

At Provence
Marinaside, the
whole Dungeness
crab provençale with
seasonal vegetables
and seven-grain rice
is as attractive as
it is delicious

PHOTO BY KK LAW





where TO DINE 2019

We salute the restaurants and people who make Vancouver such a foodie paradise

BY TIM PAWSEY, SHERI RADFORD & CHLOË LAI

■ CRITICS' CHOICE

| ■ READERS' CHOICE

LES CLEFS D'OR CANADA SILVER SERVICE

Provence Marinaside

No one makes more reservations in a year than a hotel concierge. And few have their fingers on the city's dining pulse as firmly as Vancouver's Les Clefs d'Or. Always in the loop, they can recommend the ultimate experience—and often secure that hard-to-find last-minute table. This year, their nod goes to Provence Marinaside, a waterside delight on False Creek's Yaletown shore. Marine-inclined fare marries South of France classics with West Coast flair, such as bouillabaisse, Dungeness crab provençale and olive-dusted seared tuna, using the freshest of local ingredients. Savour smaller bites at the adjacent TWB — The Wine Bar. See page 70.—TP



PHOTOS (BOTH PAGES) BY KK AW

Mouthwatering options
await at Elisa (above left),
Verre (above right) and
Coquille (opposite)



Other Notable Newcomers

Aleph Eatery
Autostrada
Di Beppe
DownLow Chicken Shack
Hundy
Origo Club
Pepino's Spaghetti House
Popina
Stem Japanese Eatery
Their There
Tocador
Ugly Dumpling

BEST NEW RESTAURANT Coquille Fine Seafood

In a city renowned for fresh seafood, it can be difficult to stand out. Coquille rose to the challenge. Located in the heart of Gastown, this stylish room was dreamed up by the folks at award-winning L'Abattoir, just across the street. The marine-cuisine newcomer dishes up seafood platters and oysters galore, along with all the usual suspects—but done superbly: halibut, sablefish, branzino, trout, prawns, scallops, mussels, lobster and more. And the plush coral-coloured booths, reminiscent of seashells, invite settling in and lingering a while. See page 40.—SR

FINALISTS

Elisa Wood-Fired Grill

Cosseted in a sumptuously refurbished Yaletown warehouse, Elisa grills to perfection a wide range of superb premium cuts, from Cache Creek grass-fed strip loin and rib-eye to a trio of impossibly tender Wagyu from Alberta, Kagoshima and Idaho. The impressive cellar yields a line-up of well-chosen Napa, Bordeaux and BC premium reds and more to go along. See page 70.—TP

Verre

This glass-clad brasserie on Coal Harbour's seawall sparkles with inventive Mediterranean flavours. Highlights include whole roasted branzino with salsa verde, seared Humboldt squid puttanesca, and 48-hour short rib on the bone with a herb polenta. The setting is smart, the mood fun, and the small black-marble bar a popular happy-hour haunt. See page 34.—TP



The timeless decor and
trend-proof flavours
at Hy's prove that
"classic" is always in style





EDITOR'S CHOICE Hy's Encore

If change truly is a constant, don't tell Hy's, which next year marks 60 years in Vancouver, where longevity in restaurants isn't a strong suit. But Hy's continues to defy the odds for any number of reasons. The one truly "clubby" room in town allows you to hunker down in old-style dining chairs under old-school oil portraits. (But it does sport a newly renovated upstairs.) Hy's has survived everything from the extinction of the three-martini lunch to the onset of rampant veganism. Its secret? To pamper us with those things we hold dear, from cheese toast to jumbo-prawn cocktails. And a filet aged at least 28 days, cooked precisely as requested, drenched in brandy and wild mushroom sauce. See page 37.—TP

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD White Spot Restaurants

BC's longest-running group of chain restaurants has wholeheartedly embraced the Ocean Wise program. Yet many White Spot classics, from the shrimp sandwich to cod 'n' chips, have long been ocean-friendly. Today's menu spans the sustainable spectrum, from seafood fettuccine to Mexican-style shrimp tacos to wild Pacific salmon with shrimp, scallops and clams. "White Spot reaches an audience considerably different from many of our past winners," says Ocean Wise coordinator Tania Leon. "Their kids' Pirate Paks even include Ocean Wise messaging and games to educate the next generation." See page 38.—TP

The Sustainable Seafood Award is presented to the restaurant that best exemplifies practices of sourcing, serving and promoting sustainable species, as outlined under the Ocean Wise Program.

