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PLUS!
THE GREATEST NOODLE PULLER ON EARTH
SECRETS OF THE RAMEN PIONEER
FROM SANTA CLARA TO THE SUNSET

SLURP IT UP:
Shoyu ramen
with Meyer lemon, shishito, and salt-cured egg
from Oakland's
Ramen Shop

$4.99 February 2013
www.sanfranmag.com
MODERN LUXURY
THE RAMEN THINK TANK

If there’s a bowl of noodles that merits a heated roundtable discussion, it’s ramen. Momofuku in New York might have brought this classic Japanese comfort dish to the fancy-food front lines, but it’s always been a hot topic for true connoisseurs. Today, San Francisco has never been richer in ramen. Three type A rameniacs weigh in on what makes their chosen dish so unforgettable—for better and for worse. SARA DESERAN

What do you look for in a noodle? JAKSICH: They should have a springiness—a life to themselves. There are straight ramen noodles and wavy noodles. Each type should suit the other components of a particular ramen, just like Italian pastas complement the sauce they’re going with. WONG: They should be firm; they should be chewy. At Tsujita in L.A., you can specify how you want them—soft, medium, or hard—but they recommend them hard.

Are housemade noodles necessarily better? I think Namu Gaji and Ramen Shop might be two of the few that make their own. NAKANO: I think Namu’s are really good because [chef] Dennis Lee is in there making them himself like a crazy person—crazy in a good way. Anyone can go to a Japanese goods supplier and order a case of generic ramen noodles that will cost pennies. What I look for these days is something special—and it starts with that noodle. WONG: I love everything about Namu—I love their farmers’ market stand. But one time I had their handmade ramen at their original Namu restaurant in the Richmond, and I just panned it. I thought it was terrible. The noodles were soft and thin. I gather that a lot of the other Japanese ramen places, like Santa [Ramen] in San Mateo, have their noodles custom-made for them. JAKSICH: For the Ramen Shop, I bought a 600-pound used machine from the guy who taught me to make noodles in Japan. It took seven months to get out here, but it’s like my baby—I talk to it. We even make our own alkaline. As much as I hate putting chemicals in things, it’s what gives the noodles their spring.

Chewy noodles are generally made with alkaline salts. Why don’t you use them for Hapa Ramen’s noodles? NAKANO: Unlike a lot of hardcore ramen people, I’m not a huge alkaline guy. Alkaline salts numb your palate a bit.

You used to make your own noodles. Do you still? NAKANO: Now we have this guy who makes our own recipe for us. He uses egg powder and whey powder and tweaked the noodle to make it as chewy as possible without adding junk.

What draws you to a broth? NAKANO: I used to really gravitate to tonkotsu broth, which is creamy, emulsified, and fatty, but I’ve started eating a bacon double cheeseburger with an egg on it. These days, I’m leaning toward shoyu broth. WONG: I think tonkotsu is very obvious if you really like big, bold flavors. I actually love a well-made shio, or salt, broth, which has briny seafood flavors in it. I think it requires more finesse. The one that comes to mind is at [Ramen Tenma] in San Jose. Even when the chef makes his tonkotsu broth, it doesn’t sit so heavily on you.

What makes a good ramen as a whole? WONG: I can almost tell if a ramen is going to be good just by the precision—by the way the bowl has been assembled. Precise ones will more likely have balanced textures and flavors.

Ramen epiphany? JAKSICH: Men Eiji, in Sapporo, Japan, blew my mind. Their ramen was so complex, and the best part was that the chef made his own noodles in-house. WONG: It was at Halu Ramen in San Jose. Chef Kumao Ara’s noodles are thicker and very, very chewy. And he makes this very serious tonkotsu broth that he sprinkles with chopped-up bits of pork fat. NAKANO: In terms of putting your bare-naked soul out there, I think that the chicken ramen at Ippuku [in Berkeley] is the one.
pork-bone broth is indeed meaty and bolstered by a shot of soy. And the broth is served with two kinds of pork and a raw egg that renders it even creamier. Yet it’s not nearly as heavy as you’d imagine. The noodles soften ever so slowly, evolving with each slurp.

5120 GEARBY BLVD. (NEAR 16TH AVE.), 415-386-8802

VEGETARIAN RAMEN

Ramen Shop

(OAKLAND) It may take you a while to notice that the guy bent over an odd little machine at the back of Ramen Shop is rolling and cutting fresh noodles. But when you start inhaling your own bowl, you can’t miss how chewy and satiny they are. While the shoyu-lemon broth at Jerry Jakisch, Sam White, and Rayneil de Guzman’s new restaurant is good, the vegetarian broth is even more nuanced and unexpected, its flavor fleshed out with red miso and finished off with a seven-miso blend, sesame oil, and Riverdog peppers. Matsutake mushrooms, Mendocino nori, a tuft of mizuna, and a creamy-yolked egg top it off. 5812 COLLEGE AVE. (NEAR CHABOT RD.), 510-788-6270

VIETNAMESE

BUN RIEU

Soup Junkie

(FINANCIAL DISTRICT) Go to Hanoi, and you’ll probably find yourself crouched on a tiny stool, face-deep in a bowl of this crab-noodle soup. As good as it is in Vietnam, though, it won’t have the elegance of the version that Hung Lam sells from his FIDI storefront: a peach-tinted Dungeness crab broth, simmered for hours, its bellwether depths buoying with thin rice noodles and topped by a raft of curly green-onion slivers. The highlight is the little cloudlike crab-and-egg omelettes that drift over the surface, almost too delicate to pick up with your chopsticks. 388 MARKET ST. (NEAR FRONT ST.), 415-291-0686

