

Dining (Way) Out

Looking forward, you'll find restaurants in new corners of Boston and the suburbs, mouthwatering new tastes, and a new type of service

By Alison Arnett | May 24, 2007

By the year 2017, the restaurant scene in these parts, which really only began to flourish in the mid-1990s, will be in its mid-20s -- a heady, tumultuous time of life. As the Globe's recently decamped restaurant critic, this is what I see for our dining future.

WHERE YOU'LL DINE, PART 1 Despite Boston's location, restaurants with water views have always been sadly scarce. By 2017, that will change. The Seaport District of South Boston, a flatland today best known for the new Anthony's, will have dozens of options -- from posh to clam shack -- spread down the wide expanse of Northern Avenue, which has a Vegas-like glitz. When you've had enough nautical sights and have tired of the district's modern high-rise styles, you'll head over to Fort Point Channel. The classic early-20th-century factory buildings will have a full complement of condos on upper floors, and restaurants, nightclubs, and retail at street level. Two of Boston's best chefs, Barbara Lynch and Joanne Chang, have already staked out turf in the Fort Point Channel neighborhood.

Another plan could be to simply saunter up -- literally -- to Summer Street (there is a plan to elevate the street) for a steak or nestle into one of the cozy wine bars, enotecas to you Italophiles. You might finish the night with cappuccino at Euro-hip cafes like Gulu-Gulu. So Prague of you.

WHERE YOU'LL DINE, PART 2 Harrison Avenue will become the new Washington Street, which is the new Tremont Street. As the young and hip and wealthy empty nesters flood into new residential areas, the edges gentrify. And where there is gentrification, there are restaurants. Look to add the northern parts of Dorchester, the west side of South Boston, and Mission Hill to your short list of restaurant rows. The edges of the suburbs, too, will be sprinkled with the siblings of downtown greats -- another Sel de la Terre in Natick, more Radius off shoots, Jamie Mammano's big Italian eatery in Burlington. You can eat well and stylishly without paying for parking.

WHAT YOU'LL EAT Tuna tartare will have run its course, thank heaven. But Italian is here to stay. Nuevo Latin will be in full flower by 2017; with the number of Latinos in Boston kitchens, it's inevitable. And already we're seeing Filipinos -- Rene Michelena of Domani and Felino Samson of Pops -- throwing off their shyness and mixing up a heady batch of Asian fusion with spicing from the Philippines.

The way we eat will change, too. We'll drop main courses. The idea of a hunk of protein will be restricted to steakhouses -- another survivor -- where you go once in a while to reminisce. We'll eat more like Chinese or Indians -- many little dishes passed around and shared communally.

WHO'LL COOK AND SERVE So many culinary students will have flooded the market that even the guy behind the counter at the corner White Hen sports a toque. As the current crop of line cooks and baby sous-chefs branches out, opening little boites in every corner of the burbs, we'll be looking for the next new thing in restaurant life. The newest craze may be a heightened form of do-it-yourself: You'll order your meal on hand-held computers and pay on them, too. Maybe the trendiest restaurants will even invite diners into stagelike kitchens to cook their own dinners. Can busing your own tables be far behind? ■

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