-poached egg that should have been oozing luxuriously over everything was nowhere to be seen. The egg had arrived minutes earlier. Only it was hard-poached, not soft. And eggs with hard yolks do not ooze, they just kind of sit there.

So back to the kitchen my order went. I thought I would be presented with a complete plate once my order returned: crepe, veggies and soft-poached egg. When our server reappeared only moments later, it was with exactly the same plate. Only this time it was completely eggless. With a perfunctory ‘your egg will be out in a bit,’ she promptly disappeared.

There was barely time for me to open my mouth, let alone to allow any words to escape from it.

Now, I like to think of myself as a tolerant diner. Both of my daughters have worked in the restaurant industry, and I put in some time during my high school and university years as well. I am all too aware that, despite everyone’s best efforts, mistakes happen. And I’m also all too aware that throwing an ornery, unreasonable customer into the mix doesn’t help matters.

So, I do my very best to be tolerant and understanding.

But sometimes, things get to be a bit much. This just so happened to be one of these times.

Trying to flag someone down was futile. The restaurant was exceptionally quiet, and there was no one to flag down. So I simply waited. I really wasn’t keen on eating the crepe and veggies without the egg.

This whole scenario was made especially infuriating due to the presence of a little note, tucked neatly beside the menu, stating: “Menu modifications of any kind will not be accepted. Our menu is meticulously planned and every ingredient has a well-thought out purpose.” Okay, fair enough. But by expecting me to eat my crepe and veggies without the soft-poached egg and then eat my egg separately, at the end, all by itself, well, weren’t they messing with their meticulously-planned menu?

Five minutes later a soft-poached egg arrived in a little side dish to join my cold crepe and veggies. I politely informed our server that the rest of my dish was now cold. She simply said “Oh, I thought you wanted to eat at the same time as your daughter.” Fair, but she didn’t ask me first, and my daughter hadn’t started to eat yet, either. She was having overnight oats and her oats were in no danger of getting cold—they were already cold.

And then, poof—our server promptly disappeared again.

Yes, I could have run after her. And yes, I could have demanded to talk to management. But I was disillusioned and tired: tired of trying to communicate, tired of being ignored, tired of the whole situation. Rather than ruining my daughter’s and my outing completely, I ate my mostly-cold brunch.

When our server did reappear some time later to clear away the dishes, I gave it one last try. My reward? A blank stare. Then she plunked down the bill and sauntered away.

I ended up emailing the restaurant after the fact. Voicing my concerns during the actual incident hadn’t led anywhere, and I wanted someone to know about it. It wasn’t so much about the food, although that was part of it. There was just such indifference on the part of our server. If someone like that worked for me, I would certainly want to know about it.

LOVE LOCAL?
listen up

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The response I got back was much more customer-friendly than the experience. It was also very much appreciated—without it, I don't think I would have ever frequented that restaurant again.

That wasn't my only less-than-ideal restaurant experience. There was also the scone and the no-you-can't-have-more-raspberry-jam incident (well, incidents). And the everything-that-could-possibly-go-wrong-did incident: overcooked salmon followed by replacement salmon on a salad that was way smaller than the original, followed by an almost completely raw cookie. And others.

Try as I might, resolving those issues while we were actually at the restaurant in question simply didn't work.

While it's not often that I will email a restaurant because of an issue, it does happen. And I always try to be polite when I do it.

The good experiences vastly outweigh the bad, though.

And once in a while you'll even be met with a truly exceptional experience.

That was the case at Corso 32 recently. Most of our experiences there have been overwhelmingly positive, but this one truly went above and beyond. And it got me thinking: I take the time to reach out to a restaurant when something goes horribly wrong, but I never make that effort when an experience surpasses my expectations. I do let our server know how happy we are and I tip well, but that's typically where it ends.

Somehow that seems wrong. I mean, if we can take the time to complain, why can't we take the time to express our pleasure and let someone know exactly what a spectacular job they've done?

So, I reached out to Corso 32 to let them know just how much we enjoyed our evening and why. And it felt really good. Way better than complaining.

Far too often we simply expect the positive and put a great deal of focus on the negative. Not that we shouldn't expect a positive experience when we go out: we are investing our time and our hard-earned money, after all. But expressing our pleasure makes other people feel good too. Everyone likes to know when they've done a good job. And after all, positive feedback is said to be much more powerful than negative feedback.

