

ZAGAT RELEASES 2007 SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANT GUIDE
7,476 DINERS RATE 1,082 BAY AREA EATERIES IN BEST YEAR SINCE 2001

With 100 New Restaurants Surveyors Eat Out And Spend More Than Ever
Redd and Ame Top Newcomers; Gary Danko No. 1 For Food And Popularity;
Cyrus, Marinus, Chez Panisse and Kaygetsu Soar; Seafood and Indian Heat Up

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 21, 2006) — Zagat Survey today released the results of its 2007 San Francisco Bay Area Restaurant Survey. And the winners are: Redd and Ame as top newcomers, respectively for the Bay Area and the City of San Francisco, and Gary Danko repeating as No. 1 for Food and Popularity, while the French Laundry kept the No. 2 spot for Food.

Reflecting over 3,400 dining experiences per day, this year's San Francisco Bay Area Restaurants guide was just released to area bookstores. 1,082 eateries in the San Francisco Bay Area – including Tahoe for the first time – are rated by 7,476 local surveyors who ate out an average of 3.2 meals per week. That means this year's ratings and reviews are typically based on several visits to each restaurant each day.

"With both dining frequency and spending rising, and over 100 significant new restaurants in San Francisco, the past year has proven to be the best since 2001," said Tim Zagat, co-founder of Zagat Survey. "Fortunately, inflation has been limited to 1.2% and the crop of newcomers has improved the already high quality of local dining."

Top Newcomers: Among this year's newcomers the category winner for the entire Bay Area is Redd Restaurant. Surveyors reported that it "hits the high notes – very high." Meanwhile, the best debut in San Francisco proper is the "sexy" minimalist, "Japanese-influenced" Ame in the St. Regis Hotel. And following close behind these leaders is the industrial-chic, New American Range.

Rising Tide For Seafood: Although tourists have long thought of the Bay Area as a seafood mecca, it has actually been pretty slim pickings (aside from Fisherman's Wharf and the fish dishes at certain high-end places). While Aqua remains the city's most highly rated seafood establishment, the tide is clearly rising for seafood specialists: in Berkeley, there's now the "imaginative," "worth the visit" Sea Salt, in Castro the New England-style Woodhouse Fish Company, in St. Helena Go Fish and in Noe Valley, Percheria will soon hit the ways.

Indian Is The New "It" Food: Spice-seekers are making Indian food this year's new favorite. Its "unique creations" give Amber India the top food ranking among it's peers; however, there are several noteworthy new spots to choose from: in the Mission, "super-friendly" yet "hip" Dosa, and on the Peninsula the haute Hindi haunt Junnoon or the "Indian-influenced Cal" Mantra.

Other Top Cuisines: While the Bay Area's favorite cuisine is Italian according to 22% of Zagat Surveyors, French and Japanese come in 2nd and 3rd with 15% and 14% respectively. Leading the Italians is Quince (where the dishes are "so fresh you feel virtuous eating them"); for French food it's the "artistically presented" La Folie; and for Japanese the "elegant kaiseki" specialist Kaygetsu. It is noteworthy that Asian food accounts for almost 1/3 of surveyors' favorite cuisines.

Top Food: "Still king of the town" (for the fifth year in a row) is the "blissful" "elegant" "supernova" Gary Danko which takes top honors not just for Food, but also for Popularity and Service. Keeping pace, and maintaining its second position once again is the "near-religious", "indulgent five-hour" dining experience at Thomas Keller's French Laundry. Rocketing up to third place in Top Food is the "phenomenal" "new culinary destination" in Healdsburg, Cyrus.

Most Popular: Meanwhile, following Gary Danko for Most Popular is the "boisterous" "beautiful" "belle époque landmark" Boulevard. And rounding out the top three is the "urbane Vietnamese standard setter," The Slanted Door.

Other Exciting Venues: First, it's worth taking a closer look at the victor for Top D@cor – Garden Court – whose "fancy" ballroom takes diners back to the "elegant" "grand style of yesteryear." Then, when it comes to Top Food in the Area's trendiest places, it's Myth which offers a "happy mixture of good design, fabulous" New American food, and a "buzzy bar." As for eating and people watching, the best bet is Boulevard, which so often plays host to "visiting VIPs." And finally, for small plates you should head out of town, since first place is a tie between the "beautiful" Tamarine in Palo Alto, the "remarkable" Fork in San Anselmo and "sensational" Willi's Wine Bar in Santa Rosa.

Spending and Tipping: With nearly 64% of Bay Area residents saying they're spending more per meal than they did two years ago, it's no surprise that fine dining continues to thrive in the Bay Area. On the inflation front, the overall news is good. The average meal price is up only 1.2% this year from \$35.52 to \$35.96. However, inflation is 15% up among the 20 most expensive restaurants. (A large part of this is due to a major price increase at the French Laundry.) Overall, San Francisco is one of the most expensive restaurant cities in the country – trailing only New York City. Perhaps that's why San Franciscans are not at the top of the tipping list. In fact, at 18.4%, quite the opposite is true – San Francisco is tied with Los Angeles as the lowest tipping city in the country, with Eastern cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, and Philadelphia tipping 19% or higher.

Service – The Weak Link: As with all 85 cities Zagat surveys, service is by far the most serious irritant for Bay Area restaurant-goers. It is cited by 66% of all surveyors as their principal complaint when dining out. In comparison all other complaints, cumulatively, amount to 34%, with issues such as noise (14%), food (7%), prices (6%) and parking (at 5%) trailing far behind. Nina Zagat, co-chair of Zagat Survey, stresses that service and hospitality are "the industry's single most important problem." According to Ms. Zagat, "We asked our surveyors to rate San Francisco as a whole. While they gave very high grades to the city's culinary creativity and diversity, they rated the city's hospitality far lower. Something needs to be done to improve the training, respect and remuneration of servers."

By the People, For the People: Like all Zagat Survey guidebooks, the 2007 San Francisco Bay Area Restaurants guide is made by consumers for consumers. In addition to numerous Top Lists, the guide also includes such useful categories as Celebrity Chefs, Child-Friendly, Late Dining, Outdoor Dining, Romantic Places, Singles Scenes and, with the Bay Area being so close to wine country – Wine Bars. Restaurants are also broken out by cuisine, location, and dozens of other groupings.

The 2007 San Francisco Bay Area Restaurants guide (\$13.95) was edited by Meesha Halm and Randi Gollin. It is available at bookstores and other retail outlets, through zagat.com or by calling 888-371-5440.

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