

Best New Restaurants

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TORONTO LIFE

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\$4.95 APRIL 2010

THE

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PLACES

TO

EAT
NOW

BY JAMES CHATTO

PLUS TRENDS WE LOVE
AND TRENDS WE LOATHE



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WHERE TO EAT NOW

By James Chatto
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This time last year, the future looked awfully grim. We braced for a litany of restaurant closures and recessionary menus claggy with comfort food, but 2009 was surprising. Though we lost some good places (Perigee, Truffles, Alice's and Gamelle, in particular), and mac-and-cheese quickly wore out its welcome, it was an exciting time to dine out. Anxious restaurateurs dropped corkage fees and slashed wine markups, while chefs cooked up imaginative prix fixe menus. It suited our mood as well as our wallets: these days, Torontonians want informality. We're still hungry for local produce and nose-to-tail dining, chefs are once again finding inspiration in Italy and Japan, and the city is finally beginning to develop a serious cocktail culture. Most encouraging of all is the number of new restaurants opening—many of them hip, low-budget bistros—and an excellent crop of pubs. Here, the best of the vintage.



Thrift shop: chef
Kevin McKenna knows what Rosedale wants to eat—well-priced comfort food, like his crisp wood-oven-fired flatbread



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Rosedale's wealthy but frugal elite has a new favourite rendezvous. The bar and lounge areas are buzzing in the early evening, as is the dining room where they bring their families for dinner. It's easy to see the appeal. Owner Ed Ho (Globe Bistro) has turned the spacious but infamously cursed premises (seven restaurants in 10 years) around by adding just enough glamour to the black-and-charcoal decor, hiring a courteous and thoroughly savvy staff and then slashing prices to the bone. Chef Kevin

McKenna, who trained under Michael Stadtländer, takes the time to source produce from local farmers, breaks down whole animals, wasting nothing, and makes good use of the wood-burning oven in his open kitchen. Roast meats are sold by the ounce, so you can order as little or as much as you want—a lovely idea. Or you can just sit at the bar, nibble one of his pizza-like flatbreads and a couple of snack-sized whitefish fritters—maybe throw in a tangy elk tartare—and watch the beau monde go by.



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