So next time your dining experience falls a bit short, by all means, do your best to try to sort it out. But by the same token, if something is truly exceptional, try letting the restaurant know. Not only will it make you feel good, it will make other people feel good too. And the world needs more of that. ●

Jan Hostyn will eat a soft-poached egg on almost anything, especially if it's a fresh, free-run farm egg from the University of Alberta's Heritage Chicken Program.



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2020 CANADIAN CULINARY CHAMPIONSHIPS



Above left to right: chef Marc-André Jetté (silver); chef Roger Ma (gold); chef Emily Butcher (bronze). Right from top: winning gold, silver and bronze plates.

Off to snowy Ottawa where they were having a bit of a thaw, the canal closed to skating when we arrived on Thursday. By Sunday the sky was blue, the air was crisp and skaters thronged the canal for the start of Winterlude. We'll miss Kelowna and being in the heart of food and wine country, but Ottawa is a fitting location for a national competition that keeps on getting better.

Ottawa has its charms after all. The Mystery Wine Challenge was held at the spectacular Aviation Museum, the Algonquin College kitchens had tons of room for the Black Box competition and the finale was in the stunning Shaw Conference Centre, with a view of the Peace Tower. Well done nation's capital!

We judges were impressed by the clever, inventive and delicious cooking by each team. Disappointed that Edmonton regional winner JP Dublado didn't podium, yet his dishes didn't escape notice. He won the People's Choice Award and a \$500 gift certificate.

Congratulations to all the competitors and kudos to the CCC staff and volunteers.

GOLD

Chef Roger Ma, Boulevard Kitchen and Oyster Bar, Vancouver

Wine Pairing Grand Finale: 2018 Unicus Grüner Veltliner, Culmina Family Estate Winery, Okanagan Valley

Talented chef Roger Ma reaches another well-earned summit of culinary recognition with his gold at the CCC. Chef trained at the Four Seasons in Whistler and Daniel Boulud in New York before returning to his hometown for the 2014 opening of Boulevard. The outstanding mentorship program at Boulevard (Alex Chen was the CCC 2018 gold and 2016 Bronze medallist) creates an in-demand training ground for so many apprentices. Now, Roger Ma's top performance is indeed an endorsement for Boulevard and the Vancouver dining scene. Boulevard's brigade includes so many team contributors, such as JP Potters, wine director and executive GM, sous Jasper Cruickshank and junior sous Daniel Kim.

Fast from the gate in the Mystery Wine opener the Vancouver team identified Pinot Noir and created a deliciously shredded braised duck dish with wonderful textures. The black box dish demonstrated consistency and artistry whereas the Grand Finale dish showcased Boulevard's seafood focus with a modern global influence, with using local west coast products to advantage. The Gruvy white wine paired so well with the vibrant citrus, herbal and mineral tastes. Well done!

Sid Cross, Vancouver judge

SILVER

Chef Marc-André Jetté, Hoogan et Beaufort, Montreal, QC

Wine Pairing Grand Finale: Saison Bariquée from a collaboration of two breweries, Isle de Garde and Ma Brasserie, Montreal, QC

Marc-André Jetté loves to work with vegetables. During the Finale, Marc-André amazed with a unique plate





Host Heather Moyse, two-time Olympic gold medalist, and People's Choice award winner Edmonton's JP Dublado, River Cree Resort.

of juicy grilled oyster mushrooms, decorated with lightly-burned marinated onions, thin smoked bread croutons, a touch of matsutake gel, mashed buttered mushrooms, thin strips of Louis d'Or cheese (a raw milk farm cheese with a washed rind from the Fromagerie du Presbytère, winner of numerous awards) and young leaves of sorrel for

freshness. But it was during the first two competitions in Ottawa that our chef revealed all his talent: the Mystery Wine inspired a plate of agnolotti stuffed with a mushroom puree, grilled oyster mushrooms and two sauces—a reduction of red beets and a short chicken juice.

For the texture: a buckwheat crumble and crispy chicken skin.

At the black box game, our chef seduced the jury with a nice enhancement of the local elk, cooked sous-vide then seared. Each item in the dish was worth it: kale crisps seasoned with plankton powder, a condiment of marinated fiddleheads, a naked-oat crumble, crisps and mashed parsley roots, and haskap berries in a syrup.

This chef loves competition and is not afraid of pressure, two vital requirements for reaching the podium at the CCC.

Gildas Menu, Montreal judge

BRONZE

Chef Emily Butcher, deer + almond, Winnipeg, Manitoba,

Wine Pairing Grand Finale: 2018

Tightrope Pinot Gris VQA, Naramata

Bench, British Columbia

Chef Emily Butcher has put Winnipeg back on the culinary map with her bronze medal win at the 2020 Canadian Culinary Championships. A trained ballerina with a bachelor's in music from UBC, chef Emily spun onto the podium with dishes that showed flavour

complexity and technical skill over three levels of competition.

