

eat&drink



INTRODUCING ...

Lucier

Truly fine dining comes to the South Waterfront (see p. 141).

PLUS: Captivating Japanese fare in Nob Hill (see p. 140); generously portioned small plates on Hawthorne (see p. 146); and soup in the summer (see p. 153)



THE GROUND RULES

This selective, rotating guide is independent of advertising. Expenses are paid by *Portland Monthly*, and visits are anonymous. Establishments are chosen based on food quality, menu selection, service, ambience, and value. Visit www.portlandmonthlymag.com for a searchable database of these listings. For an alphabetical index of restaurant listings, see p. 155.

Price Guide (Average Entrée)

\$ = UNDER \$10 \$\$ = \$10-20 \$\$\$ = \$20-30 \$\$\$\$ = \$30+

Key to Symbols

- | | |
|------------|---|
| BREAKFAST | RESERVATIONS SUGGESTED |
| LUNCH | KID-FRIENDLY |
| DINNER | OUTDOOR DINING |
| BRUNCH | CARRYOUT |
| PARKING | LATE-NIGHT DINING
(AFTER 11 P.M., FRI-SAT) |
| NO SMOKING | |

AMERICAN/NEW AMERICAN

Clyde Common

1014 SW STARK ST 503-228-3333 \$\$

In a neighborhood saturated with swanky pre-theater restaurants, staid hotel dining rooms, and second-rate food carts, Clyde Common, set in the bottom of the Ace Hotel, adds a much-needed, tastefully laid-back gourmet vibe. Framed by tall windows, the restaurant offers a front-corner bar that's serving the best negroni in town, along with a half-dozen communal tables and a hidden upstairs with intimate, bistro-size tables. Noise-sensitive diners beware: High ceilings and resonant wood surfaces can make the buzz and clatter here deafening. But the small menu makes up for such inconveniences with everything from chicken-fried chicken livers with citrusy mayonnaise and a vinegary cucumber salad to a simple plate of *chitarra* pasta and clams bathed in a buttery Lillet reduction. If Clyde's brand of high-end, inn-at-the-end-of-the-road cuisine signals a new trend in downtown hotel dining, we're all for it—*arrivederci* roasted beet salad, hello foie gras with tomato marmalade.

Country Cat Dinnerhouse & Bar

7937 SE STARK ST 503-408-1414 \$\$

Regional American cuisine with Northwest flair inspires the dishes at this casual Montavilla joint recently opened by Adam Sappington, who spent 11 years as a chef at Wildwood before setting out on his own. Just how brilliantly that background informs Sappington's Midwestern upbringing comes through in the food here: A hickory-smoked duck leg glazed with savory rosemary honey is accompanied by sweet buttered baby onions; whole trout wrapped in bacon comes with perfectly cooked seasonal vegetables like peas or asparagus or carrots; and a "whole hog" is served three irresistible ways—brined and grilled chop, pulled shoulder, rolled pork belly—yet is almost overshadowed by a generous dollop of creamy corn grits and vanilla-scented poached plums. And the fruitful cultural collaboration extends beyond the menu: Servers are friendly, laid-back, and accommodating; chefs wear overalls and cook with a smile; and on the bar a jar of house-made beef jerky—\$15 per pound—beckons to the Midwesterner in all of us.

Fife

4440 NE FREMONT ST 971-222-3433 \$\$\$

Let's say this upscale Northeast restaurant were to close its doors one night and fill the room with Oregon farmers. Once their plates arrived, the conversation would

probably go something like this: "Fred, that hanger steak tastes exactly like the sweet grass I feed my cows." "Are you sure, Henry? Because I was thinking it tasted like my alfalfa." Indeed, each painstakingly selected seasonal ingredient served at this American eatery—90 percent of which comes from small farms within 100 miles of the kitchen—is allowed to shine. Transformed by chef and owner Marco Shaw into gussied-up comfort classics, local ingredients harvested at their peak become appetizers like bacon-wrapped, pan-fried chicken livers with gravy, or fried oysters with Pernod-spiked cream sauce, as well as entrées like a simple fillet of halibut with oyster mushrooms and sage, or a surprisingly light rabbit meatloaf served over a bed of steamed kale and earthy slices of turnip. With provisions as pure as these, salt and pepper serve merely as an afterthought.

