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SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2010

Northwest palate

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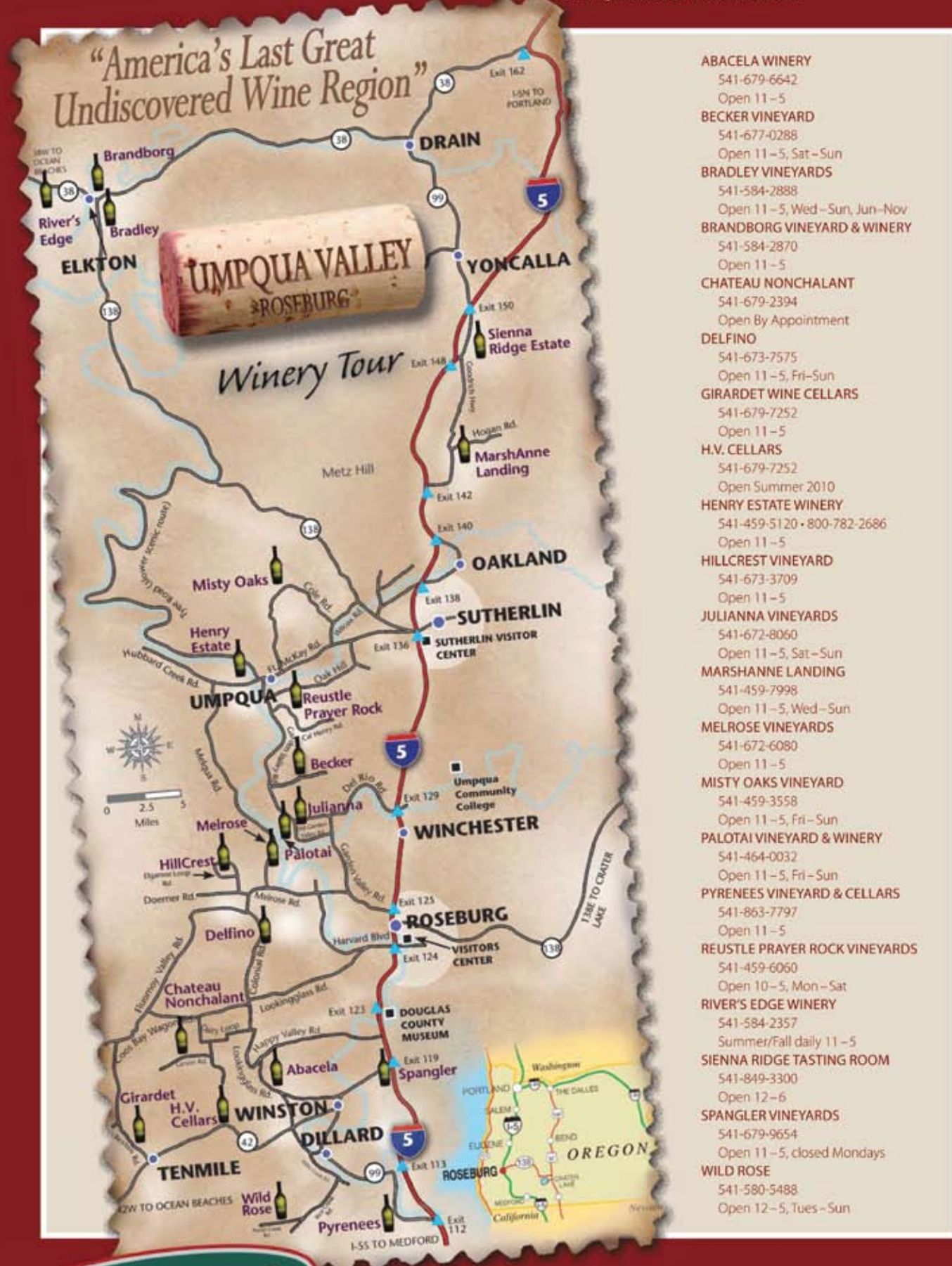
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first course

recent openings

- WASHINGTON
Blueacre Seafood
Cedarbrook Lodge
Wild Ginger
Allium
- OREGON
Irving Street Kitchen
Public Domain
- BRITISH COLUMBIA
Oru
The EdGe



