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Love Bites

While we appreciate the accolades, Portland's chefs and restaurants need no introduction.

BY KATE CHRISTENSEN

THE BEST THING about the much-ballyhooed recent *Bon Appétit* piece that names our sweet Little Easy (my nickname for Portland) the 2018 Restaurant City of the Year is that none of my favorite places was named and therefore wrecked forever. But that may also be the worst thing about it.

While it's great to see Portland's culinary embarrassment of riches praised and singled out, it is equally bewildering to be praised for having a hopping food scene when the true diehard originators who made that scene possible are passed over in favor of newcomers.

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against **Little Giant** or **Chaval**, but come on. **Fore Street** barely gets a mention—Fore Street! Sam Hayward, who brought farm-to-table and sea-to-plate dining to Maine, is arguably the father and grandfather of every restaurant on the list. Let me go out on a limb and extend that to just about every good restaurant up and down the coast.

And **Scales**, Hayward's latest (several years old, but still newish) venture, along



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with fellow classic Portland restaurateur Dana Street, wasn't even mentioned. (Full disclosure: I had my wedding lunch at Scales, and I would happily get married again just to repeat the experience.)

I moved to Portland in 2011. Before that, I lived in Brooklyn for 20 years. During that time, I watched the colonization of Williamsburg and Greenpoint—first by artists, then hipsters, then poseurs, and, most recently, tech millionaires and oligarchs. As the neighborhood gentrified, the restaurant scene, which had started out as a homegrown, local movement of young, exciting chefs, over time became just that, a 'scene'—flashy, overpriced, thronged, with little connection to the roots of the place itself.

The same thing, regrettably, seems to be happening in Portland. That is, at least, if you believe the hype. Look deeper, though, and you will find a permanent food scene in this town—scene in the sense of community: a rooted, sustainable ecosystem of chefs and purveyors, local fishermen and farms, and an ethos of authenticity, honest quality, and pragmatism.

In the years since I moved to Portland, I have developed a chauvinistic pride in its real food scene. Meanwhile, I've watched new restaurants rise, flounder to gain a foothold, then fade away—dozens, it seems, each year. But the old stalwarts haven't lost any of the magic that made them successful in the first place.

You wouldn't necessarily know this from reading *Bon Appétit*.

The piece is mainly focused on the newest hot spots on Washington Avenue, Portland's newest "restaurant row." I'd never heard of half of them. Andrew Knowlton, the writer of the piece, appears to have thrown in Fore Street as a tip of the hat, and he mentions **Ruski's** (Ruski's!) to prove his in-the-know hipster Portland street cred. To be clear, I love Ruski's as much as the next person. But let's just say that its inclusion on the list of great Portland restaurants made me burst out laughing.

As did the breathless tone of the piece: T-shirts! Tote bags! All these new places I've never heard of! I can't help wondering how many of them will still be here in three years...

To be sure, Portland is a place with a rich and thriving food culture, but it's not a 'scene,' and it's not dependent on newer,

flashier places. It's a small city with a network of chefs, interdependent and interconnected. Fred Eliot, who used to cook at Petit Jacqueline, is now running the kitchen at Scales, and wherever he goes, I will follow him. Masa Miyake of **Miyake** and **Pai Men Miyake**, Steve Corry of **555** and **Petite Jacqueline**, and David Levi of **Vinland** all have very different visions, but they are equally rooted in Maine ingredients and classic cooking techniques. And Dana Street is the seasoned magician of local seafood.

As I learned from living in north Brooklyn, it's the nature of a thriving, healthy city to change and evolve. Restauranting is a tough business, and new places come and go as, do hotspots. Three years ago, Restaurant Row was arguably on Middle Street: **Eventide**, **Duckfat**, **Hugo's**, and the **Honey Paw**. Three years before that, in my memory anyway, Restaurant Row was Longfellow Square: **Pai Men Miyake**, **Petit Jacqueline**, **Boda**, **Hot Suppa**, and **Local 188**. Forest Avenue had a moment about a year ago, when a flurry of new places added to the luster of the tried-and-true ones. **Central Provisions** had its red-hot moment in the sun, crowded every night with out-of-towners and cruise-ship passengers.

What matters to me in a restaurant, though, lies beneath the dazzling surface of trend and novelty—namely consistency, integrity, and longevity, along with food that genuinely satisfies. So many of the good older places are all still going strong, and they're all as good as ever—Portland's solid go-to neighborhood joints. **Salvage** serves fantastic barbecue and sides. You almost always have to wait for a table at **Empire**, but it's worth it, because their dumplings and noodles are insanely good. **Micucci**, **Otto**, and **Bonobo** have been making great pizza for years. **Holy Donut** is my chosen place of worship, though it hardly needs any more attention, and **Emilitsa** is a paradise of modern Greek cuisine. **Asmara** serves Ethiopian food that's as good as any I've ever had anywhere.