White Spot highlights sustainable seafood in family-friendly dishes such as seafood fettuccine



Fried Chicken

It may not be fancy, but it sure is satisfying: Vancouver's hottest food craze is fried chicken at dedicated spots like Juke, DownLow, Popeyes and Hot-Star. More upscale restaurants want in on the tasty trend, too, so don't miss the fried chicken at Nightingale (with spiced maple syrup) and Burdock & Co. (with pickle mayo and dill powder).



PHOTOS OF MICHEL JACOB AND LE CROCODILE BY KK LAW

Michel Jacob (above left) and Christine Coletta (above right) are key players in Vancouver's food-and-wine scene

LEADERSHIP Michel Jacob

The Leadership Award recognizes an individual who has made a significant contribution to the city's hospitality scene over many years. *Where* is delighted to salute Michel Jacob. It takes more than culinary skill to run a successful fine dining restaurant for 35 years, not to mention win almost every award in the book. Even after three decades, *Le Crocodile* (page 65) remains the destination French room in the city. Unknown to most, however, is the role this highly respected chef has played as mentor to many local chefs who early in their careers apprenticed with him at *Le Crocodile*. See next page for an interview with Jacob.—TP

LES DAMES D'ESCOFFIER TRAILBLAZER Christine Coletta

You don't have to look long in Vancouver to find somewhere Christine Coletta has left her mark.

She was instrumental in building the BC wine industry, the fruits of whose labours you'll now discover on almost every wine list in the city. As the founding executive director of the BC Wine Institute, Coletta helped forge Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA), Canada's appellation system. Well ahead of the curve, she shaped programs that encouraged Vancouver restaurants to pour wines by the glass. That helped establish a regional food-and-wine culture that had never existed before. And she continues to be a major industry player: over the last decade Coletta has established (with partner Steve Lornie) her own winery, Okanagan Crush Pad. Find their increasingly organic drops, including Haywire and Free Form, at Marquis Wine Cellars and BC Liquor Stores (both listed on page 85), among others.—TP

Les Dames d'Escoffier is an organization of women leaders in food, beverage and hospitality, whose mission is education, scholarship and philanthropy.



Japanese Desserts

It's easier than ever to find a sweet taste of Japan here, thanks to a plethora of new dessert spots including Nana's Green Tea, Bake49, Usagi Sweets and Uncle Tetsu's Japanese Cheesecake—but arrive early (and be prepared to wait in line) for the famed light and fluffy cheesecake.

The French Connection

In an industry not short of egos, there are few “name” chefs more under-the-radar than Michel Jacob. The unassuming owner of Le Crocodile (page 65), arguably the *éminence grise* of the culinary scene, stays very much in the background—as in, the kitchen. For it’s from here he can ensure that every plate meets or exceeds expectations.

The chef named his restaurant in homage to Strasbourg’s celebrated Michelin-starred Au Crocodile, where the young chef-to-be first experienced the standard of excellence he aspired to recreate. Over the years, some 350 young chefs have passed through his kitchen as apprentices. Now luminaries in their own right, they include Ned Bell (Ocean Wise, Vancouver Club), Rob Feenie (Cactus Club Cafe and formerly Lumière) and

David Hawkworth (Hawkworth, Nightingale). All three have helped shape the culinary scene in Vancouver, thanks in great part to the sense of discipline and respect instilled by Jacob.

“Almost everywhere I go to eat, somebody knows me,” chuckles Jacob. Le Crocodile’s new chef de cuisine, Greg McCallum, also apprenticed under Jacob before embarking on his career, now come full circle.

What does it take to be a good chef, or own your own place? “If it’s one thing, it’s be consistent,” Jacob insists. “It’s the number-one reason we are still here after 35 years.” He adds, “You’re only as good as your team.”