PHOTO BY SEAN BALKOFILM WORK STUDIOS

WASHINGTON

Blueacre Seafood

1700 7th Ave., Seattle, WA
206-659-0737
www.blueacreseafood.com

...the traditional Peruvian ceviche is given a Northwest twist with silken pieces of giant clam, accented with giant Andean corn kernels and a bit of aji amarilla spice
Totten Inlet
Geoduck
Tiradito ➤

Diners still mourning the abrupt shuttering of The Oceanaire in 2009 were thrilled to see those familiar deco doors open once again, the space and menu reinvigorated by chef/owner Kevin Davis and his wife Teresa. Gone is the over-the-top opulence, replaced



PHOTO BY JAY FRIEDMAN

by gleaming stainless steel and cobalt neon reminiscent of the Davis' popular Steelhead Diner in Pike Place Market. Fans of the Steelhead will recognize more than just the smart-casual decor. Carryovers include affordable shellfish and fish options, gumbo, chowder, and sandwiches. Blueacre's menu is divided into sections that evoke a grizzled Scottish moor: The Thorny Field (salads), The Hunger (appetizers), and, of course, The Briny Sea. Dishes are inspired by cuisines near and far, in bold preparations that mostly succeed.

Totten Inlet Geoduck Tiradito is one such example: the traditional Peruvian ceviche is given a Northwest twist with silken pieces of giant clam, accented with giant Andean corn kernels and a bit of aji amarilla spice. A bowl of Green Curry Penn Cove Mussels demonstrates the kitchen is not afraid of heat. At times, the pristine

ingredients can seem buried by sauces so vivacious and voluminous that the bivalves' beauty is lost, like crisp-tender razor clams drowning in a pool of mustard vinaigrette.

Amiable service and an easy vibe welcome diners at the bar. Choose from the dozen or so carefully sourced local oysters and nearly 20 wines by the glass from the Northwest-rich list. Featured beers are handcrafted in nearby Redmond, Pike Place Market, and Rainier.

On the weekends, extensive brunch offerings range from soups and salads to shrimp and grits and smoked salmon hash.

Blueacre is a puppy—over-eager at times, but fun with a playful spirit. Patrons expecting the former room's old-school charm and finesse may be disappointed, but allowed to be its exuberant self, Blueacre Seafood shines.

—LESLIE MILLER

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WILD GINGER
425.495.8889

For 20 consecutive years, the Northwest's most popular restaurant in the Zagat Guide has been the incomparable Wild Ginger, where owners Rick and Ann Yoder merge fresh local ingredients with authentic Pacific Rim cuisine to achieve sublime flavors and a dining experience unlike any other. In 2009 it was one of only 72 restaurants worldwide to receive the Grand Award from Wine Spectator. Dim Sum and Hawker brunch on the weekends.



TROPHY CUPCAKES
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Chocolate Graham Cracker. Lemon Coconut. Peanut Butter and Jelly. These are just a few of the imaginative flavors you'll find at Trophy, where cupcakes are a work of art, as delicious as they are beautiful. Baked fresh every morning with the finest quality ingredients. Having a celebration? Make it unique with custom cupcakes designed exclusively for you. Then find everything else you need to make your party special from cards to decorations.



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Allium

310 E. Main St., Eastsound, WA
360-376-4904
www.alliumonorcas.com

Lisa Nakamura, former executive chef at Seattle's Qube Restaurant and Kirkland's Bin Vivant, has jumped over the pond—Puget Sound, that is. She and her husband recently purchased Christina's on Orcas Island, reopening this past Memorial Day as Allium. (The name derives from the Latin word for garlic and the botanical genus for vegetables like leeks, onions, scallions, and shallots.)

The island's allure is easy to see. Drink in the panoramic waterfront view at one of the umbrella-clad patio table seats on the deck—plus practical touches like hand fans for sunny days and cozy blankets for breezy nights—or sup within the rural-chic dining room.

While perusing the menu, try a creative cocktail like the Orcasm (vodka, Cointreau, and a splash of Chambord) or a glass of wine. Pours are available in sample-friendly as well as five-ounce sizes. The international list has several Northwest standouts, including Dusky Goose from Oregon's Dundee Hills and Thurston Wolfe from Prosser, Washington.

Among the smaller plates, the Daily Gnocchi entices with its white truffle oil drizzle, while Roasted Vegetables with Caramelized Onion and Herb Dip encourages diners to "Eat your veggies and support our farmers!"

