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Anthony's Italian Kitchen, offers home-made Italian cooking using the freshest ingredients, featuring favorites such as pizza, pasta, and sandwiches. Voted "Best in Portland" for three years. Dine-in and catering services on offer. Beer and wine available. Open 11-8 Mon. through Sat. 151 Middle St #5, Portland; and new location Cumberland County Courthouse, 205 Newbury St. anthonyitaliankitchen.com, 774-8668.

Bruno's Voted Portland's Best Italian Restaurant by Market Surveys of America, Bruno's offers a delicious variety of classic Italian, American, and seafood dishes—and they make all of their pasta in-house. Great sandwiches, pizza, calzones, soups, chowders, and salads. Enjoy lunch or dinner in the dining room or the Tavern. Casual dining at its best. 33 Allen Ave., 878-9511.

Bull Feeney's Authentic Irish pub & restaurant, serving delicious from-scratch sandwiches, steaks, seafood & hearty Irish fare, pouring local craft & premium imported brews, as well as Maine's most extensive selection of single malt Scotch & Irish whiskeys. Live music five nights. Open 7 days, 11:30 a.m.-1 a.m. Kitchen closes at 10 p.m. 375 Fore St., Old Port, 773-7210, bullfeeneys.com.

DiMillo's Now through December, relax and enjoy Head Chef Melissa Bouchard's masterful creations. Every day, she offers something new and delicious. Try our Early Dinner Specials, Monday-Friday or our wonderful Port Side Lounge, Portland's getaway for grown-ups. Happy Hour includes special menu Monday-Friday, 4-7p.m. Open daily at 11a.m., Commercial St., Old Port. Always FREE PARKING while aboard. 772-2216.

Eve's at the Garden, an oasis of calm and great food in the Old Port. Perfect for meetings and special occasions. Ingredients from Maine's waters and farms. The seasonal Ice Bar is ideal for outdoor dining. Happy Hour Mon. - Fri.; free valet parking. Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., Dinner 5-9:30 p.m. 468 Fore St., Portland, 775-9090, evesatthegarden.com

J's Oyster is a premier seafood destination and locals' favorite with indoor and outdoor waterfront seating on one of Portland's scenic piers. Established in 1977, J's offers classic favorites and friendly service. Coastal Living claimed J's one of "America's Best Seafood Dives 2016." Find us on Facebook. 772-4828

Kon Asian Bistro Steakhouse & Sushi Bar serves Asian cuisine with modern flair. Japanese, Sushi, Thai, Chinese, or hibachi tables. Private party rooms accommodates groups from business meetings to birthday parties. Choose fresh, delicious items prepared before your table. Family

Next Stop Chengdu

Sichuan Kitchen brings the heat to Congress Street.

BY DIANE HUDSON

ENTICING, SPICY **SICHUAN KITCHEN** is now pulsing on Congress Street. In this daughter-father act, **Qi Shen** (Qi meaning “life” or “breath” in Mandarin) brought her dad, **Shang Wei Shen**, from his native Sichuan Region of southwest China to dazzle diners here. As head chef, “He speaks no English,” Qi says. “We translate each order to him in Mandarin.”

We begin with the **seaweed salad** (\$7). Crystal vermicelli noodles, julienned daikon, and savory seaweed combine to create a stunning fresh salad dressed with roasted chili oil, which gives the dish a smoky heat. It’s spiced, not spicy: the kick of the chili is tamed by black vinegar and a generous garnish of fresh cilantro.

If the heart of Sichuan cooking beats with “four taste sensations: spicy, hot, fresh, and fragrant,” according to the menu. This opener delivers on all four.



Seeking robust sensuality, we enjoy an appetizer of savory **Sichuan-style ribs** (\$12). Made of slow-braised, tender pork ribs smothered in a dark syrupy sauce, this

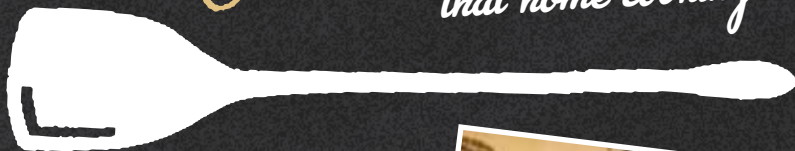
pairs beautifully with the subtle, dry heat of the seaweed salad.