CHICKEN PHO

Turtle Tower

(TENDERLOIN) Over the past 13 years, Steven Ngage Pham has grown his family’s Larkin Street restaurant into a mini-empire with three locations—but it’s always good to start here, at the original. I’m partial to Pham’s chicken pho for its evocative simplicity. Chopped cilantro and scallions skim the surface of the mildly flavored, transparently golden broth, which is filled with slices of poached free-range chicken tangle in slippery-soft wide rice noodles. It’s a wonderful antidote to whatever ails you—during flu season, the restaurant becomes a virtual infirmary of sniffing diners seeking solace. 631 LARKIN ST. (NEAR EDDY ST.), 415-409-3333

SOUTHERN-STYLE

BEEF PHO

Pho Ao Sen

(OAKLAND) San Francisco has the lock on northern Vietnamese pho—beefy and straightforward, the kind of rice-noodle soup you want to eat on a cold, rainy morning. But the more aromatic southern-style pho is best eaten in Oakland or San Jose. The pho dac biet bo vien (house special pho with meatballs) served at Pho Ao Sen has been my favorite for a decade, and it remains so even at the restaurant’s new upscale location. The scent of fresh Thai basil and garlic hovers over the clear beef broth, seasoned with star anise and swimming with wonderfully dense beef, meltingly soft and transparent tendon, and long-braised brisket and flank meat. It may be the best in the region. 1135 E. 12TH ST. (NEAR 12TH AVE.), 510-835-5588
THIRST • By Jon Bonnot

How wine criticism must shift

It should have been Robert Parker's crowning moment. At the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone earlier this month, he was inducted into the Vintners Hall of Fame.

Parker wasn't there in person (some health concerns), but his video message stunned Californias he recognition — although thanks might equally have gone the other way. California wine, at least an ambitious subset of it, revision him as an awful lot.

There were just a couple of dens in this otherwise perfect moment of gratitude. About a week earlier, Parker got word that a critic at his Wine Advocate newsletter, Antonio Galloni, was heading out the door to found his own online publication at AntonioGalloni.com.

Other critics had departed from the Advocate in the past. But Galloni wasn't just another critic for hire. In ten, he drew shock waves when Parker tapped him to take on the pivotal role of California critic for the Advocate. In addition to Bonnot.

Bonnot continues on G6

MICHAEL BAUER • Dining Out

Refined ramen in Oakland

Maybe it's that we're so in love with Japanese noodles. Or maybe it's the Chit Panisse connection.

Then reason, from the day it opened, Oakland's Ramen Shop has been more crowded than a Tokyo bus at rush hour.

By 5:30 p.m. on a recent Wednesday, names were already scrabbled on the chalkboard behind the host stand as people waited in the lounge for one of the 12 seats at a table or at the long counter where people can watch the action in the kitchen.

The Ramen Shop, in the space of what was most recently Tachibana, is a partnership of three former Chez Panisse staffs.

Perfect roasts with 5 ingredients

By Tara Duggan

A roast might not seem like an obvious candidate for easy cooking. A preparation we turn to for late winter as well as early spring gatherings like Easter, it involves wresting a large hunk of meat into the oven with the hopes of creating a tender, juicy centerpiece to be sliced and admired by those who gather around.

Despite all that pressure, I'm here to tell you roasts are easy to make. They can even handle the five-ingredient treatment, meaning you can make a roast with five ingredients or fewer. That doesn't include salt and pepper, which you will still need plenty of, but you don't need complicated spice rubs, marinades or sauces if you choose your meat or fish well and pay attention to the cooking temperature.

Roasting is a dry cooking method that's usually done at high heat to concentrate flavors and create browning, although oven temperatures can be as low as 200 degrees, depending on the cut.

Recipes on Pages G9 & G10

Next Sunday in The Chronicle Magazine

Curing next week: Special farm-to-table issue.

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Follow the Food & Wine staff on twitter.com/SFC_Foodandwine
Ramen Shop, in the space that most recently was Tachibana, is a partnership of three former Chez Panisse staffers.

Refined ramen in Oakland

Maybe it's that we're so in love with Japanese noodles. Or maybe it's the Chez Panisse connection.

Whatever reason, from the day it opened, Oakland's Ramen Shop has been more crowded than a Tokyo bus at rush hour.

Even by 5:15 p.m. on a recent Wednesday, names were already scrawled on the chalkboard behind the host stand as people waited in the lounge for one of the 45 seats at a table or at the long counter where people can watch the action in the kitchen.

The Ramen Shop, in the space of what was most recently Tachibana, is a partnership of Jerry Jaksich, Rayneil De Guzman and Sam White, who met while working at Chez Panisse. Their pedigree is on full display at the restaurant, from the Japanese whiskey behind the bar to the Japanese noodle machine in the corner.

Bauer continues on 67
Pedigree on display at Ramen Shop

Bauer from page G1

of the kitchen. The menu is limited to a couple of appetizers, three varieties of ramen and, more often than not, ice cream sandwiches for dessert. Yet each element is meticulously crafted, and every nuance is thought out.

Diners can see one of the cooks in the crowded, utilitarian kitchen preparing each wok-smoked black cod salad ($12) to order. She uses a mandolin to shave the golden beets and watermelon radishes, and chef's knife to slice the Cara Cara oranges and julienne the radishes. She tosses the ingredients in the dressing and carefully arranges them on a pottery plate, with thin flakes of seafood and a sprinkling of salt. It’s a dynamic explosion of color and flavors.

Mixes of flavors

That’s the way it goes every night. One time the appetizer could be house-smoked sardines ($10) buried in a collection of pickles: scarlet turnips, watermelon radish, daikon, onions, beets and mushrooms. For pickle fanatics like me, it’s pure heaven; each flavor is different, but the essence of the vegetable comes through.