Locally and regionally sourced foods from farmers in the San Juan Islands are highlighted on the menu. Entrées include Polenta with Roasted Forest Mushrooms and a sunny side up duck egg from Orcas Island's Black Dog Farms and Mount Townsend's Cirrus Cheese, and

Alaskan Halibut Filet with summer zucchini and a twice-baked tater.

Tempting desserts range from Chocolate Puddin' Cake to a chef's selection of three artisan cheeses. Finish with a freshly brewed cup of Allium's specially blended medium-roast coffee made on-island by Local Goods. There's even Treats for da Poochie—vegetarian, fish, and gluten-free doggie biscuits—to take home.

Whether a quick bite between ferries or a leisurely repast after a day of whale watching, Allium is worth an island stopover.

—JACQUELINE PRUNER

Cedarbrook Lodge

18525 36th Ave. S., Seattle, WA
206-901-9268
www.cedarbrooklodge.com

Secluded in a sleepy suburban stretch by SeaTac airport is this 104-room retreat. Located on 18 acres of restored wetlands, Cedarbrook Lodge is designed for travelers in search of a tranquil stay, with the added convenience of airport proximity. This pet-friendly hotel boasts sleek rooms with oversized soaking tubs, original artwork, and floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the manicured grounds.

Management is committed to protecting the ecological landscape of the property. A mycelium inoculation system—natural water filtration utilizing cultivated oyster mushrooms—is being established to purify water runoff and to irrigate the lawns and chef's garden. Spent cooking oil is recycled, low-energy bulbs are used throughout the lodge, and to-go food packaging is fully compostable, among other ecologically minded practices.

Fresh farm-to-table cuisine is available on-site at Copperleaf Restaurant. The 34-seater serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily to guests staying at the lodge as well as diners just dropping in. Chef Mark Bodinet, formerly of The French Laundry, helms the kitchen. He also tends a small garden planted with herbs, lettuces, root

vegetables, and summer berries, which serves as the inspiration for his seasonally inspired menus.

A recent multi-course meal featured lacquered, crisp-skinned Snake River Farms pork belly accented with Dijon mustard and fresh-from-the-garden baby turnips, followed by tender Painted Hills Natural Beef strip loin with morels and peas, and capped with a cooling quenelle of homemade fromage blanc ice cream with strawberries.

In the mood for something a little more low-key? Spend the evening curled up in the communal living room with a movie. An added perk for hotel guests: old-fashioned candy jars filled with malted milk balls and yogurt-covered pretzels for late-night snacking, and a

Located on 18 acres of restored wetlands, Cedarbrook Lodge is designed for travelers in search of a tranquil stay, with the added convenience of airport proximity▼



freezer full of gourmet ice cream—all complimentary.

With event spaces that can accommodate up to 300 guests, picturesque water features (including a casting pond), an outdoor patio complete with stone fireplace to ward off the night breeze, and spa services, Cedarbrook Lodge is a natural choice for wedding parties, family reunions, or corporate retreats—especially those seeking a "green" locale for their get-together.

—LORNA YEE

San Francisco-based owners ...recycled a defunct restaurant space, warmed up the room's atmosphere considerably, and capitalized on local ingredients
 Salmon Gravlax ▼



PHOTO PROVIDED BY WILD GINGER

Wild Ginger

11020 NE 6th St. Ste 90, Bellevue, WA
 425-495-8889
 www.wildginger.net

East-side Seattleites who have long savored the Pan-Asian cuisine of Wild Ginger no longer have to trek downtown to get their fix. Founders Rick and Ann Yoder opened Wild Ginger's second location in Bellevue's upscale center, The Bravern, last September. No surprise: it has proven to be a popular dining destination.

The multi-level space has a dark drama accentuated by architectural accents of steel, wood, leather, and concrete. The bar area is an appropriately intimate and warm space for enjoying a Vanilla Passion Sidecar or gambling on a Ginsing Margarita. The Satay Bar's gleaming steel stove canopy showcases the cooking action while awaiting servings of Kom Pot Short Ribs (marinated in a mélange of galangal, lemongrass, lime leaves, chiles, turmeric, fish sauce, soy, and honey) or Nam's Prawns with Cambodian dipping sauce.

The deep menu takes time to peruse, and regardless of what is ordered, one has the nagging suspicion that a better dish may be going unsampled. Wild Ginger Fragrant Duck is a mainstay, with the spicy skin complementing the rich duck meat. Seven Flavor Beef offers quick wok-cooked flank steak strips with an involved spicy and fragrant flavor. Black Pepper Scallops are a simple, light, yet wonderfully tasty seafood choice, while the Tuna Manada delivers a complex and potently spicy experience.

