

RESTAURANT BIOS

Blurbs summarizing a restaurant's conceit in 150ish words (BostonChefs.com)

BISq

BISq—a funky acronym for Bergamot Inman Square—is a fun, unpretentious take on wine and charcuterie. This sequel to Somerville's Bergamot is chef/owner Keith Pooler's second venture, and despite sharing a name (sort of) with its older sibling, BISq's concept is totally its own. No tasting menu or prix-fixe here—just a la carte small plates and cured meats to share. Pair those with an extensive Old World wine list and it's hard to go wrong.

The space, outfitted with wood panels and wine crates, boasts two bars: a traditional beverage bar and an interactive charcuterie bar that overlooks the open kitchen. Whether you dine under the wine bottle chandelier or watch chefs slice you a “hook-up board” of salumi and pâté, BISq is a happening haven for meat-lovers and oenophiles alike.

Saltbox Kitchen

Saltbox Kitchen is one more in chef/owner Ben Elliott's multiform bag of tricks. This 15-seat restaurant is the third child of the Saltbox family (Saltbox Farm and cooking school The Little House came first) and offers casual café service from 7:00am to 7:00pm every day. It's no late-night spot, but you'll thank yourself if you play the early bird to taste menu items that incorporate Saltbox Farm's eggs, meat and honey.

Driftwood tables and subway tile walls give the restaurant an authentic secondhand charm, and an open kitchen lets diners see the chefs in action. The tiny Concord spot is not likely a tie-one-on destination, but you can enjoy wine or beer with whatever farm fresh fare is advertised on the Kitchen's chalkboard.

Townsmen

Chef/owner Matt Jennings sticks to his roots and serves up New England brasserie-inspired fare at Townsmen, the big-but-charming restaurant next to the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Chinatown. The space is considerable—75 seats in the dining room alone—but the décor and service help retain a homey, intimate feel. Bright red Windsor chairs and walnut dining tables are beautiful in their simplicity, and the open kitchen is a welcome piece of set dressing as you enjoy your meal. (If watching the chefs work is really your thing, ask for front row seats at the crudo bar.)

For those just drinking, have a cocktail in one of the lounge's leather seats or head to the bar and pick from a well-curated (and reasonably priced) wine list that focuses on France, with a smattering of Spanish, Austrian, and German selections. There's no shortage of options here—in the summertime, Townsmen's vast interior opens out onto a patio for additional alfresco dining.

OAK Long Bar

The atmosphere is half the fun at Oak Long Bar, where elegant draperies adorn arched windows and chandeliers hang from coffered ceilings. The chairs are huge, almost thronelike, and emblazoned on a mirror above the bar is WE SERVE THE NATION, a double entendre that welcomes hotel guests from afar while subtly nodding to local folk (“It’s a Red Sox Nation thing,” the bartender says). But the bygone-era décor goes only as far as the ambience, because a peek at the menu will remind you the place is thoroughly modern.

In season, the kitchen sources produce from the Copley’s farmer market just across the street, and the menu offers everything from pizza to a bone-in ribeye. If beer and wine won’t cut it, try one of the craft cocktails—the place is known for its “extra-large and ice cold” martinis and Manhattans.

PATIO BLURBS

Short patio descriptions (BostonChefs.com)

Il Casale Belmont

Take a trip beyond the city limits for alfresco Italian this summer. The eight-table patio at Il Casale Belmont is enclosed by floral installments that add a splash of color to the converted firehouse’s brick and glass façade. Watch shoppers bustle down this quaint little stretch while sharing a salumi plate for two with that special someone, or “La Famiglia” (a family-style dinner) for the whole crew.

Mirbeau

Mirbeau sets the standard for elegant outdoor dining this season. This Plymouth spot offers all its breakfast, lunch, and dinner goodness on the Bistro Porch, a breezy fresh-air dining area overlooking the Monet-inspired Pond Gardens. The scenery makes as good an impression as what’s offered tableside—try a wine flight or a 1920s throwback cocktail with dinner, then head down to the Mirbeau Garden and shake off the evening chill by the fire pit.

Beat Brasserie

You don’t get much more culture than this. Beat Brasserie’s patio, located in the heart of Harvard Square, offers a high-energy space to dine amidst shoppers shopping, Ivy Leaguers off to class, or film buffs rushing to the Brattle. Stick around through the afternoon and enjoy some wine on tap and people watching, then head inside for live music at night. Ginsberg would be proud.