Other nights, the starters could include halibut tartare ($12) or a kamacki and shrimp salad ($12) with Little Gems and beets. Often there’s also a pork donburi ($9). The one consistent offering has been wild nettle pork fried rice with chile paste and sometimes with shrimp ($10-$11). Each grain of rice is separate, but infused with meaty flavors; the chile heat fires back, gently grabbing the back of the throat.

By the setup in the kitchen it’s clear that ramen plays the lead event. Jaksich stands at the stove facing diners next to his wooden crates of portioned noodles, tasting and adjusting the pots of broth — generally nuances of greens that intensify as they warm in the hot, rich broth. In addition there’s always a garlicky vegetable miso ramen ($8), served in a simple blend of whiskey and soda. It’s a classic, a no-brainer, but one that’s rarely highlighted. It’s brilliant in its simplicity and a perfect complement to the food, especially if kottari miso ramen with ground pork belly and a thick, rich broth is on the menu. The cocktails, made with Hakushu 12-year-old blended whiskey, cuts through the soup and sets up the palate for the next bite. All of the cocktails are carefully curated. Because there’s rarely sake in ramen shops, you won’t find any on the menu here; there’s also no shochu listed, either. A few of these would be appropriate on the menu, and I was told they are working with St. George Spirits to produce one especially for the restaurant.

The wine list

I can’t think of another bar where one of the options on the printed menu is a Shop Hightball ($12), a simple blend of whiskey and soda. It’s a classic, a no-brainer, but one that’s rarely highlighted. It’s brilliant in its simplicity and a perfect complement to the food, especially if kottari miso ramen with ground pork belly and a thick, rich broth is on the menu. The cocktails, made with Hakushu 12-year-old blended whiskey, cuts through the soup and sets up the palate for the next bite. All of the cocktails are carefully curated. Because there’s rarely sake in ramen shops, you won’t find any on the menu here; there’s also no shochu listed, either. A few of these would be appropriate on the menu, and I was told they are working with St. George Spirits to produce one especially for the restaurant.

The menu also lists four nightly cocktail specials, such as the Gold Leaf ($10) with Sutton Cellars dry vermouth, Benedictine, absinthe and house-made apple cider. It was a little too sweet for my taste, but the Nee-Guy Spritz ($10) was just right, thanks to the balance of Botaniregin gin, Campari, cranberry syrup, lemon, cava and mint.

The list also features a half dozen beers, mostly from the Bay Area, and 14 wines, mostly from Europe. Prices are high — the wines start at $40, too expensive for a ramen place where the most expensive bowl is $15. Markups are also high, so I’d stick to the cocktails. If you bring your own wine, corkage is $20.

Ramen the star

Jaksich’s passion is on display with the shoyu Meyer lemon ramen ($14), topped with a slight-roasted slice of pork, a marinated half egg with a still-runny center, broccoli rabe and a small fist of mizuna. If you take the time to stop and smell what’s in the bowl, you can detect the smoky earthiness of the meat, the sweet perfume of the citrus and the peppery

Manny please Ramen Shop’s long counter, where they can see the kitchen work its magic. Left: vegetable miso ramen with Mendocino nori and maitake mushrooms. Above: house-pickled daikon with spicy watermelon radish.
Ireland
Basinger
Baldwin
By Bruce Weber

THE NEW
NORMAL:
MILLIONAIRE YOGIS
&TODDLER
TYCOONS

TV'S RICHEST STAR
JUDGE JUDY

MARRIED TO A PLASTIC SURGEON:
THE WIVES BARE ALL!

FALL'S
ROMANTIC
FASHION

DE NIRO
WISDOM OF A WISE GUY

CANNES AFTER DARK WITH ELLEN VON UNWERTH? • Mais Oui!
OPENINGS OF NOTE

The best new places to drink and dine—and a new salon to boot

ALEX CHASES SALON
2895 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park
Glam has finally come to the tech set. Stylist Alex Chases, owner of the always bustling Union Square salon, expanded to the Sense spa at Rosewood Sand Hill. His sleek new space accommodates eight clients at a time.
650-561-1562

HARD WATER
Pier 3, Embarcadero
With 47 seats and the lure of 150 brands of private-barrel and out-of-production American whiskey, Hard Water can be hard to get into. But it’s worth booking in advance in order to taste Charles Phan’s Southern-inspired dishes, like seafood gumbo, cornmeal-crusted alligator and okra etoufﬁee. Still, if you’re more of an on-the-fly type, show up, take a seat at the marble bar, order yourself a mint julep with Weller 107 or a Dixie cocktail with Old Forester bonded bourbon and enjoy the bay view from the massive windows.
hardwaterbar.com

LE MARAIS BAKERY
2066 Chestnut Street
Carbs have invaded the Marina, and even those who’ve sworn them off may make an exception for the breads and pastries from this new French bakery. Boulanger Justin Brown bakes everything from country-style levain loaves and baguettes to turnovers and specialty croissants like banana-chocolate, while pâtissier Phil Ogliola turns out traditional desserts such as tartlets, pain perdu and macarons. The interior is a treat, too, thanks to French limestone floors, redwood counters and tables and reclaimed ironwork. lemaraisbakery.com

PADRECITO
901 Cole Street
What’s the number-one reason to go to friendly, out-of-the-way Cole Valley? Padrecito. From the team behind Marnacita, Tipsy Pig, Uamami and Blue Barn, this eye-catching Mexican mecca highlights local produce and sustainably raised meats in its offerings, which include lamb meatballs with a guajillo mole, duck carnitas with kale and fava beans and spring onions, as well as killer cocktails like the namesake Padrecito (blanco tequila, mezcal, agave and lime) and the adventurous Dia de los Muertos (blended scotch, herbal liqueur, fortified wine, blood orange and lemon).