And the biggest change he’s noticed since starting out? Before, Montreal and Toronto ruled, but Jacob says it’s now Vancouver’s turn as “the leading city in Canada.”—TP



Le Crocodile serves French specialties such as filet de boeuf tartare



Colourful dishes at The Acorn focus on fresh ingredients such as king oyster mushrooms (top left), roasted carrots (top right) and heirloom tomatoes (bottom)

Green Wave

Veggie-lovers have had it good in Vancouver for a long time, and it's only getting better: plant-based hotspots are thriving all over the city. Bright, welcoming Aleph Eatery (page 39) wows with creative twists on familiar Middle Eastern fare—we dare you not to order seconds of the enoki shawarma tacos—while Bonus Bakery's (page 32) 100-percent vegan treats make even the most dedicated butter-lover swoon. Dig into plant-based pizzas and flights of dairy-free ice cream at Virtuous Pie (page 32), the ever-growing Vancouver-based phenomenon that has spread to Toronto, Victoria and even Portland. Farm-to-table ingredients take centre stage at cozy Soil (page 45), owned by the dairy-free-cheese experts at Blue Heron Creamery next door. The Acorn's (page 44) casual-chic vibes, artful plates and showstopping flavours have won countless awards. To the west, health-conscious Kitsilano is home to The Naam (page 44), the 24/7 vegetarian haven that started it all—over 50 years ago. Because when a trend is this good, it becomes tradition.—CL

SEAFOOD

Blue Water Cafe

See page 69.

FINALISTS Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House (page 30); Coast (page 30).

WEST COAST

Coast

See page 30.

FINALISTS Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar (page 36); Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House (page 30).

STEAK

Gotham Steakhouse & Bar

See page 36.

FINALISTS The Keg Steakhouse + Bar (page 37); Black + Blue (page 30).

FRENCH

Le Crocodile

See page 65.

FINALISTS L'Abattoir (page 41); Tableau Bar Bistro (page 33).

ITALIAN

Italian Kitchen

See page 30.

FINALISTS CinCin Ristorante + Bar (page 65); Lupo Restaurant & Vinoteca (page 70).

EUROPEAN

Bauhaus

See page 40.

FINALISTS Chambar Restaurant (page 48); The Greek (page 70).

LATIN

Ancora

See page 35.

FINALISTS Cuchillo (page 32); Fayuca (page 70).

HOTEL DINING

Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar

See page 36.

FINALISTS Bacchus Restaurant & Lounge (page 35); Botanist (page 33); Notch8 Restaurant & Bar (page 38).

FINE DINING

Hawksworth Restaurant

See page 37.

FINALISTS Ancora (page 35);
Bishop's (page 43).

INDIAN

Vij's Restaurant

See page 46.

FINALISTS Copper Chimney Indian
Grill & Bar (page 36); Sitar (page 41).

CHINESE

Peaceful Restaurant

See page 38.

FINALISTS Floata Seafood Restaurant (page 32); Pink Pearl Chinese
Seafood Restaurant (page 39).

JAPANESE

Miku Restaurant

See page 37.

FINALISTS Minami (page 70);
Kinyo Izakaya (page 35).

ASIAN

Maenam

See page 44.

FINALISTS Thai House Restaurant
(page 46); SalaThai (page 38);
Chi Modern Vietnamese Kitchen
(page 44).



Food Delivery

See those big, boxy backpacks on cyclists around town? They're full of delicious fare from local restaurants. Food-delivery companies like Foodora, Skip the Dishes, UberEats and Spud have really taken off in the last couple of years, making it easier than ever to get your food fix—without even stepping outside.

PHOTO BY DSOLEIL STUDIOS

Original Local Hero

BC's flourishing cuisine is a relatively recent phenomenon. When Janice Lotzkar opened her Raintree restaurant in 1989, the term "West Coast" usually denoted California. Lotzkar says she struggled to convince magazines (including this one) to adopt the more accurate "Pacific Northwest" label.

"They were exhaustive discussions. I remember them really, really well," she says.

Raintree was one of the first to credit local farmers and fishers right on the menu. Ultimately it proved the foundation for the modern locavore movement.

"It took a lot of explaining and talking...but we were informing people what this new type of regional food was all about," recalls the former restaurateur. A case in point? Oysters were referred to as just that. No distinction was made between East Coast and West Coast. But today you'll find over 30 BC kinds, from Kussui to Pacific Kiss.

