

CHOICE TABLES

In Oakland, Innovation Is on the Menu

who spent 21 years at the venerable Berkeley restaurant, was the produce buyer for much of his tenure. This is a chef who knows how to shop — a talent he shows off at his new restaurant, Camino, located in an old furniture warehouse in the Grand Lake neighborhood.

The high-ceilinged, almost austere dining room puts the emphasis on the huge fireplace at the back of the restaurant, where almost every dish is cooked over the open flame. Because the regularly changing menu is so short, Mr. Moore's sous chefs oversee individual menu items all the way through, from start until they're plated.

During my visit, the menu consisted of seven starters and three entrees. The pig's head and trotter fritters, accompanied by poached pig's tongue, was the most memorable dish of the meal; the fritters were crisp on the outside but gooey with fat on the inside. Kid goat, paired with a chili-mint sauce, was fall-off-the-bone tender. The garlic and pork sausages were also satisfying: taut on the outside yet soft on the inside, their flavor enhanced by a side of thick house-made sauerkraut.

Later, I asked Mr. Moore why he settled in Oakland, and he said he hadn't intended to. "We were looking at spaces in San Francisco for three years and used three different Realtors but we found nothing," he said. "So we just decided to have a look around Oakland and we stumbled upon this place."

Camino, 3917 Grand Avenue; (510) 547-5035; caminorestaurant.com. Dinner for two, without drinks or tip, is about \$80.

ADESSO

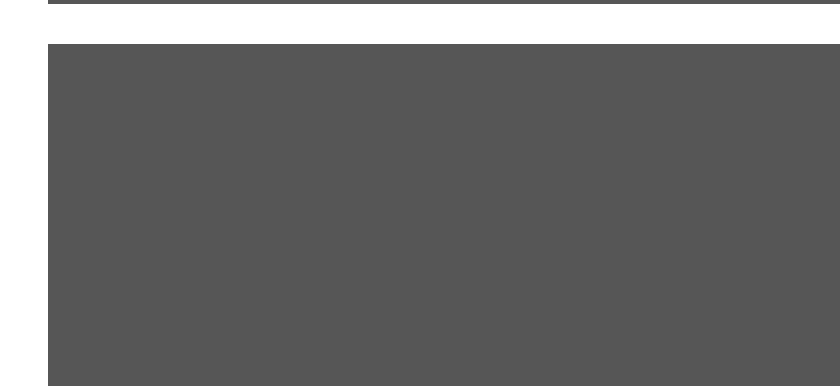
Up the street from Commis is another new restaurant that has set local foodies' taste buds ablaze. Adesso is a laid-back Italian wine bar that cures its own salumi. With a book-sized wine list that covers all 20 regions of Italy and a two-page list of 40-plus salumis, eight pâtés and six panini, the restaurant is an Italophile's dream. I arrived early to catch the one-hour aperitivo that has regulars raving: buy a glass of wine or a cocktail between 5 and 6 p.m. (or 10:30 and 11:30 p.m.) and graze from a section



TOP Meatballs and toast at Boot and Shoe Service. ABOVE Asparagus, olive toast and egg at Camino, located in an old furniture warehouse, right.

of the bar crammed with free food. Offerings change daily, but I sampled ciccioli, a fluffy, fat-laced pork pâté; small nuggets of parmigiano; a peppery wild arugula salad; and bowls of olives.

Off the main menu, plates are meant to be shared. The prosciutto was some of the best I've ever had: transparent-thin, like a pork-flavored breath strip, it melted the second it hit the tongue. The porchetta panino, sandwiched between a crunchy baguette and mingling with strands of cooked chicory, was perfectly done, the light spices infused in the porchetta danced on the palate long after the sandwich was gone. The best, though, were the arancini, fried rice balls filled with molten pork ragù,



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG LEE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

slightly salty but oozing with gooey goodness.

Adesso, 4395 Piedmont Avenue; (510) 601-0305; dopoadesso.com. Dinner for two, without drinks or tip, is about \$50.

BOOT AND SHOE SERVICE

The Bay Area has been going through something of a pizza revolution recently. And it arguably started when Charlie

Hallowell — yet another chef to have spent time at Chez Panisse — opened Pizzaiolo in Oakland five years ago. Last December, Mr. Hallowell opened a spinoff, Boot and Shoe Service (the name is a holdover from the previous tenant).

Like Pizzaiolo, Mr. Hallowell's new spot doesn't take reservations and is



TOP Scallops with Brazilian curry sauce at Bocanova. TOP LEFT Adesso, a wine bar, cures its own salumi. ABOVE Corned pork jowl salad at Commis, which offers a six-course dinner at its counter, below left.

perpetually packed. I waited for an hour at the bar, nursing pints of a crisp local pilsner. Once seated, I began with the fist-sized pork meatballs, slightly crispy on the outside and aided by a thick, chunky tomato sauce. Then there were the pizzas, whose toppings change based on available ingredients (surprise, surprise). Eschewing offerings like wild nettles and Monterrey Bay squid, I went simple with the margherita. Tangy tomato sauce oozed into bubbling mozzarella over a crust thick and slightly charred on the periphery and impressively thin and crispy in the middle. My dining companion, who lives in San Francisco, feasted on the tomato, sausage, black olives and Calabrian pepper pie, which she said was good enough to bring her back across the bay for more.

Coming from someone living in restaurant-loaded San Francisco, that seems like the ultimate compliment.

Boot and Shoe Service, 3308 Grand Avenue; (510) 763-2668; bootandshoeservice.com. Dinner for two, without drinks or tip, is about \$50. ■

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