

# Gourmet

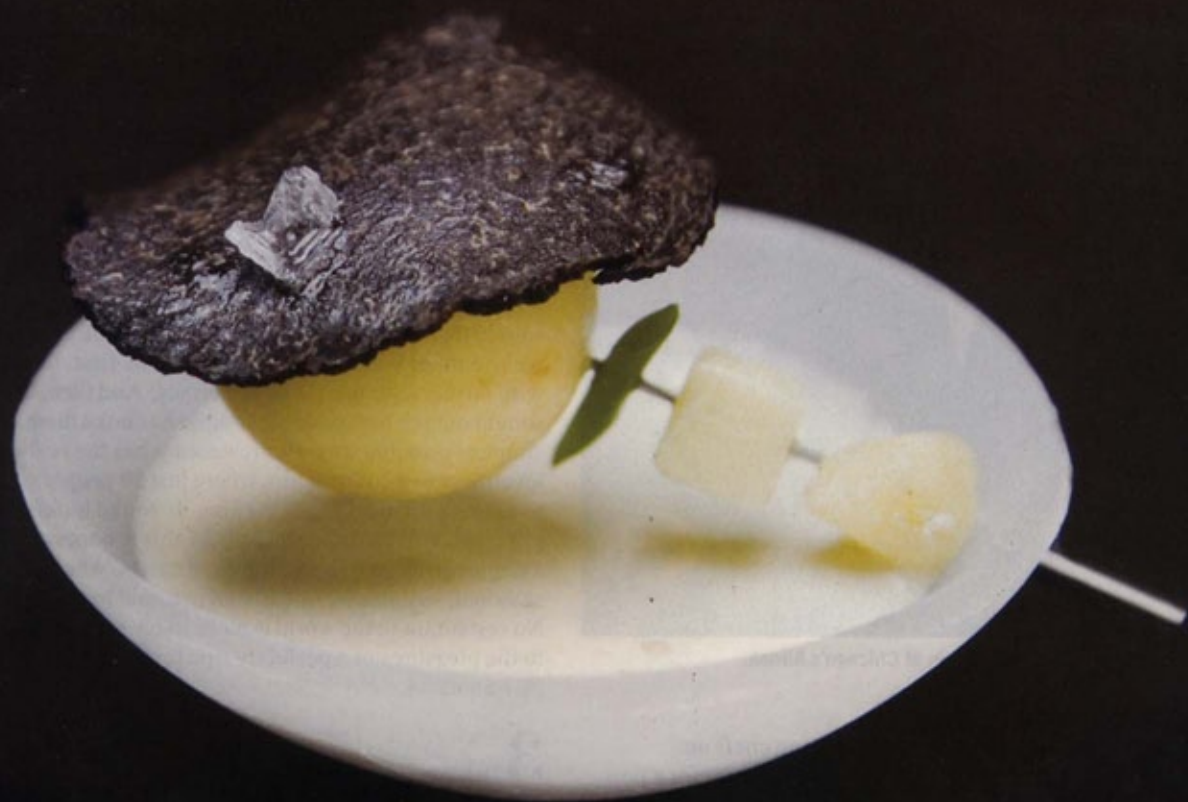
THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

egg drop soup  
SCALLOP & fruit salsa  
SYNTHETIC champagne  
GOAT CHEESE snow & balsamic  
SASHIMI & blood orange  
PASSION FRUIT & crab

## THE RESTAURANT ISSUE

BISON & aromatic utensils  
JALAPENO, avocado & lemon myrtle  
BEEF with kielbasa  
MAC & cheese  
FETTUCCHINE alla dolce  
3 COTTON candy stages  
FLAPJACKS prepared tableside  
PEANUT BUTTER & jelly  
BANANA split  
DOUGHNUT SOUP & pancake  
CHILI-CHEESE nachos  
BROWN BUTTER & white chocolate

YOU, TOO, CAN EAT THIS MENU



# AMERICA'S TOP 50 RESTAURANTS

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

# TOP 50 RESTAURANTS

**5★ JOËL ROBUCHON AT THE MANSION** He is generally considered the greatest chef in the world, and he has not been able to resist the allure of Las Vegas. You want to hate him for it; you tend to want it not to be very good. But the new Robuchon is truly incredible, a cocoon of luxury and precise, impeccable cooking. From the first moment of the meal, when the 17 breads (“They just came out of the oven at five o’clock”) are wheeled up to your table, the experience unfurls seamlessly. Yes, the bill is enormous, but if you’re on a winning streak, you probably won’t care.

MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, 3799 Las Vegas Boulevard S., Las Vegas (702-891-7925)

**6 LE RÊVE** The best restaurant in Texas isn’t in Dallas or Houston. It’s in San Antonio, where Andrew Weissman came home to open this 38-seat gem after stints as a reporter in Mexico City, a student at Hyde Park, and a cook in France and New York. His modern-American French-style food, which was wonderful when he opened eight years ago, has grown increasingly refined and assured. The menu changes constantly, but look for dishes like foie gras custard with warm vegetables, poached oysters in wasabi beurre blanc with braised cucumbers and caviar, and crisp-skinned Gulf snapper with chive sauce—all of it even more delicious because of where it is.

152 E. Pecan Street, San Antonio (210-212-2221)

**7★ MASA** An experience of intense purity, this is an introduction to sashimi and sushi as high art. If you really want to understand sushi, sit at one of the 11 seats at Masayoshi Takayama’s bar (being sure to appreciate the texture of the soft hinoki wood) and put yourself in the

At New York’s Masa, the attention to detail begins at the door.



master’s hands. You are paying not just for the quality of the seafood but also for the sheer pleasure of watching Takayama as he works. Each plate, cup, and bowl is a thing of singular beauty, and as with all real artistry, a meal here stays with you; leaving, you find that your senses have become attuned to details so tiny that you are suddenly aware of sights and sounds you would ordinarily have missed.

Time Warner Center, 10 Columbus Circle, New York City (212-823-9800)

**8 ALAN WONG’S RESTAURANT** Well before most people had heard of fusion food, Alan Wong was cooking it. And why not? Hawaii itself is an East-West blend, and Wong borrows from all of the islands’ antecedents. In 2005, Wong went to Peru, Japan, and Singapore and found new ideas to inform his farm-influenced food. This romantic little restaurant has always reached out to the local growers so that every diner can discover the true taste of what Hawaiians call home. Now, after 11 years, it is still going strong.

1857 S. King Street, Honolulu (808-949-2526)

**9 DANIEL** This is food as celebration, a place where every meal is an event, every dish an occasion. No American chef is more modern in his determination to be up on every new influence—France, China, and South America are all present in the spicing—or more old-fashioned in his definition of what formal dining ought to offer. If you are looking for great food on a grand scale—if you want to wear your ribbons and rings—Daniel Boulud’s flagship is the place to do it.

60 East 65th Street, New York City (212-288-0033)

**10 LE BERNARDIN** There is a reason why Le Bernardin is constantly rated at the top of every New York restaurant poll: It may be the most perfect combination of France and America that can possibly be achieved in a restaurant. From France come the flawless service, the precise technique, the spot-on timing. From America come the inventive dishes, which borrow not only from France but also from South America and Japan in wonderfully surprising ways. Le Bernardin is famous as a fish restaurant, but it is more than that. It is a stunningly consistent restaurant, a place that never lets you down. Eric Ripert can make anything taste delicious.

155 West 51st Street, New York City (212-554-1515)

**11 MAGNOLIA GRILL** Whereas many temples of local produce treat their products with worshipful reverence, Ben Barker’s cooking is daring, almost reckless. The menu is rife with wild, unwieldy-sounding dishes like “octopus ‘salami’ with farmer’s market vegetables, romaine in Caesar dressing with overnight tomatoes, roasted olives, and pine nuts.” But it works—flavor after flavor makes its own space, elbowing the others out of the way in an ecstatic parade. Karen Barker’s desserts end the roller coaster with the straightforward pleasure of a knockout chocolate cake or a classic lemon tart. Don’t be fooled by the unassuming exterior or the wan lighting inside—the excitement here is all on the plate.

1002 Ninth Street, Durham, NC (919-286-3609)