RAMEN SHOP
5812 College Avenue, Oakland
If you’re interested in dining at this rustic Japanese spot, a partnership from a pair of Chez Panisse alums (Sam White and Rayneil de Guzman) and Jerry Jakisch, follow these directions: Leave work early and jump on a train to Oakland. After you get to Ramen Shop, put your name on the clipboard and enjoy a Silver Dollar Sour (silver tequila, lemon, strawberry puree, sasho peppercorn) as you wait to be summoned. Once seated, order a ramen and a sour beer. Finish with a black-balsam ice cream sandwich. Repeat as needed.
ramenshop.com

R+W KITCHEN
507 Divisadero Street
The once gritty Divisadero Corridor has experienced a bit of a renewal lately, establishing NoPa as a great dining and drinking destination. Wine Kitchen, from co-chefs and owners Gregaucette and Jason Limburg, is one of the latest attractions. Working from a former garage, the duo—whose cumulative CV includes stints at Per Se, Bar Tartine and Spruce—built this relaxed space with a seasonal menu and a sharp wine list. Pair the 2012 Le Cingle Syrah/Grenache Rosé with scallops à la plancha, summer squash, grapes and yuzu kosho, or just enjoy an evening glass of one of Faust’s favorites, the 2011 Domaine A. Clape Syrah.
winekitchensf.com
Stock in Trade

Words by Aya Muto & Photographs by Erin Kunkel — Styling by Lisa Moir

Oakland’s Ramen Shop has quickly become a favorite stop for anyone who likes their noodles and broth made with tons of flavor, imagination and carefully chosen ingredients.

Broth made from house-dried sardines, hand-roasted nori seaweed harvested on the coast of Mendocino, freshly foraged oyster mushrooms and dried chilies flaked in house for the touch of sweetness the local varietal offers: these are the details that go into each bowl of Ramen Shop’s noodle soup. Jerry Jaksich, Sam White and Raynell De Guzman—the partners behind this Oakland eatery—are graduates of Chez Panisse, Alice Waters’ restaurant in Berkeley, and have applied their passion for local, seasonal ingredients to the humble meal that Japan continues to renovate with passion.

Ramen is an adaptation from Chinese cuisine, to which Japan applied its own twist. It is made with regional specialty broth; some combination of items—be it seaweed, fish, chicken or pork bones—is cooked for up to several days in a big pot. Ratios of blends are rarely used twice. Noodle texture and thickness are their own journey, too. You’ll always have the option of walking into a ramen shop on any city street in Japan, while food magazines like to feature ramen several times a year.

When the ramen bowl is served, the meal often happens quickly. “Ramen is a solitary meal,” explains Jaksich, who spent six years in Japan teaching English and conducting ramen research. “Most of the ramen shops consist of just a counter, some with a refined system where a customer orders through a machine and hands the ticket over the counter. No room for any mistakes to be made, super efficient.” His first meal in Japan was a bowl of ramen that brought him a complete epiphany. From then on, he spent much of his free time finding the perfect soup, visiting, working, and even apprenticing at a regional Italian fine dining restaurant in a remote town in Japan, learning all aspects of culinary ways. When he returned to the US, he wanted to work at Chez Panisse.

While Jaksich is the force behind the ramen, De Guzman brings more than 10 years of culinary experience to the table. By the time its doors opened officially in January 2013, Ramen Shop had been perfecting every detail—from broth to noodle, from garnishes to pop-up events. White co-founded a situational art-food gathering called Open, and Ramen Shop was also involved. After Japan suffered the earthquake and the unfortunate incidents following it, the Open collective was quick to join the mission to help the Bay Area’s food community support Japan.

Some key ingredients, such as fermented bonito flakes, are imported from Japan, and sometimes, Ramen Shop uses its resources and experiences to come up with better alternatives. “Raynell suggested Roman-style deep-fried artichoke to go on top as a substitute to menma [pickled/fermented bamboo shoots, a trademark ramen topping] because I had a hard time sourcing the good quality ones,” says Jaksich. “The texture and flavor I was explaining just prompt Raynell with different culinary ideas, and it’s fantastic. Our menu changes every day, and it’s always ingredient-oriented.” There is also one bowl available for vegetarians.

As White prints out the day’s menu after the staff meeting where Jaksich and De Guzman explain the art and story behind all the ingredients and preparation, people are starting to form a line outside. The counter—made by a woodworker friend with reclaimed wood from Oregon—is fresh and fragrant, and White and his bartenders are preparing to serve local distillery-made shochu and other cocktails, to make the waiting experience exciting. The boiling of noodles, which are prepared daily, happens in front of your eyes if you sit at the counter, and vegetables, braised pork and precooked eggs will perfect the appearance of the bowl. In Oakland, the bowl of ramen represents a gathering of multiple communities, on both sides of the counter.

Ramen Shop: 5812 College Avenue, Oakland, California / Telephone: 510-788-6370
Website: ramenshop.com

KINFOLK 73
The Fifth Quarter

The former football player Michael Strahan has had an unlikely post-gridiron career, one that has made him one of the few celebrities as recognizable to housewives as to their teenage sons.

By DAVID AMSDEN

On the Friday before the presidential inauguration, Michael Strahan paid impromptu homage to Michelle Obama's new bangs during a taping of "Live With Kelly and Michael," the morning show he co-hosts with Kelly Ripa. Seated next to Ms. Ripa at the desk they share five mornings a week, Mr. Strahan entertained the crowd in the show's studio by donning a wig, batting his lashes and staring longingly into the camera — a ridiculous gesture for any man, let alone one who stands 6 feet 5 inches, weighs 240 pounds and helped the New York Giants win the Super Bowl in 2008 with his talent for driving quarterbacks into the turf.