Fire on the Mountain Buffalo Wings

4225 N INTERSTATE AVE 503-280-9464

1708 E BURNSIDE ST 503-230-9464 \$

Legend has it that buffalo wings were invented in an upstate New York bar, but when a Portland establishment claims to be our city's "Original Buffalo Wing Joint," we're willing to accept it as fact, as long as the wings are crispy and the sauce is spicy. At this cheery, family-friendly restaurant, both conditions have been more than amply met, the latter in the form of the usual Tabasco-and-butter sauce, as well as a half-dozen other sauces, from clove-heavy Jamaican jerk to rich "soon-to-be-famous" spicy peanut. Like any savvy wing establishment, Fire on the Mountain offers both blue cheese and creamy ranch with your meat—but like a true Portland winging, it's also concocted meatless alternatives (although we can't figure out why anyone would order them). Serviceable salads and sandwiches will fill you up here, of course, as will the restaurant's beers—from Pabst to Rogue—but it'd be a shame to drink them for any reason other than to temper the burn.

Jáce Gáce

2045 SE BELMONT ST 503-239-1887 \$

Any restaurant that has as its mantra "Art. Waffles. Beer." deserves to live a long, full life. It's also bound to be a bit befuddling at first. The name of Portland's only art-waffle-beer hybrid is admittedly difficult to pronounce (it's YAH-say GAH-say). And upon entering, you may wonder whether you've stepped into a gallery, a coffee shop, a breakfast joint, or a bar. But we say: *Embrace it all.* Open your mind to the hip dualities and contradictions. Order a sausage-and-gravy-topped Belgian-style waffle and wash it down with a bottle of Belgian beer, for lunch or breakfast. Or settle for a cappuccino with a simple maple-syrup-drizzled waffle, which, by the way, happens to be thick and fluffy in all the right ways, no matter which of the dozen waffle entrées you choose. Then sit back and take it all in: the rotating art exhibits in the back; the blaring indie music all around; the smell of hot waffle batter sizzling away on the waffle iron; and the pretty people sashaying in and out the front door, genuflecting before the holy trinity.

Mother's Bistro & Bar

212 SW STARK ST 503-464-1122 \$\$

The ultimate destination for upscale comfort food (all the classics Mom used to make, if you were lucky enough to have a mother who put smoked salmon and caramelized onion in the mac and cheese) just got a lot more comfortable. No more rubbing elbows with strangers, thanks to an impressive dining room expansion that banished the bar to a dedicated room of its own—the Velvet Lounge, a coquettish *après-theater* destination serving comforting homemade TV dinners



"The Egg" at Lucier: a soft scrambled duck egg topped with Sevrega caviar

INTRODUCING...

IT'S 7 O'CLOCK on a Monday night on the South Waterfront, in June. Lucier has been open for only a few weeks. Yet the dining room is full, mostly with groups of men and women in business suits sipping champagne and feasting on structurally arranged food; trios of wine geeks with their noses stuck deep in their glasses; and a smattering of couples devouring \$30 course after \$30 course like it's the last meal of their lives.

But it's not just the modern European cuisine—prepared by chef Pascal Chureau, who also heads up the kitchen at Fenouil—and the lengthy wine list that guests are paying high prices for. It's the superb quality of ambience and service, both of which make Lucier something of an anomaly in Portland, where white butcher-paper tablecloths, rough-hewn communal tables, and hipster tude are considered de rigueur.

At Lucier, owned by Tyanne and Chris Dussin,

founders of the less-than-opulent Old Spaghetti Factory chain, everything from the silverware to the toilet-paper holders has been meticulously

curated by Alvarez-Brock Design, the New York firm responsible for Le Cirque 2000 and Thomas Keller's Per Se. A miniature river runs around the perimeter of the dining room, and glass bridges lead guests to tables draped in fine white linen. From the ceiling, copper tubes curve downward in raindrop-shaped spirals.

And weaving through this orchestrated scene is a choreographed army of suited servers carrying plates of striped bass carpaccio topped with shavings of foie gras, and tiny roasted squabs set atop celeriac and a cassis reduction.

Undeniably, the waiters and waitresses are here to make you feel as though you're the only person in the world. The question is, in a casual town like Portland, are there enough diners in search of such pampering to sustain Lucier's equation? For our sake, and for Lucier's, I secretly hope there are. —CD

Lucier \$\$\$\$

1910 SW River Dr 503-222-7300