For the Grand Finale dish, it's fair to say that chef did not play it safe by taking on a vegetable that she described as the versatile and under-rated, turnip. She delicately poached a baby Tokyo beet variety, stuffed it with Manitoba white roe and served it with torched sable fish, Chinese sausage and turnip cake morsels in a heavenly turnip broth. The wine pairing was magic on the palate.

Chef has a harmonious approach to the kitchen in honour of grass roots days of cooking with her grandmother as a young child. She graduated the culinary program at VCC and quickly moved up the ranks at Joey Vancouver. Seeking more knowledge of fine dining, she trained as a poussionnier under chef Quang Dang. You will find her at deer + almond always with a welcoming smile.

The cuisine is worth the trip and reservations are recommended. Congratulations chef! 🍷

Barbara O'Hara, Winnipeg judge

Mary Bailey, editor of the Tomato, is Edmonton's judge at the Canadian Culinary Championships.



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Hansen Distilleries released its first whisky and gave a bottle to The City of Edmonton “It is the first bottle of whisky from a craft producer in Edmonton—we wanted to give it to the city to archive and preserve this piece of history,” says Kris Sustrik. “It’s to say thanks to the good people of Edmonton for such love and support of our young distillery.” Northern Eyes Whisky is made from 100 per cent Alberta rye barrel aged in a single American oak barrel for three years. (To qualify as a Canadian whisky, the spirit must be barrel aged for a minimum of three years.) Northern Eyes was proofed down from 65 per cent in cask to 43 per cent bottle strength. If you haven’t been able to get your hands on a bottle yet, there will be more available March 3 and April 7, \$69. You will be able to sample the whisky at Hansen Distillery for \$5.

Wondering where to go for a great cocktail? Include the Fairmont Hotel Macdonald in your wanderings—they have just announced the 2020 rendition of the Classic Perfected Menu. The program involved several bartenders from different Fairmonts around the world who have rediscovered and revamped the classics. For eg the Carte Blanche is inspired by the Vesper; the Chai Tai by the Mai Tai and the Madame Fleur by a French 75. The program is fun and the drinks are delicious. Bartender James Sequiera is serving the Soul Reviver with Casamigo Blanco and blackberry, right.



Neil and Lavonne Herbst have sold Alley Kat to Zane Christensen and Cameron French—two fans of the business from St. Albert.

“We are seeing craft breweries being absorbed by large multinationals; keeping Alley Kat in independent hands was extremely important to us,” said Neil Herbst, who was one of Alley Kat’s original founders back in 1994. Alley Kat, now 25 years old and one of the very first craft breweries in Alberta, was named Brewery of the Year at the 2019 Alberta Beer Awards. Word has it that Neil will keep on brewing at the Kat. Yaay!

Down 76 Avenue near the railway is the Monolith, Greg Zeschuk’s brewery for making barrel-aged beers. The first two beers, Buffalo Meadows and Measure of Patience, were released earlier this year. These beers can be tricky to make. Relying on several forms of fermentation—wild yeast, bacteria and brewer’s yeast—then aged in barrel and bottle conditioned. They are ready when they are, well, ready. You don’t have to be in any rush to drink these beers either, as they age in in the bottle.

The best place to try them may be at Biera where chef Christine Sandford excels at creating dishes to pair with the beers.

Mary Bailey

EVENT CALENDAR

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

Small Producer Wine Dinner
RGE RD, Eventbrite

MONDAY, MARCH 9

High School Culinary Challenge Awards
Dinner, ECC, edmontonchefs.ca

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Hokanson Chef in Residence Jeremy
Charles lunch and dinner
Ernests at NAIT, 780-474-8686

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

Gerard Bertrand Wine Dinner
Lyon Restaurant, 780-433-0123

Weird & Wonderful Tasting

Hicks Fine Wines, 780-569-5000

FRIDAY, MARCH 13+

Cabane à Sucre, Café Bicyclette,
587-524-8090

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Waste Not, What-nots'n Wine Chef
Collab Dinner, RGE RD, 780-447-4577

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

Cavern Cheese School
780-455-1336

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Zenato Tasting, Vines Wine Merchants,
780-434-9444

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

Zenato Winery Dinner, Violino
Ristorante Italiano, 780-757-8701

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Aging Gracefully Tasting
Hicks Fine Wines, 780-569-5000