Not that he has forgone his past life completely. Two days later, Mr. Strahan was on millions of television screens once again, this time in a dapper suit and wide plain tie, offering as a co-host of "Fox NFL Sunday" a nuanced breakdown of the flaws in the Atlanta Falcons' defense before the team took on the San Francisco 49ers in the playoffs.

"Man, I haven't really had any free time in, basically, forever," Mr. Strahan said on a blustery afternoon not long ago. He was continued on page 11.

Michael Strahan, who played 15 seasons for the New York Giants, last month on the set of "Live With Kelly and Michael," which he co-hosts with Kelly Ripa.
Japanese Noodles, California Style

When they worked together at the California restaurant Chez Panisse three years ago, Sam White (a head waiter), Rayneil De Guzman (a veteran cook) and Jerry Jaksich (a bartender) discovered a shared fanaticism for, of all things, ramen. A couple of pop-up restaurants and several pilgrimages to Japan later, the three Alice Waters alumni opened the Ramen Shop, Oakland’s newest dining destination, in early January.

The menu changes daily and rotates Japanese dishes driven by Northern Californian ingredients, like shio ramen cut with Meyer lemon, rich miso infused with the local Dungeness crab, and fried rice flavored with earthy wild nettles and Monterey Bay squid. They even make their own noodles with locally sourced flour. The Ramen Shop, 5812 College Avenue, Oakland, Calif.; (510) 788-6370, ramenshop.com.

DAVID PRIOR
Anthology
LIVING WITH SUBSTANCE & STYLE

Eat, Drink & Be Merry

Chefs, Restaurateurs & More
At Home, Work & Play
almost as many bookstores, it's the perfect spot for an afternoon of reading or casual conversation. The newest gem here is Timeless, a smartly understated vegan coffee shop created by RJ Leimpeter, formerly a roaster at San Francisco's Sightglass Coffee, and seasoned baker Violet Slocum. Down the street, two modern shops beckon: Mercy Vintage Now packs a stellar collection of secondhand clothing, shoes, and bags. Gifts purveyor Good Stock is my go-to for indie brands like OLO Fragrance and The Wild Unknown (I'm a fan of their tarot cards and other printed designs).

As the afternoon wears on, we head farther north to College Avenue in the Rockridge area for an early dinner at the new kid on the block, Ramen Shop. (They don't accept reservations, so showing up before the crowds is a good idea!) Chez Panisse alums Rayneil De Guzman, Sam White, and Jerry Jaksich use traditional Japanese techniques to turn farm fresh ingredients into delicious, inventive ramen dishes—such as the shio clam ramen and the spicy miso with house-made pickled ginger that Jen and I order. The restaurant is thoughtfully designed, from the warm wood counters and industrial stools to the chunky glazed ceramic bowls, and is sure to become a neighborhood favorite.
YOUR TRAVEL QUESTIONS—ANSWERED  (SEE PAGE 47)

70 BEST NEW RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD
LONDON • SYDNEY • NEW YORK • SHANGHAI • PARIS • TOKYO • SAN FRANCISCO
(AND THE AMERICAN SOUTH)

FRANCE
FEASTING ON GASCONY

COLOMBIA
BOGOTÁ’S FOODIE THRILLS

&
20 HOT BARS IN 20 CITIES

VIVE LA FRANCE!
A lunch at the Château de Lassalle comes with lovely vistas of the Gascon countryside.
Don’t you wish you had a restaurant critic on speed dial when navigating the dining scene in a foreign city? We do, which is why, for Condé Nast Traveler’s Food Issue, we asked food writers and critics around the globe to name the best new restaurants on their home turf. Turn the page for the best eats in the Bay Area—a favorite foodie destination that has recently outdone itself with a slew of exciting spots—and for the rest of the picks, go to page 80.

SUPER BOWLS Pork and vegetable ramen and a Campari-and-prosecco cocktail at Oakland’s Kaman Shop.
70 BEST NEW RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD: PART I

SAN FRANCISCO & BEYOND

The nominator: MICHAEL BAUER

His credentials: Restaurant critic for the San Francisco Chronicle; director of the largest food and wine staff of any U.S. newspaper; member of the James Beard Foundation Restaurant Awards Committee. Follow him on Twitter @michaelbauer1.

CENTRAL KITCHEN
The scene: A back-to-basics Californian 60-seat place from the owners of very-popular Flour & Water. A roof garden yields the vegetables, herbs, fruits, and honey used in the kitchen, and a covered patio is heated for year-round alfresco eating.

The food: Simple classics, like radishes with cultured butter and sea salt, and elaborate combos such as roast hen with smoked-oyster relish and green Puree.

Dish to get: Nothing’s perennial, but the $89 six-course tasting menu has the most intricate medley of tastes (3000 20th St.; 415-626-7004; entrées from $24).

RAMEN SHOP
The scene: Three Chez Panisse veterans bring the feel of a tiny Tokyo noodle shop to an Oakland place with a long Douglas fir counter and rusted stools.

The food: The three ramen on the menu change nightly along with a couple of appetizers such as citrus and greens topped with flakes of wok-smoked cod. Order an exceptional ice-cream sandwich for dessert.

Dish to get: Ramen with pork broth, spit-roasted pork, a soy-marinated egg, pickled ginger, and Mendocino nori (5812 College Ave.; 510-788-6370; entrées from $13).

REDD WOOD
The scene: The owner of the elegant Redd in Yountville, California, took a casual turn for this pizza-centric 90-seat with a sun-warmed bar and dining room lit by fixtures set in massive copper pup cups.

The food: There’s excellent pizza, of course, as well as house-cured meats (displayed in a glass case by the bar), meatballs in tomato sauce, and seasonal pastas.

Dish to get: Chopped salad with salami, chicken, black olives, and red wine vinaigrette—a mashup of California freshness and rustic Italian zest (6755 Washington St.; 707-299-5030; pizzas from $11).