—COLE DANEHOWER

OREGON

Irving Street Kitchen

703 NW 13th Ave., Portland, OR
 503-343-9440
 www.irvingstreetkitchen.com

Portland's food community often looks askance at outsider restaurateurs opening new venues: will they respect the city's local, seasonal, sustainable ethos?

In the case of newly opened Irving Street Kitchen, the answer is a resounding "Yes!" San Francisco-based owners Doug Washington and brothers Steve and Mitch

Rosenthal recycled a defunct restaurant space, warmed up the room's atmosphere considerably, and capitalized on local ingredients—from booze to beef—to present creative, full-flavored, Southern cooking-inspired dishes.

Executive chef Sarah Schafer (whose background includes San Francisco's Frisson and New York's Gramercy Tavern) has assembled an intriguing menu. For a "First" course, Angels on Horseback—plump oysters wrapped in bacon with remoulade—is a saucy choice, while the house-smoked trout salad with brunoise-diced potatoes and toasted hazelnut vinaigrette is light and refreshing. Also try the Johnston County (North Carolina) ham sliced transparency-thin and served with buttermilk biscuits and red pepper jelly—the pork may not be local, but it's too good to fight about!

For the "Next" course, the grilled duck sausage, confit duck leg, and gingersnap-brown basmati rice with pan drippings is simply spectacular. The house-smoked St. Louis BBQ ribs with broccolini and bourbon-glazed cornbread has an authentically Southern aura, while pan-roasted halibut with white corn, mascarpone, morels, and truffle cream is Northwest cuisine at its finest.

Sommelier Nicole Burke has done a remarkable job of creating one of the most intelligently chosen regional wine lists in the city. Her selections highlight superb smaller producers with distinctive wines that are well ahead of the nearly hackneyed glass pours found at so many other places in town. On top of that, the restaurant features a unique barrel-to-bar program, with glass pours coming through custom-designed taps into wine kegs kept with argon, and which are filled at the winery and driven to the restaurant by owner Doug Washington.

Such attention to quality seems apparent in all operational aspects. From the warmly attentive staff to the use of local ingredients—beer and spirits included—Irving Street Kitchen fits right in.

—COLE DANEHOWER



PHOTO BY MIEKE STRAND PHOTOGRAPHY

Public Domain

603 SW Broadway, Portland, OR
 503-243-6374
 www.publicdomaincoffee.com

With its motto "Great Coffee is Public Domain," this new coffeehouse in downtown Portland has set out to provide superior cups of coffee—not just something to drink every morning to wake up with, but rather a truly buzz-worthy experience.

Public Domain is the first coffeehouse opened by Coffee Bean International, the Oregon-based coffee importer and roaster that started in Eugene in 1972 (its headquarters are now in Portland), and today is an international leader in sustainable, organic, and fair trade coffee.

The space on the corner of Alder and Broadway is inviting and modern with stainless and warm wood appointments, Wi-Fi, and ample counters to park your laptop for an afternoon of caffed-up power web surfing.

Baristas expertly pull shots on

the high-performance (and made-in-Seattle) espresso machine—the Slayer. As they tamp the grounds and adjust the machine's pressure, baristas welcome conversation with customers standing nearby or sitting at the coffee bar.

Weekends at 2pm, the company's coffee roasters join the discussion at public cuppings: these sessions give java enthusiasts the opportunity to chat with industry professionals and taste various coffees from around the world while learning about the farms where the beans were grown.

Happy hours take place every Monday from noon till 1pm, and again Thursday from 4pm to 6pm, when shots are only \$1 each. Perk up with a shot of the house espresso, Prometheus—a blend of South American and African coffees that tastes of toasted almonds—or one of the single varietals from Kenya, El Salvador, and Peru.

Public Domain also hosts brewing classes on the first Saturday of every month at 11am. Baristas demonstrate different brewing methods and teach the techniques—



PHOTO BY GARY WILSON

▲ ...this new coffeehouse in downtown Portland has set out to provide superior cups of coffee—not just something to drink every morning but rather a truly buzz-worthy experience

how to achieve the best grind, for example—for making the best coffee at home. Now that's something to buzz about.

—KAMILA KUHN

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➤ Oru's kitchen is headed by executive chef Andrew Wong, who describes his style as "Asian brasserie," which conveys tremendous license for the young chef to strut his stuff



B.C.

