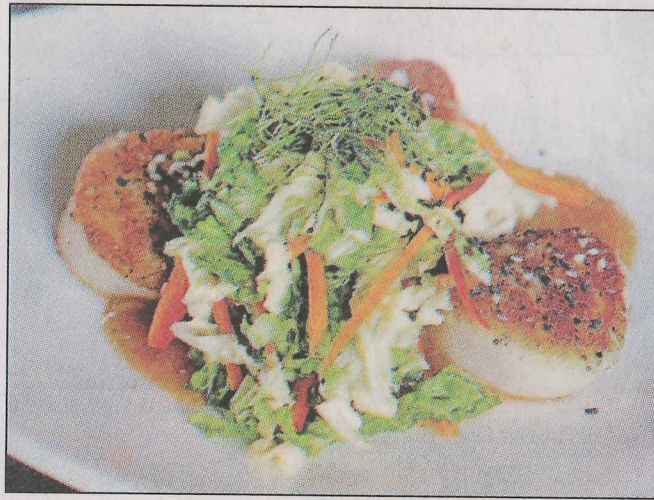


TRAVEL

St. Paul Pioneer Press TwinCities.com



COURTESY OF AMBER GIBSON
At Ukiyo in Indianapolis: wild king salmon, beets, strawberry vinegar, black lava salt, nasturtium.



COURTESY OF AMBER GIBSON
At Open Society in Indianapolis: Hokkaido scallops, Szechuan sauce, napa cabbage, carrots, sesame vinaigrette.



COURTESY OF AMBER GIBSON
At Love Handle in Indianapolis: Chicken gizzard beet hash with fried egg and Amelia's Pullman baguette.



A spread at Bar One Fourteen, a luxe microbar in Indianapolis.

COURTESY OF CHRISTINA SLATON

Traveling to eat

Indianapolis has a great food scene — just like another 'apolis' we know

By Amber Gibson
Special to the Pioneer Press

So many of us travel for food now. Whether it's Michelin-starred restaurants in Paris and Tokyo or Noma's seven-week Tulum pop-up. But great food doesn't have to be so elusive or expensive. Instead of New York, San Francisco, or even Chicago (and this is coming from a Chicago girl) consider Indianapolis for your next gourmet adventure.

No other city in America has such a dynamic, democratic and still largely unheralded culinary scene right now. Venture outside the downtown core to Fountain Square, Fletcher Place, Broad Ripple or Mass Ave and you'll find consistently great meals from humble, hard-working chefs that don't always even realize how incredible their food is.

Plus, this autumn brings a

slew of hotly anticipated openings from established chefs and up-and-coming talent. There's never been a more exciting time to dine out in Indianapolis. Bring your stretchy pants.

GRASSROOTS BEGINNINGS

Indianapolis' current culinary renaissance traces its roots back to a few chefs, food artisans and restaurateurs who weren't afraid to experiment and push the city's appetite for creative, quality food beyond steakhouses and corporate chains. Two culinary stalwarts, Chef Regina Mehallick and Chef Greg Hardesty, recently closed their restaurants after strong runs of more than a decade. Their legacy lives on in the chefs they've mentored who continue to innovate and

INDIANAPOLIS, 6E



COURTESY OF AMBER GIBSON
At Cerulean in Indianapolis: Goat cheese strudel — poached bing cherries, saffron anglaise, marzipan ice cream, black sesame praline, black sesame sponge.

Quick Trips > Regional Events

MINNESOTA

1. WABASHA SeptOberfest: Pumpkin races, largest

WISCONSIN

7. MINERAL POINT Cornish Festival: Celebrate Cornish heritage in

CONTINUED FROM 5E

> Indianapolis

cook for hungry locals and visitors.

Milktooth's Jonathan Brooks and Bluebeard's Abbi Merriss were both James Beard semifinalists this year and both worked as sous chefs under Hardesty at Recess, where an adventurous daily-changing four-course prix-fixe menu introduced Indianapolis to a new chef-driven style of dining. Another one of Hardesty's proteges, Neal Brown, is fast becoming one of Indianapolis' most successful restaurateurs. He's taking over the Recess space with a Japanese concept, Ukiyo, opening early November. "We want to keep it approachable," he says. "But we'll also serve a 15-course bar omakase that will be the first of its kind in town." Brown will personally cook for guests at the bar, while the dining room will serve kappo-style food that includes simmered, steamed and grilled plates along with the requisite sushi.

Brown's other new concept, Stella, opened in June and is a dining oasis along the drinking corridor of Mass Ave. Mediterranean small plates here are incredibly affordable and perfect for sharing, including crudo dressed lightly with olive oil and sea salt and roasted veg-



COURTESY OF CHRISTINA SLATON

David Hoover is a first-time executive chef at Bar One Fourteen.

etables accented with pickled chilis, spices and black garlic rouille.

As for food artisans, Chris and Mollie Eley were a pioneering couple. They founded specialty grocery store Goose the Market in 2007 to serve responsibly raised meat and local produce. Four years later they opened Indiana's only USDA-certified smokehouse and butchershop, Smoking Goose. Now, their sausage, bacon and charcuterie is served at countless restaurants across town including St. Elmo's Steak House, Pizology and Gallery Pastry.

They just opened a sausage shop inside Sun King Brew-

ery too, serving massive sandwiches and an Alsatian choucroute garnie platter with smoked loin chops, thick-cut applewood bacon, knackwurst, Strasbourg and Nuremberg sausages. "This plate truly will feature what Indiana pork is all about in its many forms," Eley says. "It's the perfect food to eat with beer."