RICH TABLE
The scene: The city’s best chefs spend off-hours at this 50-seat storefront by married duo Evan and Sarah Rich. Its farmhouse feel—whitewashed barn-wood walls, scarred-wood tables—belies the four-star service and food.

The food: The changing New American menu might feature lasagna with chicken, artichokes, and chanterelles with a hint of Douglas fir; or spaghetti with goat cheese, peas, and mint.

Dish to get: Sardine chips—thin potato slices stuffed with fish, then fried and served with horseradish cream (199 Gough St.; 415-355-9085; entrées from $17).

SAISON
The scene: A pop-up turned into one of the Bay Area’s most expensive eateries—the 18-seat Mission District restaurant serves an 18- to 20-course menu for $298, plus wine pairings for $148. The anti-luxury look—concrete floors, 35-foot unfinished ceilings—appeals to the rich Internet set.

The food: Most dishes are touched by a flame-tableside. Before that, intense preparations mean that blue-wing sea robin might be draped with a gelle made from its roasted bones and topped with fried seaweed and a dusting of herring roe.

Dish to get: The brassica category—dehydrated, raw, fried, and toasted veggies with smoky broth and grains (78 Townsend St.; 415-829-7990; tasting menu, $298).

1. Sardine chips and horseradish cream at San Francisco’s Rich Table.
2. At $298 a head, the inventive Saison is one of the Bay Area’s priciest restaurants.

FORMAL TASTING MENUS, CASUAL RESTAURANTS

God knows the Bay Area doesn’t dress up (see: hoodies as start-up uniforms), so multicourse menus now come casually. Try it at: The Mission District’s Roxy’s Cafe, whose Venezuelan-inspired ten-course ($75) are served with paper napkins (2847 Mission St.; 415-375-1185; entrées from $10), and at Commonwealth, which has a fancy but cheap six-course menu for $70 (2224 Mission St.; 415-355-1500; entrées from $15).

70 BEST NEW RESTAURANTS IN THE WORLD, CONTINUED

FOR TOP PICKS IN LONDON, NEW YORK, PARIS, SHANGHAI, SYDNEY, AND TOKYO, SEE PAGE 60.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIK KUKVELI. ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE MCDONALD.
Restaurants

Oakland, California: Ramen Reimagined, Regionally

Ramen Shop
5812 College Avenue
Oakland, California
tel 510.788.6370, ramenshop.com
around $30, plus drinks
open evening only, closed Tuesday, no reservations

In America, it’s hard to uncouple ramen from the chef David Chang of Momofuku fame. His curiosity led to a culinary breakthrough, when he transformed dashi, the stock used to fortify the ramen broth, by replacing the traditional dried bonito fish with smoky Tennessee bacon. That was a symbol of something more important: that you can uphold the integrity of ramen even while reassembling it, with some fresh parts, from the ground up.

Chang’s bacon dashi became the signature flavor at Momofuku Noodle Bar in New York City and established a ramen style people have come to expect there. After it opened in 2004, the number of ramen shops in the US spiked, whether or not as cause and effect, with places such as Ippudo and Jinya Ramen Bar offering their specialized types. At the West Coast restaurant Ramen Shop, a relatively new addition, the owners are steadily applying their skills to looser, improvisational versions of ramen.

Ramen Shop, a stone’s throw from the Rockridge BART station on the border of Oakland and Berkeley, is run by a trio of former Chez Panisse employees: Jerry Jaksich handled the bar, Rayneil De Guzman was a line cook, and Sam White was maître d’. Like that restaurant’s treatment of traditional French cooking — often quoting but always innovating with a California touch — Ramen Shop aims at a California-inspired Japanese cuisine. The restaurant is trying to balance tradition, time, and place, finding out what it means to be a ramen shop that specializes in the raw materials of Northern California.

Japan has more than 80,000 ramen shops as well as a respected ramen critic, Hiroshi Osaki, whose activities include running the all-Japanese Ramen Data Bank website. Ramen is made throughout the country, in more than 100 versions, and it summons intense regional pride. To offer a few examples, in Ashikawa, where the weather can be austere and cold, a layer of melted lard is poured on top of the ramen, which is said to trap the heat. In the southwestern island of Kyushu, the ramen called tonkotsu is a full-bodied, cloudy, marrow-infused fatty broth simmered from pork bones. In Tokyo’s tsukemen style, you dip cold noodles into a highly concentrated broth.

Despite the many kinds of ramen and a Walt Whitmanesque profusion of hybrids, you can come up with a rough definition of ramen. The foundation is the broth, usually made from seafood or the simmered bones of terrestrial animals and often paired with dashi, a consommé made with a varying combination of seaweed, bonito flakes, niboshi (dried salted anchovy), konbu (kelp), and other dried fish and aromatics. Tare is the main source of salt added to the broth and partly determines its flavor. Often tare is added to the bowl right before it’s sent to a customer. Mainstream types of tare include shio (sea salt), shoyu (soy sauce), and miso (fermented bean paste). There’s debate as to whether tonkotsu is a kind of tare (I view it more as a broth). The third component of ramen, noodles, can range from thick and flat to thin and wispy, according to the broth, just as

Melissa Schneider
certain pasta shapes complement certain sauces. Ramen noodles are generally made with wheat flour, salt, water, and kansui, the alkaline salts that give the noodles their firm texture and chewiness. Finally, there are toppings, which can include but are by no means limited to chashu (simmered pork loin or belly), seafood, egg (boiled or soft-cooked), mushrooms, bamboo shoots, scallions, and nori.

Ramen Shop's flavors are ambitious, which is demanding for the chefs, who are trying both to honor and to riff on an established technique. With each broth, the goal is to find a sweet spot where the flavors achieve balance and depth, something that can take many calculated improvements and a lot of time.

