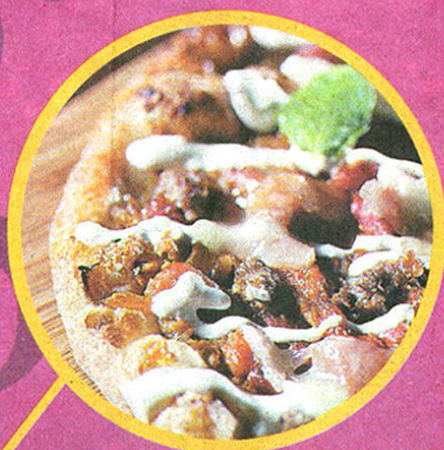


**G**  
FOOD

RESTAURANT TRENDS

# WHAT'S IN, OUT, AND UPCOMING

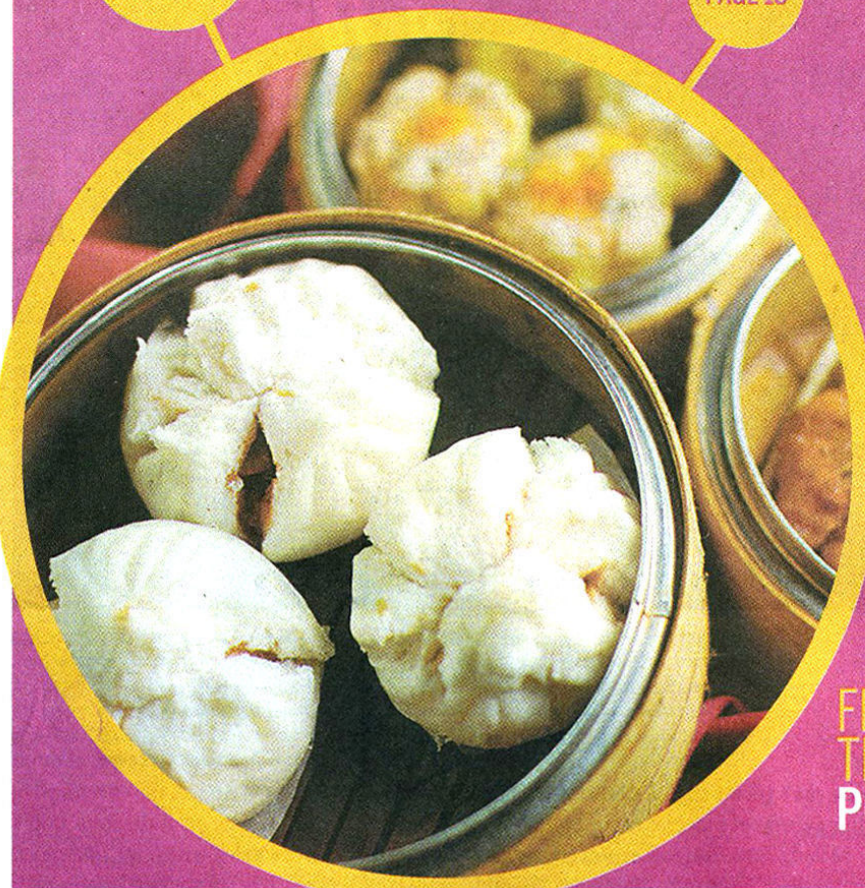
A SAMPLING OF CUTTING EDGE  
DISHERS AROUND TOWN  
By Devra First



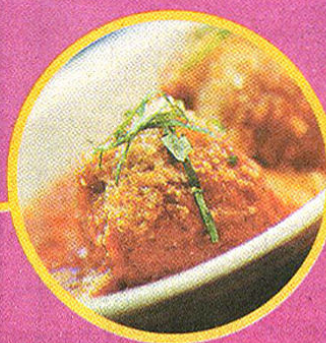
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FLAVOR OF  
THE MONTH  
PORK BUNS



5 MINUTES AGO  
MEATBALLS



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# CUTTING EDGE

HERE TODAY  
AND GONE  
TOMORROW.  
SO GO  
THE TASTES  
COMPETING  
FOR DINERS'  
DOLLARS.

By Devra First  
Globe Staff

Fashion is fickle. Tastes change. This is as true for food as it is for couture. In restaurants, tuna tartare gives way to house-made charcuterie, Italian flavors to Southern, then Asian, ones. Yesterday's risotto is replaced by today's grits — at least until grains like freekeh (roasted wheat) and quinoa begin to encroach. What's in, out, and upcoming on Boston menus right now? Let's take a look.

## APPETIZER

**5 MINUTES AGO MEATBALLS** Made with pork, beef, veal, or shrimp. In red sauce, sweet-and-sour, with Asian herbs. Meatballs turned up everywhere, the perfect little snack. Where to eat: Il Casale, 50 Leonard St., Belmont. 617-209-4942. [www.ilcasalebelmont.com](http://www.ilcasalebelmont.com). Maiale (pork) meatballs, \$7.