Following tradition, we sip cups of fragrant tea from a white ceramic teapot between courses, cleansing our palates before the next round of indulgence. Shen’s specially selected **E-Mei Kai-fengt tea** (\$5) is made from a delicate blend of floral jasmine and green loose-leaf tea shipped from China. Our draught of Peaks Fresh Cut Pilsner (\$6) hasn’t traveled quite as far to our table—but certainly de-

“The heart of Sichuan cooking beats with ‘four taste sensations: spicy, hot, fresh, and fragrant.’”

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DINING GUIDE

friendly; open Mon.-Thurs. 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri. to 11 p.m., Sat. 1 p.m.-11 p.m., Sun. 11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. 874-0000, konasianbistrome.com.

Maria's Ristorante is Portland's original classic Italian Restaurant. Greg and Tony Napolitano are always in house preparing classics like Zuppa de Pesce, Eggplant Parmigian, Grilled Veal Sausages, Veal Chop Milanese, homemade cavatelli pastas, Pistachio Gelato, Limoncello Cake, and Maine's Best Meatballs. Prices \$11.95 - \$22.95. Tue.-Sat. starting at 5 p.m. Catering always available. 337 Cumberland Ave. 772-9232, mariasrestaurant.com.

Pedro's focuses on simple yet full-flavored Mexican and Latino food. Offering tacos, burritos and an impressive array of margaritas, sangria, beer, and wine. *Especiales de la semana* (specials of the week) keep the menu varied and fresh and showcase different Latino cultures. Seasonal outdoor dining available. Open daily, 12 p.m. - 10 p.m. 181 Port Rd., Kennebunk, 967-5544, pedrosmaine.com.

Rivalries Sports Pub & Grill Now with two fun and comfortable upscale sports bar locations. Known for great casual pub food, Rivalries' menu has something for everyone. And, with 30+ HD TVs and every major pro and college sports package, you won't miss a game! Located at 11 Cotton Street in Portland's Old Port (774-6044) and 2 Hat Trick Drive, Falmouth (747-4020), rivalriesmaine.com

Solo Italiano Traditional northern Italian cuisine mixes Maine freshness with Genovese flavor from international chef Paolo Laboa. Enjoy the crudo bar or the daily changing menu. Included in *Food & Wine Magazine's* 2016 "What to Do in Portland, ME." Open daily 5 p.m.-10 p.m. 100 Commercial Street Portland, 780-0227, soloitalianorestaurant.com

*reservations recommended

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RESTAURANT REVIEW



livers on refreshment.

We can't bear to leave the appetizer list, so we try a plate of **Zhong dumplings** (\$7), straight from Shen's hometown of Chengdu. These tender little pockets of luscious, garlicky pork loin are topped with the signature Zhong chili-soy sauce with just the right amount of zing. We are smitten.

Our next taste treat, served family-style, is **Fish with pickled greens** (\$19)—Swai fish fillets, pickled greens, chilis, and Sichuan peppercorns. Swai is a white fish similar to a catfish. Bathing in a velvety broth, the dish boasts the classic Sichuan pepper spice profile: a slow, numbing tingle of heat with a lemony flavor, unlike the hot, eye-watering slap of the traditional chili pepper. A real slow burner, this dish is the perfect antidote for a cool, windy day.

Shang Wei Shen has a surprise for us: **Double-Cooked Pork** (\$16). His plate of delicate pork belly shells arrives simmered and then fried in a rich bean paste punctuated with flash-fried leeks for a zippy freshness. Jumping with vibrant greens and reds, this bowl is as much a feast for the eyes as for the taste buds.

Bypassing the limp, greasy fare of pseudo-Chinese takeout joints, Sichuan Kitchen delivers authentic regional cuisine thanks to Shen's exciting and accessible cooking. Quite exceptionally, flavor is not lost in translation at Sichuan Kitchen. ■

Sichuan Kitchen, 612 Congress St., Portland. Sun.-Wed., 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m.; Thurs.-Sat., 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m.
536-7226, sichuankitchenportland.com



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