One night, King oyster mushrooms and broccoli di ciccio were paired with a veggie–Meyer lemon shoyu broth, which gave an herbaceous aroma and brightness to the umami-laden mushrooms and creamy, salt-cured egg. A bowl of shio tori paitan, normally a heavy, opaque broth made by slowly simmering chicken bones, relied instead on the gelatinousness of chicken feet and showed a lighter color and more nuanced flavor. On another night, a shoyu ramen was served with smoked King salmon, from Half Moon Bay, whose butteriness was set off by delicate squash blossoms and slightly funky mustard greens. One of my summer favorites was a luxurious shio ramen with chashu, chanterelles, a shoyu-marinated egg, scallions, watercress, and Mendoine nori. The last, foraged by a seaweed monger, was a glistening, beautiful, contorted band of crunchy sea grass; watercress added a vegetal freshness that played off the fat of the chashu and the richness of the mushrooms.

As the climate changes, so do the ingredients. In winter you might find heartier root vegetables, such as turnip and sunchoke, as well as squash. In early January I guzzled down a bowl of wild mushroom miso ramen with leaves of broccoli spigarello and chrysanthemum, one of the most balanced bowls I’ve had from them. Ramen Shop proudly takes note that their broths have been steadily improving, especially since their most recent trip to Japan at the end of 2013.

Tinkering with ramen styles irks purists who demand that a certain broth awaken the memory of specific, familiar tastes and bring a sense of comfort. White told me about two Japanese men who live in the Bay
Area and frequent the restaurant, one a sake importer and originally from Kyushu, the other the former chef at Yoshi’s Jazz Club and originally from Tokyo. The man from Tokyo, where the specialty is a soy-flavored chicken broth, dismisses the Kyushu style, while the man from Kyushu, the island dedicated to the opaque pork broth tonkotsu, says Tokyo ramen is not real ramen. White said, “People come in here and say it’s not real ramen, but people in Japan can’t even agree on what real ramen is!”

“There’s a butter-corn miso ramen, which is a classic dish you see a lot in Hokkaido,” said White. “We were excited to execute that with fresh corn. But rather than just throwing corn in there, we made it into a corn salsa, with chopped up Gypsy peppers and cilantro. The idea came about by talking to the farmers.”

When the Ramen Shop trio traveled to Japan in the fall of 2011, they saw that their Japanese brethren faced limitations. Customers in Japan have expectations when they visit a particular ramenya and any room for alteration is infinitesimal. There are places so famous for their ramen that they wouldn’t dare change it, says White, because they have in fact perfected it. White says, where a chef in Japan might write a menu and then buy the ingredients, the Ramen Shop chefs let the ingredients determine the menu; they feel free to be unorthodox. Nothing stays the same at Ramen Shop.

“It was hard for my teacher to accept,” said Jaksich, “but he was excited about the idea.” Jaksich first traveled to Japan at the age of 22 to teach English for a year. It was just after the plane touched down in Sapporo, while he was still at the airport, that he discovered the intensity and richness of ramen, in a bowl of
miso broth with corn and butter. Later, Jaksich trained under a ramen master in Hokkaido, where he had a revelatory experience with a bowl of tonkotsu fish-flavored broth called gyokai: “You know when the writer tastes the food” — in the movie Ratatouille — “and is taken back to his childhood? This was vision-inducing ramen.”

Ramen Shop's interior is an ode to the Pacific Northwest and the Bay Area woodworkers’ community: beams are made from Douglas fir and boards come from an old barn on Jaksich’s family’s property in Oregon. There are concrete floors and industrial-style lamps. Ramen Shop is partitioned in two. The front is a spacious, high-ceilinged waiting area with a full bar — a relatively novel idea in the world of ramen. Most of the popular ramen shops White encountered in Japan have hour-long waits; possibly there’s a tent to stand under, but more likely you stand in the street, maybe in the rain, maybe next to a laundromat blowing out hot, damp air. Waiting customers at Ramen Shop can pull a stool up to the bar and sip on Japanese whisky (including an 18-year-old Yamazaki); brews from nearby Moonlight, Magnolia, and Drake’s; or cocktails such as the Polo Fields Punch, a refreshingly floral combination of rye, peach-infused bourbon, Punt e Mes vermouth, ginger, and local Santa Rosa plum.

The dining area ceiling is lower and your eyes immediately trace the curving wooden construction over the long counter; it looks like lath without the plaster. The long, heavy wooden counter, streaked with black nail marks, is the place to sit and watch the activity in the open kitchen. Jaksich and De Guzman alternate. One stands front and center, every so often sampling a small bundle of noodles to check the texture; the other works the fiery wok and grill stations.

Just left of the bar stands the 600-pound noodle machine imported from Japan. The hassle must have been worth it, because Ramen Shop’s noodles are exceptional. The flour gives Ramen Shop’s noodles their distinct, vaguely nutty character. It comes from Central Milling Company and is 70 percent Italian-style 00 and 30 percent Beehive, a flavor-enhancing all-purpose flour blended from hard red winter wheat. Jaksich also adds gluten as well as kansui, a combination of sodium and potassium carbonates.

As he showed me the kitchen, he pulled out a purple instrument reminiscent of a telescope; it’s a gauge that measures the alkaline levels of the kansui water used to make the noodles. The origins of alkaline noodles are largely unknown, although it is believed they developed in southern China to combat the effects of humidity on dough. The author and chemisty whiz Harold McGee describes the alkalinity’s effect as coaxing out the yellow pigment in flour and strengthening the gluten, so the noodles dissolve at a much slower rate and stay springy and chewy. That matters because a noodle’s composition changes quickly in boiling water.