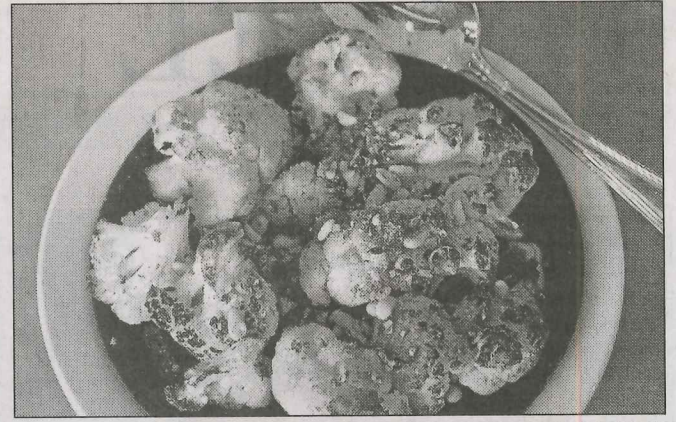
HEMOCOMING

Today, a new generation of young talent with a passion for food and drink are returning home to Indianapolis after spending time in other major cities and abroad, finding opportunities to bring creative, cosmopolitan dining concepts to the city.

Twenty-seven-year-old

David Hoover is a first-time executive chef at Bar One Fourteen, a luxe microbar and the most recent endeavor for Patachou restaurant group. He went to cooking school in Paris before working in Paris and Copenhagen. Back home, he enjoys collaborating with his mother, Martha Hoover, a legendary restaurateur who is equally known for her array of great restaurants and for her dedication to feeding Indy's school children in food deserts across the city through Patachou Foundation.

Bar One Fourteen has just 16 seats and is only open Thursday through Saturday, but the high fidelity listening room and cocktail bar has a well-curated food menu too. Start with a refreshing stack



COURTESY OF AMBER GIBSON

At Stella in Indianapolis: Roasted cauliflower, pine nuts, pickled chilis, breadcrumbs.

of heirloom tomatoes and peaches draped in creamy walnut milk followed by a decadent soft scrambled egg topped with sturgeon caviar or juicy cheeseburger on buttery brioche to pair with the potent drinks.

Down the street at Open Society, 28-year-old Brian Baker helms his first restaurant after spending years learning to cook and manage restaurants in New York. Baker and his partner, Conrad Riser, both grew up in the neighborhood. They're open all day, serving coffee and brunch every morning and dinner each night, including precisely seared Hokkaido scallops with napa cabbage and sesame vinaigrette. Strong family ties and his father's promise to invest brought Baker home to open a convivial, casual gathering place for the community.

UNSUNG HEROS

While several Indianapolis chefs have received national recognition and helped raise the city's profile among the restaurant industry and foodie travelers, there are so many more hidden gems that aren't as well known, like cozy local favorite Tinker Street and the delicious diversity of vendors at City Market.

Jonathan Brooks' playful and unfailingly tasty Milktooth has picked up accolades from Bon Appetit and Food & Wine for making brunch the most important, or only, meal of the day. But the chicken gizzard beet hash and pork tongue sandwiches at Love Handle are just as good for curing a hangover (the drinks at Bar One Fourteen and Hotel Tango are deceptively refreshing) and there's no need to wait an hour for a table on weekends. Owner Chris Benedyk fell in love

with all things meat while working the counter at Goose the Market. His new Mass Ave location will hopefully bring more foot traffic to this hipster diner.

Cerulean is easily the most underrated and ambitious fine dining restaurant in town. Ignore the location (adjacent to The Alexander hotel) and awkward interior design. Come for the food. The 10-course tasting menu is truly a steal at \$95. Chef Alan Sternberg's beautiful plating and imaginative flavor combinations challenge perceptions of Midwestern food.

Daring dishes like peach kimchi with bitter greens and house ricotta are balanced with approachable comforts like sweet corn ravioli filled with comté and mascarpone.

Desserts are equally intriguing and delectable, from goat cheese strudel with Bing cherries, marzipan ice cream and black sesame praline to a chocolate and sweet corn plate accented with tart sudachi pearls and crisp tortilla chips. I'm surprised that Pastry Chef Pete Schmutte hasn't been nominated for a James Beard Award yet. Maybe that will change once he leaves Cerulean to helm the pastry program at Brooks' new dinner-only spot, Beholder, opening at the end of the year.

Everyone claims to be a farm-to-table restaurant these days, but nobody embodies that more authentically than The Loft at Trader's Point Creamery, situated just outside the city on a 155-acre dairy farm. The restaurant has its own garden and nearly everything on the menu is organic and local. Ever since 28-year-old Chef Toby Moreno took over as executive chef 17 months ago, the menu has shifted from simple cafe to more elegant, thoughtful dishes, like cottage cheese cavatelli and farmstead pork with pozole grits and brassicas. Many dishes incorporate Trader's Point cheese and yogurt. Moreno's commitment to building strong relationships with regional farmers is commendable and you've got to love a guy who first learned to cook as a kid because he wanted to make his mom rice and beans when she came home after evening college classes.

COMING SOON

Ukiyo and Beholder are perhaps the two biggest pending restaurant openings this autumn. Brooks doesn't want to give away any specific menu items at Beholder, but tells me the food will be nostalgic, emotional and modern American. The restaurant will have just under 70 seats and, like Milktooth, is also located in a former gas station. The name alludes to the proverb about beauty being in the eye of the beholder. "This is our interpretation of what we think is sexy and beautiful about food," Brooks says. Patachou's next concept

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