

hearts. Happily, a place like Patois doesn't need one. With such dishes as sautéed sweetbreads with country-ham reduction, this year-old uptown bistro is at once classically French and unmistakably southern. It's both a comfortable neighborhood hangout and a destination for serious cuisine. In other words, it's the Big Easy in a perfect nutshell.

Worst Dining Moment of the Year
Doneraki, Houston

At approximately 1 P.M. on July 30, 2008, for the first time ever, I experienced a waiter approaching my table while talking on a cell phone.—A.R.



Most Recession-Friendly Cooking Gear on the Market
Muji

Utilitarian chic is the aesthetic at Muji, the affordable Japanese lifestyle store that finally arrived Stateside recently. And it's in the kitchenware section that you'll see the trifecta of Japanese fetishes: food, functionality, and design. Compact brushed-metal mixing bowls with fitted colander inserts; rimless dishware squared off to save shelf space; simple, sleek utensils in matte black nylon resin, brushed stainless, or sanded bamboo. They make you want to throw away every shiny, ugly, oversize object in your kitchen and sit on the floor to eat dinner.



FOOD CITY OF THE YEAR

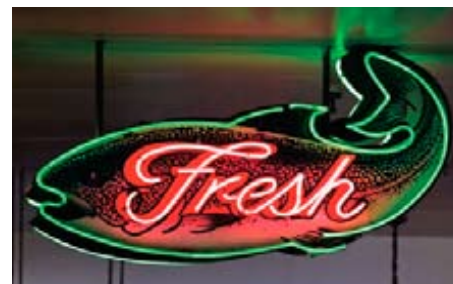
The Rise of Seattle

➔ When it comes to eating—and we mean really *eating*, as opposed to “dining”—we'll take Seattle. It's grassroots food culture at its sophisticated finest: the culinary equivalent of the Obama campaign, where everyone's in it for positive forward progress and immense satisfaction.

No surprise, it starts with the farmers' markets. They're foundational components, like bodegas in New York and seemingly as ubiquitous. But more importantly, Seattle is blessed with a battery of young, inspired chefs whose ever maturing kitchens take brilliant advantage of the city's unusually prime proximity to a cornucopia of ingredients. When you visit, start off by hitting the **CORSON BUILDING**. It's in an industrial part of town but looks like eighteenth-century Tuscany. It's not really a restaurant; it's more like an event. The menu changes. The wine changes. The crowd changes. And Matthew Dillon, who cooks there, is a genius. Pasta savant Justin Neidermeyer is rolling out some of the best noodles in America at the newly opened **SPINASSE**. Michael Hebb, who's a sort of foodie Allan Kaprow, hosts a series of intellectually robust **ONE POT** dinners in a variety of locations, feeding the mind as much as the appetite. John Sundstrom's **LARK** is simply one of the most enjoyable restaurants anywhere. And **VIA TRIBUNALI** fires its Neapolitan pizzas in brick ovens made from Vesuvian ash. There's a premium on authenticity in the Emerald City, a beautifully straightforward DIY ethos that would be hard to replicate, even on the plate, anywhere beyond the birthplace of Nirvana.—**HOWIE KAHN**



▶ Top and below, *Seattleites have shopped for provisions at Pike Place Market since 1907. Above, sea scallops at local legend Ethan Stowell's Union restaurant.*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHARLES PETERSON; TOM BARWICK; ROBERT WADE; TOM SCHIERLITZ