De Guzman explained to me that the noodles are the vehicle for flavor. Kansui allows you to cook a ramen noodle for just 45 seconds, so it keeps that toothsome quality, where if you did that with regular pasta it would taste raw. The key, he says, is that the cooked ramen noodle continues to absorb liquid after it is placed in the broth, and the broth enters the noodle.

In addition to three rotating kinds of ramen — generally one veggie, one assari (light broth), and one kottari (heavy broth) — there is always a plate of pickles made by Siew-Chinn Chin, a former pastry chef, as well as two salads, a fried rice option, and another for donburi (which means “bowl” but generally refers to one holding a rice dish).

Among the restaurant’s salads, I was drawn to the Little Gem lettuce — a crisp, sweet cross between romaine and butterhead — mixed with slightly bitter escarole, Gypsy peppers, flat yellow romano beans, and a creamy miso dressing. One night last spring, Riverdog Farm asparagus appeared with smoked black cod, beets, and spicy mustard-miso dressing. There were also wok-smoked sardines with escarole, red-fleshed Cara Cara oranges from the San Joaquin Valley, and avocado-green garlic dressing. The sardines’ slightly pungent smell had been mellowed by a perfume of smoke, and was punctuated by the bright, almost berrylke sweetness from the thin slices of orange.

On an early August day, De Guzman set on the counter a bundle of local anise hyssop, in full bloom at that time, and proceeded to pick off the leaves. As the tiny lavender, trumpet-shaped flowers and square stems suggest, the plant belongs to the mint family. The leaves taste of a mildly spicy, licorice essence. De Guzman insisted that I also try the delicate flower; its aroma was more gentle, but on the tongue its sweetness surpassed that of the leaves.

The previous night, De Guzman had dipped entire anise hyssop branches, flowers intact, in a tempura batter. Now the anise hyssop would play the role of a subtle accouterment, placed with Monterey Bay squid, pork, wild nettles, cilantro, and Chin’s spicy shrimp chile paste, all of which appear in the restaurant’s version of fried rice. The bowl combined aromas from land
and sea, both earthy and briny. And there was the anise, cutting through the unctuousness of the pork and heat of the chiles, gently rounding out the dish, as if to say, I belong here too.

Jaksich explained that when ramen came to Japan from China, it was given the name *chuka soba*, or “Chinese” soba. “Ramen is written in Chinese characters, which means it’s a foreign object that’s been introduced to Japan,” he said. White added that in Japan you can find soba houses that are 400 years old, while the earliest versions of ramen can be traced only to the early 1900s. Japanese ramen was heavily influenced by Americans after the Second World War, when the United States dumped a massive supply of wheat onto the Japanese market to feed the hungry population. Because bread wasn’t standard food in Japan, the flour was made into noodles, and wheat noodles became a cheap staple.

Despite the hallowed language often associated with ramen, and the strong feelings some people have about specific kinds, ramen was never a food frozen in time. Lately gaining traction is the double-soup style, which is made by combining two separate broths, as opposed to gradually building a single one. Ivan Orkin, originally from New York and now a ramen master in Tokyo, even serves ramen there with a layer of schmaltz on top. (He has just opened a *ramenya* in New York and will soon open a second, and his recent book, *Ivan Ramen*, is a great place to learn more about ramen.) Besides, variations such as Ramen Shop’s broth with Meyer lemon — whose scent and flavor are so characteristic of Northern California cooking — add a West Coast dimension to ramen’s ever-expanding reach.

— Justin Bolois

**Books**

**Dogma and Pasta**


The authors’ assertive, no-nonsense, yet congenial tone expresses this perfectly. Their book is “not for people who think it doesn’t matter what you do as long as you enjoy it.” Elsewhere: “Live and let live’ does not apply to the service and consumption of Italian pasta, for which there are approved methods and unapproved methods and not much gray area between.” I was surprised by many of the generalizations and pronouncements that followed in 15 introductory pages, so I took a mini-survey of friends and acquaintances whose knowledge of Italian culinary ways is deep (because they are Italian or have married Italian). I wanted to see how much of what Fant and Zanini De Vita write is really dogma.

The authors say that “everyone in Italy knows the metric formula”; 100 grams of pasta, 1 liter of boiling water, and 10 grams of salt. This turns out to be something taught mainly in cooking schools and written in _Il Cucchiato d’argento_ (the definitive cooking reference that no one really uses); home cooks, per my friends, haven’t heard this formula and really do eyeball the amounts. All agree that salting the water is essential, that oil should not be added to the water, and that no one ever cuts pasta with a knife or edge of a fork to make it easier to eat.

The consensus on matching sauce and shape, according to the authors, is less clear. Pairings “can be eccentric and highly subjective” — _sugo ai frutti di mare_ (seafood sauce), for
Ramen Shop
Chez Panisse alums turned ramen masters
Oakland, California

RAMENSHOP.COM

"Our noodles are made fresh every day with organic eggs and flour. The broth is made from scratch. Even the anchovies that go into a dashi are cleaned and dehydrated in house. As far as we know we are the only ramen place in America that does all of this. All our ramen bowls are made by the very talented Jessica Niello who is an incredible artist in different mediums. Carrying a well-crafted ramen in a well-crafted bowl to someone feels very special."

Jeff Canham
Traditional sign painter and designer
San Francisco, California

JEFFCANHAM.COM

"Painting letters by hand really helped me discover the beauty in imperfections. It took me a while to recognize it, but the inconsistencies are now what make sign painting attractive to me. No matter how hard I try to make something perfect, there are inevitably flaws, and those nuances are the details that I appreciate. I’m optimistic about sign painting’s future. It went through a rough patch where older sign painters were hanging up their brushes and it didn’t seem like there were too many people keeping the tradition going. But now there’s no shortage of young people that are interested in learning the craft and pursuing a lucrative career in hand painted signs."