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DINING OUT WITH (BOSTON) BABY

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Photo: Courtesy of Union Park Press

Susan McCrory

All of you out there with young kids, take note: there's an event happening tonight at [Aura Restaurant](#), nestled within Boston's [Seaport Hotel](#), that you may want to head to. Fast. It's not often you find family-friendly, *gourmet* dining complete with arts activities so that you can enjoy your meal while the kiddies stay occupied in a way that won't give you *agita*.

PRK caught wind of [Aura's "Fine Dining, Family-Style" events](#) held each month on a Friday night 5:30–8pm and decided to delve deeper into tonight's feature: a celebration of the release of [Boston Baby: A Field Guide for Urban Parents](#) written by [Kim Foley MacKinnon](#), who bills Aura as "the perfect double date for two families with kids." Kim, mom of one, will be on hand tonight to sign copies of her book and chat with parents about her take on where to go and what to do around town with kids. In keeping with the family-friendly character of these monthly Fridays at Aura, folks from [Artbeat](#) will run an arts n' crafts table for the kids. A little more distraction means a little more quiet time for Mom and Dad. Aaaaah.

PRK contacted Kim to ask her a few questions about eating out with kids and why Aura, in particular, got her backing.

PRK: What do you look for when you are trying to decide where to dine out with your family?

I have to admit that I don't go out with an eye to pleasing my daughter necessarily. If I did that, we'd only eat in the North End since she's a pastavore! My husband and I like a diverse range of cuisines and we like to try new places. Even if a restaurant doesn't appeal to her, we can always cobble together elements from different dishes for her.

PRK: What are some challenges you have faced while eating out as a family?

My daughter is a vegetarian, and has been from birth, so most kid's menus are out for her. I have never agreed with the chicken fingers/hamburger/fish sticks and fries model for kids anyway. Where are the veggies? I'll often just order sides for her and make that into a dinner.

PRK: Why did you choose Aura as the perfect place to dine out with kids?

Aura has made having a really nice meal in an upscale spot a possibility for families on Friday nights. When the kids inevitably finish eating before their parents, they can go play or do a craft in a dedicated space right there.

PRK: What about the experience at Aura is unique to other family-friendly restaurants in Boston?

I think a lot of people are afraid to go out with their kids. They worry about noise or mess or dirty looks from other diners. Aura has literally laid out the welcome mat for them. You can eat out and it doesn't need to be at a chain restaurant with mediocre food.

PRK: What do you recommend when eating at Aura on Fine Dining, Family Style night-for adults? For kids?

The menu changes monthly and seasonally, so if it becomes a tradition in your family to eat there you're always going to find something new. That said, the baby and children's menus have more continuity. There will always be fresh purees for babies and a pasta option for the older kids. Chef Rachel Klein does twists on popular kids' foods, such as a grilled cheese with sweet potato fries. I don't know anyone else who offers actual baby food, as in fresh purees.

Tonight's menu? For adults it includes corn chowder, pork tenderloin, roasted chicken with gnocchi and shallot cream, a roasted salmon dish with parsnip puree and, for dessert, rosemary apple pie. Babies and toddlers have their own respective menu offerings. No teeth, a few teeth or the whole lot, here's some of what's being served: seasonal purees, a bread and banana plate, chicken in a basket, broccoli flowerettes, peas and corn and chocolate chip cookies. As a mom of two little-ish ones myself, I'll pass on to you what Kim wrote to me when I confessed how, well, 'chicken' I am about taking my kids out to eat: "Don't be afraid!"

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