**FLAVOR OF THE MONTH FLATBREAD** It's not pizza. It's a pizza-like crust topped with things one might put on a pizza. Flatbread just sounds so much classier. If you're eating at a restaurant in 2012, chances are flatbread is on the menu. Where to eat: Trade, 540 Atlantic Ave., Boston. 617-451-1234. [www.trade-boston.com](http://www.trade-boston.com). Lamb sausage flatbread, \$15.

**ON THE RISE PORK BUNS** Chinese cha siu bao, steamed buns filled with pork, are a dim sum staple. In New York, the restaurant Momofuku spread them to a wider audience. They haven't made a huge splash in this city yet, but as chefs increasingly incorporate Asian flavors, we will see more. Where to eat: East by Northeast, 1128 Cambridge St., Cambridge. 617-876-0286. [www.exnecambridge.com](http://www.exnecambridge.com). Crispy pork belly on mantou bread, \$9.

## VEGETABLES

**5 MINUTES AGO PICKLES** House-made pickles were ubiquitous to the point of mockery — they inspired a sketch on IFC comedy "Portlandia." "We can pickle that!" announced the show's stars, about everything from CD jewel cases to parking tickets. Fortunately, area chefs tended to stick to things like locally grown turnips and radishes. Where to eat: Grillo's Pickles, 1075 Cambridge St., Cambridge. (More locations on website.) [www.grillospickles.com](http://www.grillospickles.com). Pickles, assorted prices.

**FLAVOR OF THE MONTH CAULIFLOWER** The new Brussels sprout, once considered unappetizing. It can be found raw, roasted, grilled, and, yes, pickled — served with everything from bone marrow to chorizo to pine nuts and golden raisins. Where to eat: Tico, 222 Berkeley St., Boston. 617-351-0400. [www.ticoboston.com](http://www.ticoboston.com). Roasted cauliflower with creamy chipotle and crunchy fava beans, \$8.

**ON THE RISE SHISHITO PEPPERS** >>> These little Japanese peppers are served grilled or roasted until the skins blister, with plenty of coarse salt. They can be sprinkled with citrus or showered with bonito flakes, served at Asian, Mexican, or Spanish restaurants. About 1 in 10 is spicy, so eating is an adventure. Where to eat: Estragon Tapas Bar, 700 Harrison Ave., Boston. 617-266-0443. [www.estragnetapas.com](http://www.estragnetapas.com). Pimientos shishito, \$7.



## BIRD IS THE WORD

**5 MINUTES AGO DUCK CONFIT** Curing duck legs in salt and cooking them in their own fat yields rich, tender meat and crisp skin. Duck confit appeared both as the star of the dish and an accessory, shredded into everything from salads to spring rolls to quesadillas. Where to eat: Deuxave, 371 Commonwealth Ave., Boston. 617-517-5915. [www.deuxave.com](http://www.deuxave.com). Duck confit, \$14.

<<< **FLAVOR OF THE MONTH FRIED CHICKEN** A Southern specialty that's taken hold in non-Southern restaurants. Most often spotted with its partner, waffles. Where to eat: Trina's Starlite Lounge, 3 Beacon St., Somerville. 617-576-0006. [www.trinastarlitelounge.com](http://www.trinastarlitelounge.com). Fried chicken and waffles, \$14.

**ON THE RISE ASIAN CHICKEN WINGS** Perhaps they are inspired by BonChon, a Korean franchise that serves its fantastically addictive chicken in Allston and Cambridge. Or maybe by Portland, Ore., restaurant Pok Pok, whose Vietnamese fish sauce wings have gained national reputes. Flavored with soy, ginger, chilies, and more, wings are taking on an Asian flavor profile. Where to eat: Park Restaurant & Bar, 59 JFK St., Cambridge. 617-491-9851. [www.parkcambridge.com](http://www.parkcambridge.com). Confit chicken wings with sambal and honey glaze, \$9.



## TRENDY DISH

**5 MINUTES AGO POUTINE** Hailing from Quebec, this dish of fries with gravy and cheese curds took gastropub menus by storm. It's traditionally consumed late at night after too much drink. Can't imagine why it's been such a hit locally. Where to eat: The Gallows, 1395 Washington St., Boston. 617-425-0200. [www.thegallowsboston.com](http://www.thegallowsboston.com). Simple poutine, \$10.

### FLAVOR OF THE MONTH BANH MI >>

These Vietnamese sandwiches feature French bread filled with meat, fish, or tofu, pickled vegetables, cucumbers, cilantro, chilies, and mayonnaise. Bought from a counter in Dorchester or Chinatown, they are one of the best cheap meals in town. The banh mi has now made the transition to non-Vietnamese restaurants, where the price tag is inevitably higher. Where to eat: Strip-T's, 93 School St., Watertown. 617-923-4330. [www.stripts.com](http://www.stripts.com). Eggplant banh mi, \$9.