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

The Cellar of Confucious;
Wines of Moldova Dinner
The Lingnan, 780-426-3975

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Sunday Supper Club: Bistro Night
The Marc, 780-429-2828

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Weinert Dinner,
RGE RD, 780-447-4577

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Small Producer Wine Dinner
Café Linnea, Eventbrite

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

Annual Spring Open House
Hicks Fine Wines, 780-569-5000

THURSDAY, APRIL 16

William Fevre Chile Espino
Winery Tasting, Hicks Fine Wines
780-569-5000

MONDAY, APRIL 20

CVNE Dinner
Ernest's Dining Room, NAIT

SUNDAY APRIL 26

Sunday Supper Club: April in Paris,
The Marc, 780-429-2828

Two Brewers Single Malt Whisky picked up a remarkable nine medals at the tenth annual Canadian Whisky Awards. Their whiskies are made in four categories, or expressions—classic, peated, special finish and innovative. Classic Release numbers 13, 16, and 18 won gold medals as did Release 12, a peated expression. It also won Sippin' Whisky of the Year and the Best Canadian Single Malt Whisky. This is the second year that Two Brewers have nabbed this prestigious award, winning it in 2019 for Release 09. Innovative Releases 14 and 17 picked up silver medals as did as Release 15, a special sherry-barrel finished whisky. Yukon Brewing was formed by Bob Baxter and Alan Hansen in 1997, after a canoe trip conversation. After building a successful local craft brewery, they decided to expand into spirits. In 2009 they invested in a small pot still creating Two Brewers Yukon Single Malt Whisky. Their goal is that every release is unique, depending on the different malted and roasted grains, fermentation techniques and the mix of barrels. 🍷



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GETTING LOST IN IRELAND

JOHN GILCHRIST

WE WERE LOST.

Or at least momentarily misplaced somewhere between Galway and Burren National Park on the narrow, winding, left-hand-driving roads of western Ireland. So, we pulled into Aillwee Cave, a centre for birds of prey as well as caves, to ask for directions.

It turned out we were on the right road all along but hadn't adjusted to the amount of time it would take to get to Burren. (Irish driving time: 50km = one hour or longer). Shannon, a cave gift shop staffer, gave us detailed—and accurate—directions to Corofin, the Burren headquarters, and to the shuttle bus that would take us from there into the park for our hike.

When we asked how she knew so much about shuttle times and even the lunch

break for the driver she smiled broadly and said, “Me Da’s the driver. And we live across the street from the Burren office.”

A few minutes later Shannon’s father was driving us into the park, a lovely Irish landscape with a range of elevation, windswept rocks and mossy glens.

The Burren walk was our third day of hiking in Galway. On the first two days we had headed north into Connemara for breezy hikes that took us into the hills (mountains as they call them) for spectacular views of the Atlantic and along tree-shaded trails through the woods.

The hikes were a counterpoint to exploring Galway’s—and Ireland’s—food culture, dining on fine traditional-

and contemporary-Irish cuisine and sipping a few brews in the area’s numerous pubs. I had a group of 28 travelers with me, spending fifteen days consuming as much Irish culture (castles, cathedrals, pubs, prisons, etc.) as possible and hitting some of the better restaurants on the island. And meeting many friendly and helpful folks like Shannon.

We had great success all around. I had my best meal of 2019 on May 1, a tremendous lunch at The Muddler’s Club in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Delicately executed modern Irish cuisine that started with a silky fresh pea and haddock veloute, followed by perfectly-cooked beef sirloin topped with an egg and flavoured with dill, and finishing with a colourful combination

of rhubarb, vanilla ice cream and honeycomb. Simple, clean preparations with beautifully melded flavours. All in a comfortable, casual setting with friendly professional service. Best meal of the year material.

Until the next day.

In Dublin this time, at a new place called Variety Jones. In a space that might at one time have been a hallway. No sign on the door; just a caricature of a face. About thirty seats inside with a tight, open kitchen at the back.

Run by brothers Aaron and Keelan Higgs and uber-sommelier Vanda, Variety Jones opened on December 23, 2018 and was immediately named the

Please see “Ireland” on page 30



Above: JP McMahon’s grilled brill with sea asparagus and sea beets at Aniar.

Right: Chef Keelan Higgs, Variety Jones.

Inset: John Gilchrist with his wife Catherine Caldwell at the Locke Bar, Limerick.

