

## 2009 Restaurant Special

## A View From the Top

You would think **Alinea** chef/owner Grant Achatz has enough on his, er, plate running what many consider the best restaurant in the U.S. But he's not one to sit back on his many laurels. Instead, he's off and running with projects: the 400-page cookbook *Alinea*, which won a James Beard award, his articles in *The Atlantic's* online magazine and a forthcoming memoir, *Life, On the Line*. Did we mention the two movies (a documentary and a feature) tentatively in the works? 1723 N. Halsted St., 312.867.0110.

one sixtyblue's modern dining room plays off chef Michael McDonald's elegant cuisine.



## They're baaack!

Chicago foodies are celebrating the return of three award-winning chefs to our fair city: After a year traveling through the best kitchens in Spain, former Butter chef **Ryan Poli** is now the executive chef at Perennial. Over at one sixtyblue, **Mike McDonald** (formerly of Everest) returns after stints as executive chef at Charlie Trotter's restaurants in Los Cabos (C), and Las Vegas (Restaurant Charlie). Last but not least, **Todd Stein** (formerly of mk) is back in a big way at the Wirt Hotel, where he will be running the kitchens at both Cibo Matto and Roof.

## The Latin Lover

It may sound like a region in France, but **Province's** creative American cuisine gets its inspiration from Spain and South America. Chef/owner Randy Zweiban (he was with latin-themed Nacional 27 for almost 10 years) continues to shake things up with dishes like rabbit confit with marcona almond emulsion and slow-cooked salmon with red wine mojo. 161 N. Jefferson St., 312.669.9900.

## Best Place To Veg Out

In these pork-centric, sweet-on-sweetbreads, burger-loving days, you would think a vegetarian-only restaurant wouldn't stand a chance. But try telling that to the hordes of diners that swarm **Mana**, a chic 32-seat Wicker Park spot from the same owners of De Cero and Sushi Wabi. With dishes like tender artichoke ravioli, Thai watermelon salad and sweet potato pancake, there's at least one question you won't hear any one ask: "Where's the beef?" 1742 W. Division St., 773.3421742.

## Fishing for Fun

Celeb chef Marcus Samuelsson hopes diners get more than great seafood at his restaurant **C-House**. "I want the focus to be on fun dining rather than fine dining," he says. With shareable yellowtail ceviche tacos, comfortable let's-stay-awhile banquettes in the main dining room and C-View, the rooftop lounge, we're hooked. 166 E. Superior St., 312.523.0923.



Urbanbelly's Asian squash dumplings with passion fruit vinaigrette.

## CHEF OF THE YEAR

Martial Noguier CAFÉ DES ARCHITECTES

We've been a fan of chef Martial Noguier for some time. And not just for his easy-on-the-eyes looks and swoon-worthy accent, although those are pretty great, too. Rather, it's the way this Paris native takes his classical training—learned at Jean Ferrandi, an esteemed culinary academy in France, *bien sur*—and melds it seamlessly with seasonal Midwest ingredients. We first took notice when he was at one sixtyblue and now, some eight years later, he's all but perfected his signature cuisine combinations as the new executive chef of the Sofitel Chicago Water Tower and its posh restaurant, Café des Architectes. "I want to bring the Midwest to the hotel and have it become a neighborhood restaurant," he says of his aspirations for transforming it into an everyday but still incredibly elegant local spot. After a recent meal of Alaskan halibut with artichoke barigoule and ahi tuna tartare layered in a mason jar with diced avocado and a light piquillo vinaigrette, we think he's well on his way. 20 E. Chestnut St., 312.324.4000.

## RUNNER-UP: CHEF OF THE YEAR

Bill Kim

URBANBELLY

We wouldn't have thought that one of the city's most respected chefs would open up his first restaurant in an out-of-the-way mini-mall next door to a laundry mat. But that's where you'll find Bill Kim and Urbanbelly, his BYO ode to noodles, rice and dumplings (and a spot Kim, a Seoul native, had been conceptualizing for 20 years). Kim, a graduate of Kendall College's culinary arts program, is no stranger to fine dining, having worked at Charlie Trotter's, Trio and Le Lan, and it shows in dishes like his richly flavored pork belly ramen in a pho broth, fragrant fried rice with short ribs, and juicy lamb and brandy dumplings. Urbanbelly, however, has subbed self-service water carts, an at-the-counter ordering system and communal tables for fine dining niceties—and we don't miss them a bit. 3053 N. California Ave., 773.583.0500.



A seasoned chef already, Martial Noguier now adeptly helms the modernist Café des Architectes, dishing up delicacies like Madagascar shrimp with grilled octopus and honey caramel sauce.