The Bay Area loves to eat. Our lust — and respect — for food are centuries old.

Maybe it’s a legacy of the Gold Rush, when “free lunch” was offered at the brothels that dotted just about every street corner of San Francisco. Because of this link, there’s always been a strong connection between food and carnal pleasure. Dining is more than sustenance — it’s pure, unadulterated joy.

*Top 100 continues on page 2*

**Chez Panisse has been part of the Top 100 since the guide’s first year.**

**Top 100 Bay Area Restaurants**

By Michael Bauer

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**New online features**

This year’s Top 100 offers special online features. You can search restaurants by cuisine and neighborhood, and find guides for special occasion dining. The site is also mobile-friendly. Visit at http://www.sfchronicle.com/food/top-100-2015

**On the cover**

Sashimi with shaved ice and Japanese tuber at Kusakabe. Photo by John Storey / Special to The Chronicle
San Francisco has been a gold mine of originality for more than 160 years: the creation of Boudin sourdough bread in 1849; the first air-dried salami in 1896 from Molinari; the establishment of Ghirardelli chocolate in 1852 and Guittard in 1868. All these built a foundation of innovation that is clearly evident in the food scene today.

I’ve been producing the Top 100 Bay Area Restaurants guide for 20 years, but with each edition I marvel anew at the quality of what we have. Chefs continue to start trends that then sweep the country — small plates, open kitchens, communal tables and organic produce.

We have such a powerful restaurant scene that the list could swell to 150 or 200 and still exclude many excellent places. That’s what makes the task of creating this guide so wonderful, yet so challenging.

Each year I return to the restaurants on the previous year’s list and then fold in the reviews and Updates I write weekly in The Chronicle. Keeping up with this dynamic scene means I dine out every night — sometimes consuming several meals in an evening. I’ve visited each restaurant at least three times, and in most cases many more.

This year, 17 new restaurants earned a place in the Top 100. The newcomers are a mix of recently opened places, such as the Hawaiian-themed Liholiho Yacht Club, and reinvigorated establishments like Kokkari, which was on the list several years ago but fell off because of kitchen ennui. In such a competitive region, chefs must — and do — rejuvenate.

Four restaurants on the 2014 list closed. It’s more than usual, even though a 4 percent attrition rate would be considered great in most business circles. We said goodbye to Abbot’s Cellar, Local’s Corner, Etoile in the Domaine Chandon winery in Yountville, and Coco500 (which became the home of the Top 100 Marlowe).

With the thousands of restaurants that have opened since my first guide two decades ago, it’s amazing that 10 restaurants have bested the

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Top 100 from page 1

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Top 100 Bay Area Restaurants by cuisine

Restaurants are in San Francisco unless noted otherwise.

**AMERICAN**
- Ad Hoc, Yountville
- Benu
- Bull Valley Roadhouse, Port Costa
- Commonwealth
- French Laundry, Yountville
- Hopscotch, Oakland
- House of Prime Rib
- Lazy Bear (NEW)
- Madrona Manor, Healdsburg
- Marlowe
- Park Tavern
- The Progress (NEW)
- Range
- The Restaurant at Meadowood, St. Helena
- State Bird Provisions
- Terra/Bar Terra, St. Helena
- Wayfare Tavern

**BASQUE**
- Piperade

**BRITISH**
- The Cavalier

**CHINESE**
- Hong Kong Lounge II
- Yank Sing

**DRINK-CENTRIC**
- Bar Agricole
The Dock at Linden Street, Oakland (NEW)
Maven
Trick Dog (NEW)
Trou Normand (NEW)

**FRENCH**
Bouchon, Yountville
La Folie
Monsieur Benjamin (NEW)

Nico

**GREEK**
Kokkari (NEW)

**HAWAIIAN**
Liholiho Yacht Club (NEW)

**ITALIAN**
A16
Acquerello
Bistro Don Giovanni, Napa
Bottega, Yountville
Ciccio, Yountville
Cotogna
Delfina
Flour+Water
Gialina
Oenotri, Napa
Perbacco/Barbacco
Pizzaiolo/Boot & Shoe Service, Oakland
Poggio, Sausalito
Redd Wood, Yountville
Scopa/Campo Fina, Healdsburg
SPQR
Tosca Cafe