Photos John Gilchrist

WHERE TO EAT IN I·R·E·L·A·N·D

CONTEMPORARY IRISH

The Winding Stair, 40 Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin

*Great view of the Ha'penny Bridge
with slick service and creative, well-executed food.*

The Muddler's Club, 1 Warehouse Lane, Belfast

*Gorgeous cuisine with excellent service to match in a tricky location.
Very professional kitchen. (The Muddler's Club recently received one Michelin star.)*

Variety Jones, 78 Thomas Street, Dublin

*The Best New Restaurant in Dublin in 2018 deserves the accolades—impeccable.
(Variety Jones received one Michelin star just months after it opened.)*

Loam, Greata Na Catrach, Fairgreen Road, Galway

Lovely Michelin-star room with stellar food and service.

Aniar, 53 Lower Dominick Street, Galway

*Stunning Michelin-star food by JP McMahon
as local and seasonal and superb as they come.*

Kai, 22 Sea Road, Galway

Mostly local, seasonal and organic, the food at Kai sings with flavour.

CASUAL IRISH

Bodega, 54 John Street, Waterford

The incredibly hard-working and skilled kitchen puts out wonderful food.

Sage, The Courtyard, 8 Main Street, Midleton

The perfect lunch before a visit to Jameson's Distillery. Sage's food is light and fresh.

Cakeface, 16 Irishtown, Kilkenny

*A fine bakery and deli, Cakeface offers lush and filling picnic lunches
with a few tables if you're lucky enough to snag one.*

Cava Bodega, 1 Middle Street Mews, Galway

*Spanish and Irish—tapas in a lively atmosphere
under the watchful eye of chef JP McMahon.*

Tartare, 56 Lower Dominick Street, Galway

*Located across the street from big sister Aniar,
Tartare offers tartares and small plates for all appetites.*

Dough Bros, 1 Middle Street, Galway

Creative Neapolitan-style pizza with well-aged dough and sassy toppings.

PUBS

Ryan's, 28 Parkgate Street, Dublin

*Part of the FX Buckley group (there's a Buckley steakhouse upstairs)
Ryan's pours a great pint and serves terrific food.*

The Reg, 2 The Mall, Waterford

Built against a 900-year-old Viking Wall, the Reg adds history to its fine pub menu.

Murty Rabbitt's, 23 Forster Street, Galway

*Fine Irish pub food combines with toe-tapping
Irish music in this casual, comfortable pub.*



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Restaurant buzz

Madison's Grill (10053 Jasper Avenue, 780-401-2222, unionbankinn.com) has a special **Downtown Dining Week** event, Saturday lunch with a tour of the beautiful historic property on March 14. There is a Wine & Dine special too—choice of guestroom and a special six course tasting menu. Call 780-401-2222 for deets.

Happy 16th birthday to the **Blue Chair** (9624 76 Avenue, 780-989-2861, bluechair.ca). Coming soon, happy hour with **Alley Kat** beer, wine deals and a patio musician. The Blue Chair is the best spot in town for dinner and a show.

Chef **Ben Staley** has opened a new restaurant and bar called **Yarrow** (101, 10544 114 Street, 587-881-8282, restauranyarrow.com). Expect an inventive tasting menu, 18-22 small dishes with wines to suit. It has 10 seats only and reservations (called tickets on the website) are a must. The bar is a little different, modelled after the wine and *conserva* bars in Portugal. Find small bites, a clever selection of well-made cocktails (Chuck Elves is behind the bar) wine and beers, seafood in cans (conservas) and a convivial atmosphere. It's an interesting space; dark, moody, with low lighting, quite spare, on a semi-industrial street behind MacEwan. There are two doors, one for the bar and one for the resto, but don't worry if you go through the wrong door. You will end up in the same place. Check it out!

Cavern (10169 104 Street, 780-455-1336, thecavern.ca) launches a refreshed menu and wine list in early spring, featuring themed cheese boards, various sandwiches, cocktails and beer. Also new is the happy hour menu with bites like cheese curds from Vermillion's **The Old School Cheesery**, cheese boards, popcorn and pickles listed alongside the wine and draught beer specials. Cavern happy hour runs Tuesday-Friday, 4-7pm and Saturday afternoon, 12-5pm.

Wine tastings, happenings and events

Here is a great idea for hump day: **Kitchen by Brad's** (10130 105 Street, 780-757-7704, kitchenbybrad.ca) **Wednesday Night Suppers**—three convivial courses at the Kitchen island or table with wine and beer by the glass. Tix: \$35/p+, book on the website. Long table dinner tickets on sale March 21.

