

10 Local  
Heroes

House Sales  
of the Year

The Terrorists  
Next Door?

Top Experts in  
Sports Medicine

Best of  
Fairfax


# WASHINGTONIAN

## 100 Very Best Restaurants

The Finest  
Dining in DC, Maryland,  
and Virginia

Restaurants  
Ranked 1 to 100

Critics Pick the  
25 Top Dishes



Dessert at 2941:  
flourless chocolate  
cake with chocolate  
*crèmeux*, roasted  
sweet cherries, and  
mint-chocolate-chip  
ice cream.

JANUARY 2010



\$3.95 [washingtonian.com](http://washingtonian.com)

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**Insider tips:** Frank Morales, who previously manned the stove at Rustico, has recently come aboard to run the show. The streamlined menu is a little less zippy, and Morales is given at times to overproducing his dishes, but the Elvis burger is better (and bigger) than ever and the cheese grids are otherworldly.

**Service:** (1)(1½)

Open Monday through Saturday for dinner (cafe menu on Monday), Sunday for brunch and dinner. Moderate to expensive.

## 83 Passage to India ★★

4931 Cordell Ave., Bethesda; 301-686-3373

**Cuisine:** Chef/owner Sudhir Seth tackles his native India's every culinary corner on his menu, which ranges far beyond commonplace curries and tandoori meats. With an impressive level of accuracy and consistency, he conveys the flavors of not just the familiar north (with its reliance on kebabs) and south (with its breads and veggie stews) but also the east and west.

**Mood:** The low-lit dining room, with elaborate wood carvings and photographs of Indian palaces, is a throwback in an age of clean-lined, bustling spaces: quiet, serious, almost serene. Waiters in jackets and bow ties tend to their tables with a military-like precision.

**Best for:** Anyone willing to venture beyond the safe ground of butter chicken; anyone seeking an oasis of calm to dine in.

**Best dishes:** *Sep-murmura chaat*, a mash-up of puffed rice, vermicelli, and dats, sweetened with tamarind; a potato-stuffed *samosa* dressed up with chickpeas and yogurt; juicy, thin slices of lamb cooked in the tandoor oven; shrimp in a coconut-based curry with coriander and garlic; a marvelous pickle plate; a dessert of fresh mango peeking out from a blanket of cardamom-spiked yogurt.

**Insider tips:** If you want to sample some of Seth's complex and layered cooking but are on a budget, come at lunchtime. Main courses arrive with a side of lentils, rice, and a salad—all for about \$10.

**Service:** (1)(1)

Open daily for lunch and dinner. Moderate.

## 84 Hell Point Seafood ★★

12 Dock St., Annapolis; 410-990-9888

**Cuisine:** Bob Kinkead calls his Annapolis waterfront operation Kinkead Lite—a more casual, streamlined, and affordable version of his DC seafood emporium. The kitchen early on was a work in progress but has found its groove. Portions are bigger, execution is tighter, and the familiar-looking plates of mussels, oysters, lobster rolls, and smothered fish are now worthy of the Kinkead name.

**Mood:** The redeeming feature of the bland space, which for years housed Phillips Seafood, is the gorgeous view of the Annapolis harbor—seats along the glass windows fill up fast.

**Best for:** That rarest of dining-out pleasures—a good meal with a view.

**Best dishes:** Sweet mussels in green Thai curry with diced squash; an ever-changing roster of oysters on the half shell; plump, minimally bound crabcakes; cornmeal-crust ed flounder in a creamy sauce garnished with tasso ham, mushroom matchsticks, and baby shrimp;

swordfish steak with confit of basil-draped baby tomatoes; excellent seasonal tarts (peach in summer, pear in fall, apple in winter); elegant, Eastern Shore-style caramel layer cake.

**Insider tips:** Think seafood calls exclusively for white wine? Think again: The important thing is to complement the sauce or accompaniment, and the embellishments for Kinkead's seafood are generally big and bold-flavored. Accordingly, there are red-wine-by-the-glass picks that pair well with the restaurant's catches of the day, including a rosé made from Malbec. And servers will pour a taste of any by-the-glass wine.

**Service:** (1)(1)

Open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch and dinner. Expensive.

## 85 Villa Mozart ★★

4009 Chain Bridge Rd., Fairfax; 703-691-4747

**Cuisine:** Chef/owner Andrea Pace anchors his dishes with familiar Northern Italian flavors—prosciutto with melon, eggplant lasagna—but elevates them with unexpected accents. When he's successful, which is often enough (chocolate pappardelle with wild boar), the result feels fresh; when he's not (a caprese salad with buffalo-milk foam), it feels forced.

**Mood:** Long on charm, this cozy but contemporary townhouse is a prime destination for date nights. Each table is adorned with fresh red roses, and the Italian arias soaring through the dining room set the mood for an evening of romance.

**Best for:** An old-fashioned date.

**Best dishes:** Wide bands of smoked prosciutto sharing the plate with hemispheres of sweet cantaloupe; coins of eggplant and zucchini stacked with pungent Taleggio; a dressed-up "meat and potatoes" with lamb two ways (roasted shoulder, grilled rack) and a cube of potato *mille foglie*; delicately poached halibut filet in a comforting but light mushroom-based broth with white beans and artichokes; chocolate soufflé, cracked and filled with Grand Marnier sauce at the table.

**Insider tips:** The wine list is small, but the corkage fee for bringing your own bottle is just \$25—cheaper than almost anything else on the menu.

**Service:** (1)(1½)

Open Monday through Friday for lunch and dinner, Saturday for dinner. Expensive.

## 86 Circle Bistro ★★

1 Washington Cir., NW; 202-293-5390

**Cuisine:** After a rocky year, the kitchen seems to have stabilized with the arrival of Ethan McKee, a veteran of Equinox and Rock Creek at Mazza, whose French- and Mediterranean-influenced American menu runs to plates such as wild Alaskan halibut with chorizo, Swiss chard, and saffron butter.

**Mood:** Deciding where to sit can be hard. Will it be the teeming lounge, where you can nibble on snacks such as fries with *fines herbes* mayonnaise, or the conversation-friendly dining room done in shades of orange, yellow, and cream?

**Best for:** The Kennedy Center-bound—there's a \$35, three-course pre-theater meal from 5 to 7.

**Best dishes:** Crisp potato-crust ed oysters

with bacon-salad with arrib-eye with r; with celery nange; a decoing a dense, espresso ice

**Insider tips:** ing half-price bar Monday, 7:30 and free brunch.

**Service:** (1)

Open Monday for lunch, and Saturday for dinner, Sunday for brunch. Moderate.

## 87 Gray

4865 Cordell

**Cuisine:** whimsical-around the \$20 by the sive tasting

**Mood:** A swirling and the cellar's taurant does on the wine

**Best for:** dates that s

**Best dishes:** goat cheese *beurre blanc* sauté of calster in spic sauce; roast  
**Insider tip:** day through specials pl chosen from

**Service:** Open Monday through Friday

## 88 Art

Liaison Capital 202-393-7778

**Cuisine:** formerly

and his loc up feel-go Southern po' boy tu (simple fri

**Mood:** It hotel resta ing suites Luther Kin perhaps a that you'r power.

**Best for:** group; a g at the bar (pancakes)

**Best dishes:** take on fr okra, and vinaigret