Oru

1038 Canada Place, Vancouver, B.C.
604-695-5500
www.orucuisine.com

Walk into the lobby of the recently unveiled Fairmont Pacific Rim and you can't help but be struck by its style and grace compared to the typical hotel foyer.

With oversize dark leather chairs, soaring ceiling, and windows looking across to the new convention center, this lobby lounge is a sure lure for postprandial lingering. Climbing the stairs to Oru, I was struck by the overall refreshingly modern setting, with wide-open spaces wrapped in a strikingly minimalist decor bathed in natural light.

The mood is a fitting metaphor for the cuisine: Oru's kitchen is headed by executive chef Andrew Wong, who describes his style as "Asian brasserie," which conveys tremendous license for the young chef to strut his stuff.

Lunches include an ingenious china variation on the Japanese bento box. The Four Set allows you

to make your own flexible choices of appetizer, salad, main course, and dessert, for just \$24CDN. The sense of design also carries through onto the plate. A pretty appetizer of grilled scallops with enoki mushrooms and edamame (excellent with Sauvignon Blanc) arrived on a matte black square dish.

Choices yielded no shortage of deliciousness, including perfectly seared albacore tuna tataki with soy-ginger vinaigrette and pickled ginger, kimchi-spiced braised short rib—just hot enough to be interesting—and an exquisite silken ganache chocolate tart.

Service was very attentive, not overly formal, and pleasantly friendly. For the uninitiated, chopsticks here come with a knife and fork—a good thing, since the plastic sticks are Japanese-style and can be tricky for even the most determined of noodle hunters.

Lunch is the most underrated dining experience, and Oru's is no exception. Dinner offerings, however, cover a wider selection with slightly larger portions and featuring local, seasonal ingredients. Favorites range from seared Qualicum Bay scallops to a Vietnamese pho with Pemberton beef brisket and bahn mi. Also of note, noodles and tofu are all made



◀ Housemade Cured Meats
The house-cured salumi, capicollo, and a three-year-aged prosciutto are made from Ossabaw pigs raised on the chef's nearby farm

in house, which pushes the quality envelope considerably.

Pan Asian cuisine without definition or regional focus can be a precarious undertaking. However, Wong cooks with confidence and obviously thrives by extemporizing on classic dishes. Oru's style excels on several levels, from the obvious thought behind the sheer variety of tastes to their detail-driven execution.

—TIM PAWSEY

The EdGe

6688 E. Sooke Rd., Sooke, B.C.
778-425-3343
www.edgerestaurant.ca

Edward Tuson, the chef who famously coaxed exotic flavors from begonia tubers and other wild edibles at Sooke Harbour House, is now delighting palates with elevated fare at his new post.

While he could have set his sights on an urban locale, Tuson stayed in his Sooke neighborhood, refashioning a former down-on-its-luck fry shack into a cozy 25-seat eatery. The vibe is laid-back, with an open kitchen, tables set around banquettes with warm colors, and a location on the edge, literally, of the road.

Lunch is a selection of the hits: sandwiches, burgers and fries, fish and pasta dishes, but with a seasonal bent, and everything made in-house. The hugely popular crispy squid finds wide slices of tender panko-crusting squid meat sitting atop spicy coleslaw with a sweet jalapeño-spiced dipping sauce.

At the dinner hour, Tuson's culinary talents really come to life. The house-cured salumi, capicollo, and a three-year-aged prosciutto

are made from Ossabaw pigs raised on the chef's nearby farm. Sweet and clean tasting, the selection was enhanced with white truffle oil, olives, and an aged balsamic to provide a tangy counterpoint. The sesame-ginger scallops showed Tuson's adventurous side, pairing them with salsa and guacamole.

Main dishes balance meat, fish, and pastas. A luscious slow-roasted pork chop rests atop a velvety cumin-corn sauce, while halibut sits on a bed of Israeli couscous, garden

peas, and an intense lemon sauce.

Dessert continues the gustatory pleasures with crisp apple spring rolls paired with apple jelly and tart apple syrup, and a flourless chocolate brownie with root beer ice cream.

The wine and craft beer list is minimal but thoughtfully chosen by partner Gemma Claridge. The affordable price points—the chef's choice five-course tasting menu is a deal at \$50CDN—easily makes The EdGe a regular hangout.

—SHELORA SHELDAN



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