Waste not, what-nots'n wine is a chef collaboration between **RGE RD's** (10643 123 Street, 780-447-4577, rgerd.ca) **Blair Lebsack** and **Rouge's** (Calgary) **Paul**

Rogalski. The two friends and colleagues are creating a waste-free feast featuring whole animal butchery, locally foraged and sourced ingredients paired with wines by the Okanagan's **Orofino Winery**. In Calgary on March 4 and in Edmonton March 18. Tix: \$220/p all in, exploretock.com/rgerd for the Edmonton dinner.

Chefs **Christine Sandford** (Biera) **Kelsey Johnson** (Café Linnea), **Andrea Callan** (Red Fox Club at Indigenous World Winery, West Kelowna) and **Aman Dosanj** (The Paisley Notebook, Kelowna), are creating a collaborative fundraising dinner at **Liquidity Wines** (Okanagan Falls, BC) on International Women's Day, Sunday, March 8, 5pm. They will be joined by **Alison Moyes** (Liquidity Wines), **Christy Bibby** (Nighthawk Vineyards), **Leslie D'Andrea** (Noble Ridge) and **Severine Pinte** (La Stella Winery), who have donated all the wine. The night promises to be delicious and meaningful. Sunday, March 8, 2020, 5-9:30pm Tix: \$165/p+, trellis.org/eachforequal.

There may be a few tix left for the **2020 High School Culinary Challenge Awards Dinner**, Monday, March 9, at 6:30pm. Sixty high-school students have competed in a high-intensity culinary competition, and now comes the payoff, a delicious three-course dinner based on the competition menu. Gold, silver and bronze rankings go to the top teams along with scholarships to NAIT's culinary program. Tix: \$35/p, \$245/table, edmontonchefs.ca. Don't miss it!

Wine guy **Gurvinder Bhatia** is holding several wine dinners celebrating small producers this spring. At **RGE RD**, Tuesday, March 3, 6pm, explore the wines of **Villa Calicantus**, who is redefining the wines of **Bardolino**, and **Coffele**, the historic certified organic producer in Soave Classico. These wineries are helping to reinvigorate winemaking in the Veneto. Special guest is filmmaker **Kevin Kossowan**. Gurvinder and Kevin filmed a documentary pilot last fall at the two wineries. Tix: \$185, Eventbrite.

Then, at **Café Linnea**, Wednesday, April 1, 6pm, experience the unique terroir and complicated history of the Sud Tirol via two wineries—**Wachter-Wiesler** in Burgenland, Austria and **Elena Walch** in Alto Adige, Italy. Six wines with five courses. Tix: \$139, Eventbrite.

Chef **Jeremy Charles** is NAIT's **2020 Hokanson Chef in Residence**. Culinary explorer, author of *Wildness: An Ode to Newfoundland and Labrador*; chef and co-owner Raymonds and the Merchant Tavern in St. John's, Charles is one of the most exciting chefs working today. As part of the week, NAIT offers lunch and dinner at **Ernest's** (10701 118 Avenue, 780-8676) on Thursday, March 12, showcasing the work that chef will do with

the students, inspired by the traditional ingredients and recipes that have been at the heart of Newfoundland culture for centuries. Lunch from 11:30am; dinner from 6pm. Tix: lunch \$39/p all in; dinner \$65/p all in, call Tanya, 780-474-8686 or email twright@nait.ca.

Enjoy a taste of the Languedoc with **Nicolas Joly** at the **Gerard Bertrand Wine Dinner** at **Lyon** (10335 83 Avenue, 780-433-0123, lyonrestaurant.ca) Thursday, March 12. Four courses, five wines, 6pm. Tix: \$95/+, info@lyonrestaurant.ca.

Have an urban gastronomical experience inspired by Quebec's traditional *cabane à sucre* (sugar shack) at **Café Bicyclette** (8627 91 Street, 587-524-8090, cafebicyclette.ca). This is the 8th annual event and the first with new exec chef **Brian Forrest**. Enjoy five courses in a wood-heated trappers' tent on the terrace. Dates are March 13-14, 20-21, 27-28, and April 3-4. Tix: \$80/p+, call to book.

Have dinner with **Vittorio Marianecchi** from Valpolicella's **Zenato** winery, Wednesday, March 25, 6:30 pm at **Violino Ristorante Italiano**, (10133 125 Street, 780-757-8701, violino125.com). Tix: \$120/p+, call to book.

East meets west at **The Cellar of Confucious; Wines of Moldova Dinner** at the **Lingnan** (10582 104 Street, 780-426-3975, thelingnan.com) features several wines from the **Purcari**, **Chateau Vartely** and **Cricova** wineries in Moldova with pairings by **Miles Quon**, Saturday, March 28, 6:30pm. Tix: \$65/p, Eventbrite.

