

JULY+AUGUST 2008



via

AAA Traveler's Companion

It's not a mirage.
Discover an oasis
below Scottsdale's
Pinnacle Peak.

A photograph of a resort pool at night. The pool is illuminated with blue and green lights. In the background, there are lounge chairs under a canopy and a building with a cactus in front of it. The sky is dark blue.

Great Getaways Great Deals

Phoenix-Scottsdale **22** Portland's East Side **28**

Reno **32** Even more summer bargains **36**

PLUS Secluded beaches **10**
Go fish—in Stanley, Idaho **21**
The worst car of all time **39**





For a fresh twist on a night out, follow the locals to the city's liveliest dining scene.



Goose liver for dessert? Profiteroles stuffed with foie gras ice cream are a surprising treat at Le Pigeon.

Portland's East side

Four-star food, painless prices

Few things in this world, or at least in Portland, are more delicious than the warm Egyptian flat bread topped with honey, ground hazelnuts, and thyme at Lauro Kitchen, chef David Machado's Pan-Mediterranean restaurant on a once moribund strip of SE Division Street. Unless it's the *kbao man som tam*—shreds of soft, sweet pork heaped on a hill of coconut rice—at the wondrous 3-year-old Pok Pok right down the block. Or the unforgettable foie gras ice cream profiteroles at Le Pigeon on East Burnside. Or the chicken-fried bison at nearby Simpatica. Or maybe the grilled hanger steak at Fife in the Beaumont-Wilshire neighborhood . . .

The east side of Portland is having a culinary moment, and anyone who loves food should take notice. West Portland has long boasted serious, spendy restaurants such as Wildwood, Higgins, and Paley's Place (average entrée: \$30) that have flourished near the downtown shops, big hotels, and posh Pearl District. But over the last few years, more affordable and playful restaurants

BY JENNIFER REESE



Four dollars buys you a warm waffle with fruit at the Waffle Window.

GREAT GETAWAYS

have been popping up in crazy numbers across the river, amid the 1920s bungalows, industrial buildings, and humble shopping strips. "Everything is moving to the east side," says Byron Beck, who helps edit the annual restaurant guide for *Willamette Week*. "When rents started going through the roof, the people who were trying to do something different with food started looking at NE Alberta Street, SE Clinton, Division."

Where a decade ago there were few interesting places to eat, there is now a dizzying diversity, from terrific cafés such as Bakery Bar, serving hot chocolate with homemade marshmallows, to swank dinner spots including Sel Gris, where chef Daniel Mondok assembles intricate towers of crispy sweetbreads and forget-me-not blossoms. There are storefronts selling one fabulous product, such as Pine State Biscuits (the \$6 biscuit sandwich with fried chicken is much loved) and the Waffle Window on SE Hawthorne (try one with hot apple pie topping). And then there are wild cards: At Broder, a stylish sliver of a restaurant, Peter Bro pays homage to his Scandinavian heritage with smoked trout hash and golden, airy *aebleskiver* (small pancakes). Because they depend on the repeat business of a local clientele rather than expense-account splurges and onetime tourist drop-ins, these places are casual, personal, reliable, and fairly priced.

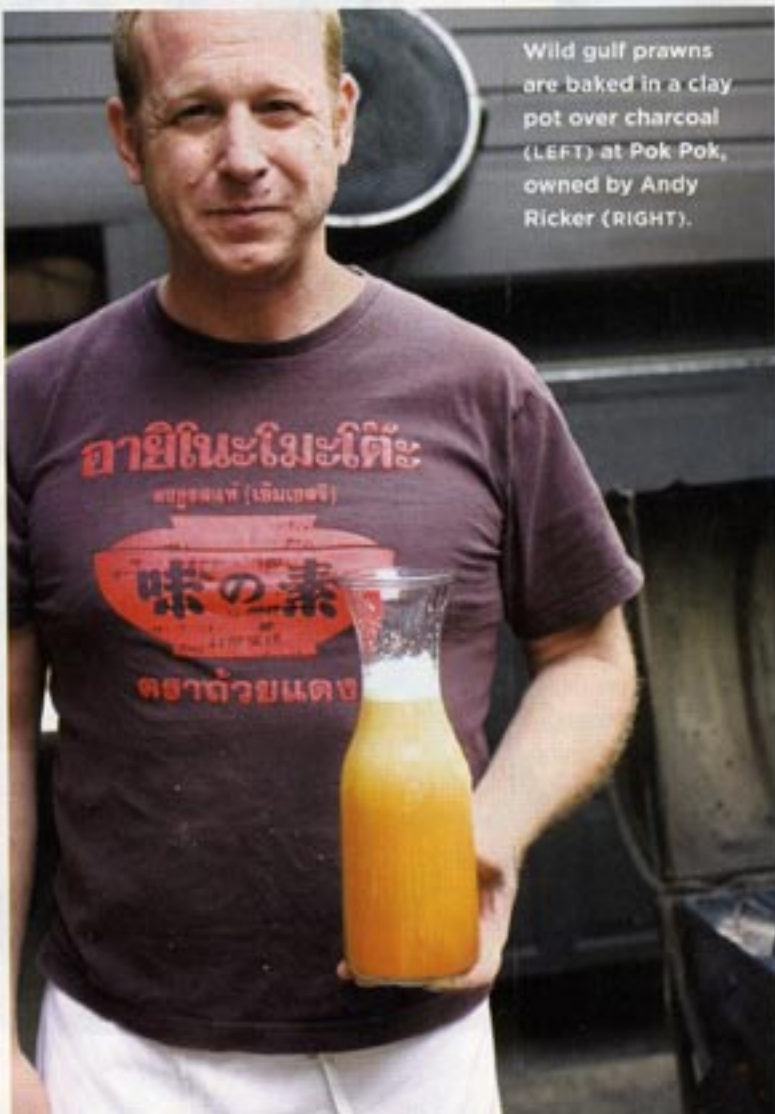
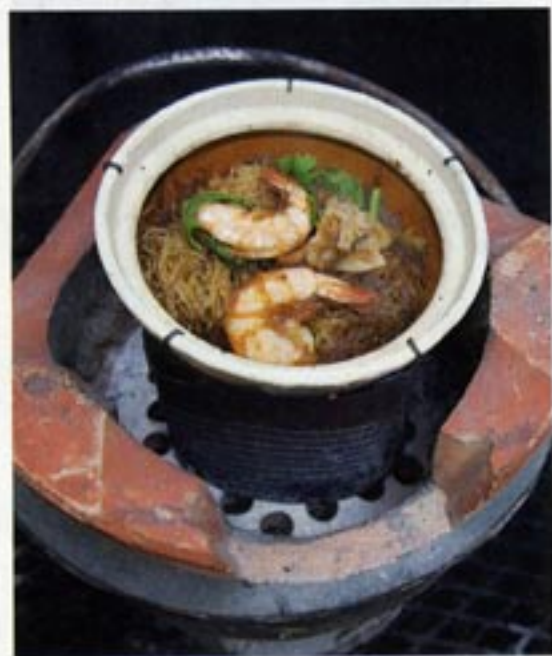
"You can do things cheaper over here," says Sarah Minnick, who with her sister Jane opened Lovely