From razor clams to Salt Spring Island lamb, Lotzkar sought out the best in local ingredients. She did the same for local wines, then few and far between. Undeterred, she'd track down small "farmgate" producers ("I went into a lot of garages") in the Okanagan and on Vancouver Island for her groundbreaking list. "There weren't enough to have only BC, so I included Washington, Oregon and Northern California. I also had to implement a taster program—so people would be able to taste, and then they'd buy the glass," she says.

Equally important, "to smash the glass ceiling," she partnered with a female chef, Rebecca Dawson.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Lotzkar wanted to recognize the area—and "shout out to the world, so that people would know we could compare ourselves to any other region."

Thanks to Lotzkar, we can. And do.—TP



A Drop on Our Doorstep

Fancy a glass of BC pinot gris, pinot noir or bacchus? No problem! But it wasn't always that way.

The local wine scene is blossoming, in part thanks to a changing climate, but also due to significant advances in viticulture. As well, winemaking expertise from regions around the world has contributed much to BC's relatively new wine scene. Just 45 minutes from downtown, the Fraser Valley is home to some 15 grape wineries (as well as fruit wineries, cideries and meaderies). They include Chaberton Estate (the valley's first winery, established in 1991), Township 7, Backyard Vineyards and Vista d'Oro, all in Langley, as well as Abbotsford's Singletree Winery.

Chaberton is also home to a delightful French bistro and ideal lunch stop, adjacent to the vineyard and rolling hills.

Thirty years ago, just 14 licensed wineries formed the foundation of the industry. Now some 280 grape wineries produce wine from almost 1,000 vineyards in nine official wine regions. You can find them everywhere from the Okanagan Valley (five hours east of Vancouver) to the Gulf Islands, Vancouver Island, Lillooet (north of Whistler) and beyond.

When colder winters, later frosts, and cooler coastal summers were the norm, it was challenging to ripen most red varieties, except in the South Okanagan. Today, however, across much of southern BC, pinot noir and other red varieties are now grown. White vinifera are also widely grown, with an emphasis on cool-climate aromatics on the coast.

The best way to experience the valley is to leave the driving to someone else. Why not spend a day or afternoon touring and tasting with a knowledgeable guide? Tours are offered by Swallow Tail Tours, Canadian Craft Tours and Lawrence Tours, among others.—TP

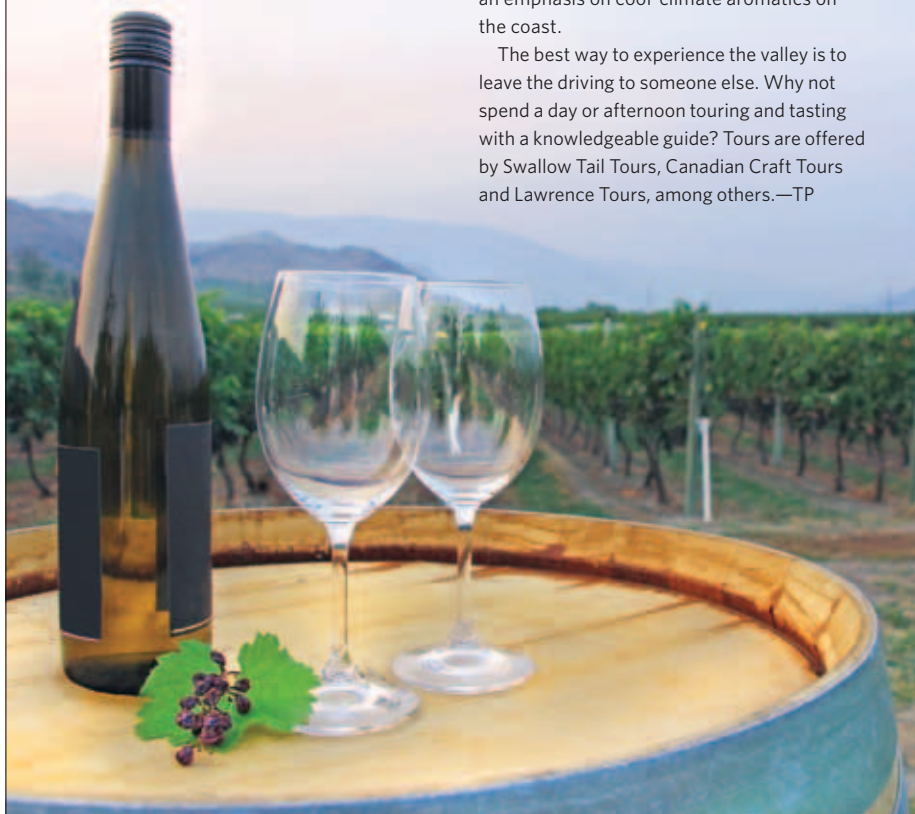
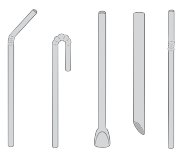