Two fun and delicious **Sunday Supper Clubs** coming up at **The Marc** (9940 106 Street, 780-429-2828, themarc.ca); **Bistro Night**, Sunday, March 29, \$85/p all in and **April in Paris**, Sunday, April 26, \$130/p all in. Call to book.

Upcoming tastings at **Hicks Fine Wines** (109-150 Bellerose Drive, St. Albert, 780-569-5000, hicksfinewines.com) **Weird & Wonderful!** featuring wines with unpronounceable names, Thursday, March 12, \$20/p+. On Thursday, March 26, learn which wines are best to cellar and why at **Aging Gracefully**, \$25/p+. On Thursday, April 16, 6:30pm, taste six wines with special guest **Felipe Olavarria** of **William Fevre Chile Espino Winery**, \$30/p. All tastings start at 6:30 and can be booked in person or call 780-569-5000.

The next **Cavern Cheese School** (10169 104 Street, 780-455-1336, thecavern.ca) is Sunday, March 15, 2-4 pm. Learn all about the savoury and delicious world of washed-rind cheeses paired with wine and beer. Tix: \$75/p+, info@thecavern.ca.

Meet **Vittorio Marianecchi** of the fine Valpolicella winery, **Zenato** Tuesday, March 24, 7pm at **Vines Wine Merchants**, (2331 Rabbit Hill Road, 780-434-9444, vinesmerchants.com). Tix: \$30/p+, call to book.

Two dinners coming up: historic Argentine winery **Weinert** at **RGE RD** Wednesday, April 1 and respected Rioja producer **CVNE** at **Ernest's Dining Room** at **NAIT** Monday, April 20.

Hicks Fine Wines (109-150 Bellerose Drive, St. Albert, 780-569-5000, hicksfinewines.com) **Annual Spring Open House** is Saturday, April 4, from 1-5pm. There will be a mystery wine and snacks by the restaurant neighbours. Free, donations gratefully accepted for the Sturgeon Hospital Foundation.

product news

Ham for Easter dinner? No problem with a **Meuwly's** (10706 124 Street, 587-786-3560, meuwlys.com) smoked honey ham (small \$35, large \$89, includes a jar of house-made honey cider mustard). Expecting a crowd? Meuwly's offers **Connoisseur Charcuterie Boxes**—cured and smoked meats, pickles, condiments with a sliced baguette, \$75. Pick up from April 10. Easter Weekend hours: 11am-6:30pm, Good Friday, 10am-5pm, Saturday, closed Easter Sunday and Monday. Visit the website to place your order.

Here is a great deal at **The Heart of the Home** (12539 102 Avenue, 780-705-4928, heartofthehomeveg.ca); all **Staub** basil green items are on a super promo, March 14-21. Watch and learn at the pancake demo on **National Pancake Day**, March 5. The annual **Easter Egg Hunt** is April 20, and for Earth Day

all eco-friendly products are 20 per cent off. Celebrate **Earth Day**, spend \$50 in April and receive a compostable **Swedish dishcloth**.

at the cooking schools

Upcoming classes at **Kitchen by Brad** (10130 105 Street, 780-757-7704, kitchenbybrad.ca): learn to make schnitzel, latkes, chicken paprikash and cabbage rolls just like your Baba used to make (maybe even better than your Baba's) in a **Eastern European Cooking Class** with chef **Brad Smoliak**, Saturdays, March 7, 14, 21, 28, 12:30pm. Chef **Tracy Zizek** will work with several wines to illustrate the art of wine and food pairing. **Food and Wine Pairing Class**, Tuesdays, March 7, 14, 21 and 28. Tix for either: 145/p+ book on the website.

Get Cooking's (11050 104 Avenue, 780-566-2106, getcookingedmonton.

com) spring schedule is now up. Highlights: Chef **Scott Iserhoff's** cooking is inspired by pow wow food trucks, flash fry shacks on the rez and by the traditional food of the land. Learn more at **Indigenous Street Food**, March 12, 6-9pm. Tix: \$115/p+ online. Check out the **Friday Date Night** classes and book the **Earth Day Dinner at Prairie Gardens**, April 22.

The Ruby Apron has a new name, **Awn Kitchen** and, this fall, a new location too. "I'm focused on teaching people the importance of quality, locally sourced ingredients and the very human experience of cooking and sharing a meal," says Ballymaloe-trained Kaelin Whittaker. Awn refers to the bristle of the flower on barley and rye. "The word Awn connects my business so beautifully to Alberta—to agriculture." 🍷

Send interesting food and drink news for *Kitchen Sink* to hello@thetomato.ca.

