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RIALTO | Cambridge, Massachusetts

← to his own Jewish roots, a pastrami made with house-cured pastrami atop a just-baked rye English muffin. **WHILE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD** visit the restored Thirtieth Street train station across from the restaurant, 29 Arch Street; 215-922-3839; rialto-restaurant.com.

Rialto CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

THIRTEEN YEARS AGO, chef Jody Adams and partner Michela Larson opened Rialto in Cambridge, which featured a menu of Mediterranean food that garnered national acclaim, including from us. Larson has moved on to open Rocca (see right), while Adams shut Rialto down, then reopened it last February with a new look and a new menu.

Adams has kept some of the dishes her regulars begged her not to remove, like the grilled clams with andouille sausage and a garlic roll, but she now changes the menu monthly to feature a different region of Italy; when I visited, she was serving highly personalized dishes from Sicily, starting off with fava beans, fennel, and ricotta slathered on crisp country bread, then house-made tagliatelle with the season's shad roe, pancetta, and greens. There was also luscious spaghetti with

lobster, and a smoky mixed grill of swordfish and tuna with sweet-and-sour eggplant, tomatoes, and artichokes. This is not a rehab; it's a great new restaurant with a fine pedigree.

WHEN YOU MAKE A RESERVATION, ask for the booth in front of the antipasti counter. 1 Bennett Street; 617-661-5050; rialto-restaurant.com.

Rocca Kitchen & Bar BOSTON

MICHEL LA LARSON left Rialto to her former partner (see left) and came to Boston's South End to open Rocca, where she brings her passion for the food of Liguria, that stretch of rippling coastline referred to as the Italian Riviera and teeming with fabulous seafood, great olive oil, and the finest sweet basil in the world (the basis of the region's signature pesto dishes).

The large dining room, formerly a warehouse, is now fitted with retro-industrial brick-and-cork walls and banquettes positioned around slate-topped tables. After frequent intensive eating excursions to Liguria, Larson has really nailed the flavors of the region, from pastas like trofie with a verdant pesto, to fat panzotti ravioli stuffed with ricotta and lavished with walnut sauce, to chestnut-flour corzetti, →

LET'S CALL A THOUSAND- YEAR BAN ON...

Sommeliers for any liquid other than wine (tea, coffee, tequila, water)

Two extra dollars for steak sauce for your forty-two-dollar steak

Plates that are way, way bigger than the food

Menus that exceed the size of the table itself

Menus made of construction material (wood, metal, slate)

Having to settle up at the bar first

High-minded reinterpretations of the s'more

Cash

Citrus the name of the farm where the brussels sprouts come from

The manager's "party" playlist played way too loud

Bathroom attendants

Our table not being ready



THINGS WE OVERHEARD Woman: "Excuse me—and you might not agree with this—but sailboats use a lot less fossil fuel." First man: "I hate sailboats. I'd rather turn on the AC while you make me some drinks." Second man: "You're certainly hung up on this fuel thing. It's not my problem." (PORTER HOUSE NEW YORK, NEW YORK)

← little rounds of pasta with braised rabbit and red wine. Sea bass is cooked so the skin is crisp and the white flesh beneath it suffused with herbs. For dessert, try the walnut-and-fig torte with a glass of semidry Tuscan dessert wine, Vin Santo.

WHILE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, visit the art galleries of the South End. 500 Harrison Avenue; 617-451-5151; roccaboston.com.

Shaun's | ATLANTA

EVERY TIME ATLANTA chef Shaun Doty moves to a new restaurant—from Mumbo Jumbo to Table 1280 and now to his own place—his food gets simpler and better. So does the decor, which at Shaun's—a small sixty-five-seat Southern bistro located on the premises of an old soul-food eatery in quiet Inman Park—is a homey mix of red-brick floors, white-brick walls, and tables topped with butcher paper.

Doty's cooking is a combination of classic Southern comfort food with the high style he learned from Atlanta master chef Guenter Seeger, like a simple platter of summer's sweetest, most colorful heirloom tomatoes dressed with basil, shallots, and olive oil. His shrimp and stone-milled grits are tossed with peppery tasso ham, an oozy poached egg, and a spicy creole sauce; tender Wagyu beef cheeks are served with butter beans and Carolina Gold rice that tastes like popcorn; and the crisp french fries that accompany a perfectly juicy roast chicken are cooked in flavor-imparting duck fat. In a city now inundated with national-chain restaurants, Shaun's is a paragon of what contempo-

rary Southern food can and should be. **WHILE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**, check out the Variety Playhouse for jazz, rock, and other live music. 1029 Edgewood Avenue; 404-577-4358; shaunsrestaurant.com.

Table 45 | CLEVELAND

YOU DON'T RUN ACROSS many fine-dining restaurants owned by hospitals, but the Cleveland Clinic Foundation has long been landlord of the InterContinental Hotel and its restaurant, which for years was a good but dull French dining room. Now, as Table 45, it's one of the most strikingly modern in America, costing (some say) \$12 million. Divided into five "zones" allowing for high-end dining or a casual nosh at the counter, the place is sleek, polished, and very cool—curving-glass private rooms, a blond-wood bar buffed to a low sheen, leather-covered curved metal chairs—like a retro-modern first-class dining room on a Richard Branson space station.

Chef Zachary Bruell has never been more versatile, drawing on global influences in dishes like his homespun bowl of Vietnamese noodles and veal meatballs. Chicken emerges from the fierce heat of a tandoori oven red-orange and sizzling. →



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CULINARY FICTIONAL TREND OF THE YEAR: THE OPPOSITE OF SOUS VIDE



CARLOS BOUNDARY slid down off the counter and showed me around the kitchen, telling me his story—or, as it turned out, his creation myth. He was one quarter Apache, he said, which was Apache enough not to give a shit about the three quarters of him that was "Texican." It was the Apache strain, after all, that gave him the balls to be what he was before he became a chef: a smoke jumper. "Some people go to Le Cordon Bleu," he said. "I went to Criapea Gulch. I went to the fire at the Salamaclis Gate, in New Mexico. You have no idea: all these poor animals, pouring out of the forests, some of them singed, some of them already smoking, just from the heat—so some you have to shoot. And then you have to eat them, because that's the Apache code: What you kill, you eat. That's where I learned to cook. On the fire line. In the beginning I used to bring chiles in a pouch—you know, your arbol, your pamanilla, that good stuff—but after a while I went with nothing but my appetite. Because the fire gives you what you need. Fire tells you what smells good, even gives you charcoal briquettes and a box of matches. What else do you need? Okay, tequila. Because we're Indians, right? Ain't no party without the pulque.

"And that's how it happened, my friend. One night, we all got drunk enough that we didn't know the fire jumped the line. We had a beautiful elk already dressed, already in the pit and garlanded with juniper berries, already blessed with a whole bottle of our best—and then it's like, Hey, man, is it hot in here, or is it just me? So next thing, we're running around like ten little Indians, because the thing about fire is that it's fast, man, like God on wheels. Faster you run, faster it goes. But somehow we outrun it. Somehow we survive. The Great Spirit was with us, the wind shifts, and when it's over, I go back. Because I can smell the elk. It's cooked, man, and I'm hungry. And when I taste it, I know what I want to do with the rest of my life. Because this isn't no knife-and-fork eating, my friend—this is get down on your knees and eat strips of flesh with your bare hands because you're lucky to be alive even if the poor elk isn't. **Two minutes at 2000 degrees. That's the essence of my cuisine.**"

—From "Three Lunches with Alberto Gonzales," a work of fiction in progress, by Tom Junod.