**JAPANESE**
Akiko’s
Ich Sushi + Ni Bar
Ippuku, Berkeley

iyasare, Berkeley
Kusakabe (NEW)
Nojo
Pabu (NEW)
Ramen Shop, Oakland
Sushi Ran, Sausalito

**MEXICAN**
Comal, Berkeley
Mamacita
Nido, Oakland
Nopalito

**MOROCCAN**
Mourad/Aziza (NEW)

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**
Al’s Place (NEW)
AQ
Atelier Crenn (NEW)
Boulevard
Camino, Oakland
Central Kitchen
Chez Panisse/Cafe at Chez Panisse, Berkeley
Coi
Farmshop, Larkspur
Foreign Cinema
Frances
Gary Danko
Manresa, Los Gatos
Molina, Mill Valley (NEW)

**SARDINIAN**
La Ciccia

**SEAFOOD**
Swan Oyster Depot

**SPANISH**
Bocadillos
Bravas Bar de Tapas, Healdsburg

**THE COMMISSARY (NEW)**
Coqueta
Zarzuela

**STEAKHOUSE**
Press, St. Helena (NEW)

**THAI**
Hawker Fare (NEW)

**VEGETARIAN**
Greens

**VIETNAMESE**
Slanted Door

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**THE GUIDE TO THE LIST**

NEW These are the restaurants that are on the Top 100 list for the first time or have been on the list before but were not on it last year.

**PRICES**

Refers to the cost of main courses at dinner.

**NOISE**

- Pleasantly quiet (under 65 decibels)
- Can talk easily (65-70 decibels)
- Talking normally gets difficult (70-75 decibels)
- Can talk only in raised voices (75-80 decibels)
- Too noisy for normal conversation (80+ decibels)
Top 100 competition and still make the list: Acquerello, Boulevard, Chez Panisse, French Laundry, La Folie, Swan Oyster Depot, Terra, Yank Sing, Zarzuela and Zuni Cafe.

The determining factor for what makes it and what doesn’t is when I can answer the following question in the affirmative: Is this restaurant a destination, a place I would travel to just for the pleasure of dining there?

The 2015 list is designed to be a living document. You’ll find a new, improved and easily searchable version online at www.sfchronicle.com. I’ll also update the list periodically, adding new places that will probably have a spot on next year’s list.

In the meantime, check out this year’s Top 100 Bay Area Restaurants. I hope it will lead you to the best dining experiences in the best food region in America.

Michael Bauer is The San Francisco Chronicle restaurant critic. Find his blog at http://insidescoopsf.sfgate.com and his reviews on www.sfchronicle.com. E-mail: mbauer@sfchronicle.com Twitter: @michaelbauer1

Liholiho Yacht Club, a newcomer to the Top 100 guide.
Visual cues are important in restaurants, and the flames that shoot up the back of the specially designed grill from Italy telegraph the impressive rustic trattoria-style cuisine at Cotogna. You watch the cooking process from the dining counter, but it's also visible throughout the dining room. Chef and co-owner Michael Tusk and his wife, Lindsay, move between this restaurant and the more elegant and formal Quince, connected by a back hall. The handsome interior of this 1907 building would be at home in Italy, but enjoys the San Francisco sense of place with plate-glass windows that overlook the tree-lined streets of Jackson Square. Items are priced by categories: Antipasti are $13 (love the wild nettle sformato); pastas, $18; pizza, $17; desserts, $9; wine, $50/bottle, $12/glass. One of the top stops for lunch, too, and on nice days there are tables on the sidewalk.

Cotogna

Cuisine: Italian
Specialties: Ricotta ravioli with farm egg; agnolotti dal plin; pizza; spit-roasted pork; roasted quail.
Seats: 50 (plus 10 at the bar and eight outdoors, weather permitting)
Prices: $17-$30 (plus 4% S.F. surcharge); $55 four-course Sunday Supper
Noise rating: AAA
Parking: Valet $12 at night