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Rosie March 17 at 7PM

A woman, her husband and their four children find themselves homeless after their landlord sells their house. Over the next 36 hours, the couple desperately search for a place to live while trying to shield the kids from the reality of the situation.

The Booksellers Opens March 27

A lively, behind-the-scenes look at the New York rare book world, featuring interviews with some of the most important dealers in the business, as well as collectors, auctioneers, and writers, is a loving celebration of book culture and serious exploration of the future of the book.



All-You-Can-Eat Cereal Cartoon Party April 11 at 10AM

The cartoon lineup is always a mystery, but you'll see both faves and obscurities spanning the 40s through the 80s, all punctuated with vintage commercials and PSAs! **Adults: \$16, Students/Seniors: \$14, Children (12 & under): \$12. Admission includes cereal.**

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TOMATO b bite

Ireland

Continued from page 26

best new restaurant in Dublin for that year by many critics and customers. We were fortunate to snag a reservation—we booked on January 7—and by the time we arrived in May, diners were clamouring for seats. After we filled the restaurant with our group that evening, Aaron locked the doors to the constant stream of hopefuls that dropped by.

Chef Keelan takes Irish traditions of dark breads, grilled fish and foraged rhubarb and adds a contemporary spin to them. A *financier* is infused with duck fat, a Hollandaise is piqued with wild garlic and a simple piece of hearth-roasted halibut is elevated by *nduja* sauce. Every single element in every single dish—I counted at least 32 elements in eight dishes—was immaculately conceived and executed. And paired with brilliantly chosen wines by the talented Vanda.

Not only did Variety Jones bump The Muddler's Club off the roost as my top meal of 2019, it was added to my top ten list of best meals of my life.

Dublin is home to many other fine eateries, from Victorian-toned pubs to slick contemporary restaurants. And while I'm sure that bad meals can be found there, as they can anywhere, the food we had in Dublin was good to great, skillfully prepared, presented hot and abundant and just downright tasty. And served by universally pleasant staff. Not cheap—just pretend those euros are dollars—but worth it. We also indulged in a culinary walking tour, visits to Kilmainham Gaol, Dublin Castle and the National Museum, strolls along the River Liffey and a liquid visit to Guinness Storehouse. Plus a literary pub tour that interspersed Irish poetry and theatre with fine drafts of beer and whiskey.

Galway is no slouch either. There we spent a day with chef JP McMahon, another culinary highlight of my life. McMahon, also known as Mr. Eat Galway and a huge proponent of Irish cuisine worldwide, was generous with his time and expertise. He led a fascinating three-hour culinary demo on the natural foods and flavours of Ireland, followed by a splendid lunch

in his Spanish tapas bar, Cava Bodega. He then took us on a foraging session on Galway's coast, picking seaweed and wild herbs along the way.

Then it was back to Aniar, McMahon's Michelin-star restaurant for an exquisite meal that included larch, sea radish, whey, eel, meadowsweet and treacle among many other things. Outstanding and a near challenger to Variety Jones for top meal of 2019. It did, however, bump The Muddler's Club down to number three.

The next night we dined at McMahon's third restaurant, Tartare, on a spectacular combo of tartares and small plates. It was a perfect culinary trifecta.

In addition to Ireland's culinary attributes, it was the culture and the people that sold us on the island. Galway is the most musical city I've ever seen, with buskers of (mostly) high quality every fifty metres on the walking streets throughout the day and live music in almost every pub. (Ed Sheeran used to busk here.)

Irish pub culture is very welcoming with fans of all ages enjoying the music, each other's company and the libations. The countryside is lovely and dotted with hiking trails and historic castles. And I'm sure there are more fine restaurants out there too.

Here's my personal thesis on Euro cuisines: countries such as Italy, Spain and France are constrained by their history and traditions of food. Many dishes must be prepared exactly as they have been for decades, even centuries. Some chefs are breaking out, but many classic European cuisines remain hidebound. On the other hand, countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Scotland and Ireland have such bad reputations for their cuisine (sorry if I've offended the lutefisk and haggis crowd) that chefs are much freer to create and incorporate global ingredients and techniques into their cooking. That's where the best Euro-food I've had in the past few years has been.

Getting lost in Ireland, either in the countryside or in the cuisine, is not the worst thing that can happen. 🍷

John Gilchrist is a Calgary-based food and travel writer.



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