

The IMPROPER

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THROW A DART AT A BOARD, and you're more likely to hit a paltry five or a bystander's head than to nail the bull's-eye. The same goes for picking a brunch place. We live in a world where mediocrity persists, and where one bad move can lead to serious indigestion. That's why we devote an entire issue to the city's top spots and services.

AS ALWAYS, we hosted a feast for a panel of talented judges and asked them to fill out a ballot of their personal favorites. This year's dinner party took place in the apt setting of the world-class Mandarin Oriental, Boston, where our local experts included Rounder Records cofounder Bill Nowlin, Skinner Auctioneers & Appraisers CEO Karen Keane and senatorial scion Ayla Brown [see page 132 for the full group].

BACK AT THE OFFICE, we counted their votes, weighing factors such as conflicts of interest, nepotism and crushing fact. Then, we picked the best in the field. From Irish pubs to French cuisine, from lingerie to sneakers, it's an exhaustive, but worthy, list of winners. All of which are worth a fling. **JONATHAN SOROFF**



NEW RESTAURANT

Coppa

If you manage to score a seat in under an hour, congratulations. Ever since Ken Oringer and Jamie Bissonnette threw open the doors of their no-reservations South End enoteca, followers of these two top chefs have stormed the place as if they were giving away free slabs of house-cured duck prosciutto. But the wait is worth the considerable reward: wood-roasted meatballs draped with lardo, knuckles of pasta with slow-cooked broccoli, and a white pizza with summer squash and spinach.

→ 253 Shawmut Ave., Boston » 617-391-0902 » coppaboston.com

FINE-DINING DEAL

Clio

Ken Oringer's culinary tour de force has long served as a special-occasion spot—and continues to do so. But a new market menu makes it easier to justify regular visits. Available Mondays through Thursdays, the \$49 deal features three courses that change daily. A recent meal brought a Silverbrook Farm egg to start, followed by diver scallops or a lamb loin and belly pressé, and finished with Japanese yuzu curd (dessert never gets overlooked here). The accompaniments alone—white-asparagus velouté, hot-and-sour artichoke chutney, native-strawberry sorbet—are worth the price of admission.

→ The Eliot Hotel, 370 Comm. Ave., Boston » 617-536-7200 » cliorestaurant.com

TAPAS

Toro

Confession: Despite counting down to Coppa's opening (see page 50), we secretly hoped the new restaurant might shorten the line at Toro, the older sibling around the corner. No such luck. Past 5 o'clock, locals still crowd in for griddled garlic shrimp, sea-salted Padrón peppers and "the corn." However, lunch is another story. Stop in any weekday between 12–2 pm, and there's a good chance you can sit right down to the killer burger, plus some of the nighttime tapas menu.

→ 1704 Washington St., Boston » 617-536-4300 » toro-restaurant.com

MIXOLOGIST

Todd Maul

When he overhauled the cocktail lists at Clio and Uni, Todd Maul did it with a splash. His new 80-plus compendium is exuberantly wide-ranging and playful, divided into categories both conventional, like aperitifs, and arbitrary, as in "other stuff." There are a handful of cocktails for two, a selection of tiki drinks and daiquiris, and 11 gin concoctions, including the classic Ramos Gin Fizz and the new 370 Comm. Ave.: Beefeater, Aperol, lemon juice and St-Germain. In circles dedicated to adventurous cocktailing, Maul's menu sets its own standard.

→ The Eliot Hotel, Clio and Uni, 370A Comm. Ave., Boston » 617-536-7200 » cliorestaurant.com