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The Last Straw

Good news for environmentally conscious foodies: plastic drinking straws will soon be off the menu at local restaurants and cafes. The citywide ban isn't in effect until Jun. 1, but for a preview of what's to come, check out the biodegradable sippers at restaurants such as ARC and Earls.

BRUNCH

Café Medina See page 36.

FINALISTS Honey Salt (page 48); Jam Cafe (page 48).

PUB FARE

Tap & Barrel See page 33.

FINALISTS Timber (page 68); Bells and Whistles (page 39).

BEER EXPERIENCE

Granville Island Brewing

See page 43.

FINALISTS Tap & Barrel (page 33); Dockside Restaurant (page 41).

PATIO

Cactus Club Cafe

See page 36.

FINALISTS Ancora (page 35); Joe Fortes Seafood & Chop House (page 30).

FOOD CART

Tacofino See page 38.

FINALISTS Japadog (page 37); Chickpea (page 44).

DESSERT

Thierry See page 30.

FINALISTS Honey Salt (page 48); Boulevard Kitchen & Oyster Bar (page 36).

Four on the Wood

Spurred on by a cadre of savvy mixers and shakers, the city is a hotbed of cutting-edge cocktails. But if you're looking for classics, well, here's a short list. —TP



Gin & Tonic

LONG TABLE DISTILLERY

Gin is the hallmark of Vancouver's first urban distillery, whose owners refer to themselves as "ginsmiths." Yes, there is indeed a long table, made from a giant slab of sequoia redwood. Drop by Thursday through Saturday evenings for #ginoclock. See page 37.

Daiquiri

TOCADOR

Ernest Hemingway is rumoured to have known his way around a bottle of rum, which is why this classic often bears his name. A short hop from downtown, a cozy slice of Havana boasts every type of rum you can imagine—not to mention a friendly vibe and good bites. See page 45.



Old Fashioned

WEST RESTAURANT + BAR

Mixologist Stacey Ackerman takes a leaf out of celebrated Savoy bartender Harry Craddock's 1930 book with this gently tweaked version that uses Knob Creek bourbon, bitters, sugar, orange zest and macerated cherry. See page 47.

Negroni

COMO TAPERIA

Not surprisingly, the Negroni comes with a Spanish twist (of fino and vermouth) at this popular Main Street addition. Not to be overlooked: a selection of on-tap vermouth and fino, plus local brews, along with truly tasty tapas. See page 45. —TP





Il Caminetto highlights farm-fresh ingredients such as burrata with heirloom tomatoes

PHOTO BY LILIA KWOK

Whistler

BEST NEW RESTAURANT Il Caminetto

If you're dreaming of *la dolce vita*, look no further than Il Caminetto. The Whistler stalwart closed for a few months to undergo a complete makeover, complete with new owners and a new fireplace. The end result is a room as fresh and contemporary as the modern Italian cuisine. Under the careful eye of executive chef James Walt, who also oversees the award-winning kitchens at Araxi and Bar Oso, the reimaged menu is sure to satisfy even the pickiest of palates. See page 69.—SR

FINE DINING Araxi Restaurant + Oyster Bar

See page 68.

FINALISTS Bearfoot Bistro (page 68); Rimrock Cafe (page 69).

CASUAL DINING Bar Oso

See page 68.

FINALISTS Caramba! Restaurant (page 68); 21 Steps Kitchen & Bar (page 68).

APRÈS-SKI Dusty's Bar & BBQ

See page 68.

FINALISTS Garibaldi Lift Co. Bar & Grill (page 69); The Brewhouse (page 68). **W**