Hula Hands in a ramshackle pink house on a sketchy stretch of Mississippi Avenue in 2003. The Minnicks decorated their restaurant with vintage chandeliers and served their eclectic dishes (fried okra, Thai-style steak) on mismatched china from Goodwill. "You rarely see a white tablecloth around here," Sarah says. "People let the fancy service go in order to charge less. But often the experience is better than what you get in one of the hear-a-pin-drop places."

The success of Lovely Hula Hands seems to bear that out. In 2006, the Minnick sisters relocated to a larger space a few blocks away where they can serve twice as many customers. The kitchen has grown more ambitious under the stewardship of chef Troy MacLarty, formerly of California's Chez Panisse,



people let the fancy service go and charge less," says Lovely Hula Hands co-owner Sarah Minnick.



Wild gulf prawns are baked in a clay pot over charcoal (LEFT) at Pok Pok, owned by Andy Ricker (RIGHT).



A former flower shop houses Lovely Hula Hands, named after a 1940s Hawaiian song.

replaced the soda fountain with a copper-topped bar, gave the walls a coat of orange paint, and opened his popular restaurant. "As far as affordability goes, the east side is the place to be," Sappington says. "I didn't want to charge \$35 for a pork plate." Instead, he charges \$20 for a platter that includes rolled pork belly, a brined chop, and smoked shoulder.

"Frankly, it has been quite surprising to me," says Kerry DeBuse, a Portland native and owner of Genoa, an intimate northern Italian spot on SE Belmont. "I thought I'd be dead before I saw restaurants opening up on some of these blocks." DeBuse grew up near Division Street, which he remembers as a no-man's land dotted with hardware stores. Today it's one of the hottest dining scenes in the city. In 2003, David Machado opened his lofty Lauro Kitchen here, serving everything from paella to artisanal pizzas. A year later Ben Gonzales launched Nuestra Cocina to showcase his handmade tortillas, ceviche, and zesty, pork-filled masa tarts.

More recently Andy Ricker, a former housepainter with a passion for Thai street food, started up Pok Pok. There's a take-out stand where you can pick up spicy roasted game hen and a cozy dining room where you can linger over coconut-jackfruit ice cream sandwiches. Unlike the fare at most Thai restaurants in the United States, everything at Pok Pok, from the coconut milk to the curry paste, is made from scratch. The difference is instantly apparent when you taste one of Ricker's signature dishes, such as the rich chicken noodle soup with pickled mustard greens. This is food so maddeningly delicious that you keep eating long after you're full. ●

JENNIFER REESE is a book critic for *Entertainment Weekly*.

but the decor has remained funky and the prices reasonable.

"The food is serious around here, but the people who do it best don't take themselves seriously," says chef Adam Sappington, who owns the year-old Country Cat Dinnerhouse. After more than a decade working at Wildwood, Sappington took over an old drugstore in southeast Portland's Montavilla district in 2007,

●●● East side eateries

- **Bakery Bar** (503) 546-8110, bakerybar.com.
- **Broder** (503) 736-3333.
- **Country Cat Dinnerhouse** (503) 408-1414, thecountrycat.net.
- **Fife** (971) 222-3433, fiferestaurant.com.
- **Genoa** (503) 238-1464, genoarestaurant.com.
- **Lauro Kitchen** (503) 239-7000, laurokitchen.com.
- **Le Pigeon** (503) 546-8796, lepigeon.com.
- **Lovely Hula Hands** (503) 445-9910, lovelyhulahands.com.
- **Nuestra Cocina** (503) 232-2135, nuestra-cocina.com.
- **Pine State Biscuits** (503) 236-3346, pinestatebiscuits.com.
- **Pok Pok** (503) 232-1387, pokpokpdx.com.
- **Sel Gris** (503) 517-7770, selgris.net.
- **Simpatica** (503) 235-1600, simpaticacatering.com.
- **Waffle Window** (503) 239-4756.



Danish pancakes with jam at Broder.