**ON THE RISE RAMEN** A far cry from the college staple, this handmade dish of noodles and soup is cult-y comfort food in Japan. Here it appears largely on late-night menus and in pop-up restaurants, but it's starting to have a presence on regular menus. Where to eat: Uni, 370 Commonwealth Ave., Boston. 617-536-7200. [www.unisashimibar.com](http://www.unisashimibar.com). Ramen served Friday and Saturday after 11 p.m., \$10.



## MEXICAN EVOLUTION

**5 MINUTES AGO FISH TACOS** Once Bostonians had to go somewhere like San Diego to get a fish taco. Then the dish swam into local taquerias, and soon on to non-Mexican restaurants all over town. Where to eat: Porter Cafe, 1723 Centre St., West Roxbury. 617-942-2579. [www.portercafe.com](http://www.portercafe.com). Grilled fish tacos, \$9.

**FLAVOR OF THE MONTH TACOS THAT COST MORE THAN \$15** As chefs with fine-dining backgrounds adapt classic cheap eats such as barbecue, Mexican, and burgers, the price tags get higher. If we want to eat tacos made with high-end ingredients in professionally designed spaces with liquor licenses, we'll have to help subsidize the experience. Where to eat: The Painted Burro, 219 Elm St., Somerville. 617-776-0005. [www.thepaintedburro.com](http://www.thepaintedburro.com). Chupacabra taco, \$21.

**<< ON THE RISE TABLESIDE GUACAMOLE** It used to be an unusual gimmick: A restaurant employee wheels a cart to your table and makes the dish in front of you, mashing ingredients together in a molcajete, a traditional mortar and pestle. Now, when an upscale Mexican restaurant opens, tableside guacamole is virtually guaranteed. Where to eat: Ole Mexican Grill, 11 Springfield St., Cambridge. 617-492-4495. [www.olerestaurantgroup.com](http://www.olerestaurantgroup.com). Guacamole, \$12.



# cover story



► **DISHES**  
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## PUT IT HERE

**5 MINUTES AGO PUT BACON ON IT** Prevailing wisdom was "Everything's better with bacon." In everything from cocktails to chocolate desserts, there it was. Now bacon fever has cooled slightly, although it's still true that many things are, indeed, better with it. Where to eat: backbar, 9 Sanborn Court, Somerville. 617-718-0249. [www.backbarunion.com](http://www.backbarunion.com). Spicy caramel popcorn with bacon, \$8.

**FLAVOR OF THE MONTH PUT AN EGG ON IT** After bacon, then came the runny egg — poached, fried, cooked at low temperature in a water bath for a long period of time. Eggs can be found atop pizzas, salads, soups, burgers, and more. Where to eat: Russell House Tavern, 14 JFK St., Cambridge. 617-500-3055. [www.russellhousecambridge.com](http://www.russellhousecambridge.com). Crispy soft-poached Chip-In Farm egg, \$7.

**AA ON THE RISE PUT IT IN A JAR** First it was drinks. Then it was desserts like butterscotch pudding. Now one can find just about anything served in a jar, from cured tuna belly to potato puree with mushrooms, crisp duck skin, and (yup) an egg to (wait for it) pickles. Where to eat: Olives, 10 City Square, Charlestown. 617-242-1999. [www.toddenglish.com](http://www.toddenglish.com). Lobster toast with lobster-corn chowder in a jar, \$15.



## THE NEW BLACK

**VV 5 MINUTES AGO BURGERS** Then.

**VV FLAVOR OF THE MONTH BURGERS** Now.

**VV ON THE RISE BURGERS** And forever. Burgers have always been beloved. Now burger joints are opening at an astonishing rate. And none of the restaurateurs seems concerned about flooding the market. Everyone will always want a burger. Where to eat: Flat Patties, 33 Brattle St., Cambridge. 617-871-6871. [www.flatpatties.com](http://www.flatpatties.com). Hamburger, \$3.95.



## SWEET THING

**5 MINUTES AGO CREME BRULEE** This French custard became the dessert equivalent of a snore. It rivaled molten chocolate cake for most over-served dessert in town. Where to eat: T.W. Food, 377 Walden St., Cambridge. 617-864-4745. [www.twfoodrestaurant.com](http://www.twfoodrestaurant.com). Creme brulee foie gras "for my mentors," \$19.

**FLAVOR OF THE MONTH PANNA COTTA** This Italian dessert gets its jiggle from gelatin. Endlessly versatile, it appears flavored with honey, herbs, chocolate, citrus, red currants, even avocado. Where to eat: 80 Thoreau, 80 Thoreau St., Concord. 978-318-0008. [www.80thoreau.com](http://www.80thoreau.com). Panna cotta with raspberry sorbet and pistachio macarons, \$8.

**<< ON THE RISE S'MORES** The ultimate campfire dessert, without the campfire. They come deconstructed, between house-made graham crackers, in milkshake and cupcake form, and more. Where to eat: West Bridge, 1 Kendall Square, Cambridge. 617-945-0221. [www.westbridgerestaurant.com](http://www.westbridgerestaurant.com). S'mores cup with chocolate panna cotta, marshmallow fluff, graham cracker crumbs, and miso syrup, \$7.

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