I could, and will, go on: **Lolita**, the **Blue Spoon**, and **Union** have never let me down. When I'm feeling raw and blue, I can always count on the chicken tacos with a side of bacon at the **Front Room** to cheer me up. The Parisian-feeling outdoor ca-

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fé at the **Regency** is a nice place for a lunch date on a balmy day. And whenever you get a hankering for top-notch homey German food (and who doesn't?) there's nowhere like **Schulte & Herr** for bratwurst and sauerkraut. As for sushi, no one does it better than Masa Miyake. But **Benkay** and **Yosaku** are damned good, too. As for Vietnamese, whether you're Team **Thanh Thanh** or Team **Saigon**, it's okay—they're both great.

Ultimately, I'm glad that most of my favorite places weren't mentioned. Let the crowds from Boston and New York buy up all the baked goods at Tandem, throng the sidewalks of Washington Avenue, book seats at **Drifter's Wife** and Little Giant months in advance, and follow **Mr. Tuna** wherever his truck goes. While the hordes demand vodka tonics and chili dogs at Ruski's, I'll have a quiet rye and soda with loaded potato chips at **Bramhall**. Let them eat fried clams at **Di-Millo's**—more twin lobster specials at the Porthole for the rest of us.

I'm starting to feel a bit out of breath, and I've neglected to mention so many other places. For a small city, Portland is ridiculously rich in restaurants that serve truly good and beautiful food on a daily basis. And I do realize that, in arguing with the premise of *Bon Appétit's* choices, I've just proved their point.

Yes, this is a great restaurant city. The magic of Portland is that there is a restaurant for every mood, budget, appetite, and aesthetic.

My hat is off to the original chefs who made this town what it is, like Sam Hayward, Dana Street, Masa Miyake, and Steve Corry—the originators who paved the way for these ambitious young upstarts. Thanks to these brilliant trailblazers, there's room for everyone. ■

Kate Christensen is the author of seven novels, including *The Great Man*, which won the 2008 PEN/Faulkner Award for fiction, and, most recently, *The Last Cruise*. She is also the author of two culinary memoirs, *Blue Plate Special* and *How to Cook a Moose*, which won the 2016 Maine Literary Award for Memoir. She lives with her husband and dog in Portland, Maine.



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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wayne J. Yee, D.D.S., P.C." The signature is written in dark ink on a light background.

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Plasma Arc, Laser, and Digital Dental Technology helps to Create Beautiful Smiles Often in Only One Day!

By: Marianna Gold

A smile that gives self-confidence and happiness is priceless. It can help you to start a new life, or to succeed at that interview for the job that you always wanted. Having a healthy appearance is a quality of life issue that can affect how others see and judge us, and how we see ourselves.

Obtaining High Quality Aesthetic (Cosmetic) Dentistry is easier to achieve than you may think. Just doing a professional 4 session Plasma Arc Bleaching is sometimes all that is needed to brighten a smile. And with today's Laser and ultrasonic filling technology you can in most cases totally avoid local anesthesia using needles. No more pain or hours of numbness. For Crowns the process of Digital Dentistry uses a Computer that guides a porcelain milling robot into the fabrication of custom designed and precisely fitted cosmetic teeth. Crowns/Laminates that could take several weeks to make can now be completed in as little as 1.5 hours.

The following photos were taken of an actual case completed in the office using Computer Assisted Design (CAD), and Computer Automated Milling (CAM) techniques. Temporaries that could easily fall off were not needed. This entire crown case was completed from start to finish in only One Day. Laser white fillings required less than 3 minutes per tooth because no wait time is needed for the patient to get numb. Plasma Arc bleaching helped to balance the colors prior to the start of treatment.



Will people know?

After this "Dental Make Over," few (even close friends) recognized what was done. But they all knew that the patient looked a lot better, and appeared healthier. This phenomena occurs because in conversations people focus more upon each other's eyes -- the teeth are not typically noticed as the immediate source of this healthy



new look; even if within their field of view.

But if the smile looks too white, or too flat, or too perfect the secret is given away and it draws attention immediately to the teeth; in which case they would appear fake. The secret to a perfect smile is by adding imperfections, but in the way that Mother Nature would. Look at the before and after pictures again. See if you can identify the natural teeth from the cosmetic bondings and porcelain crowns. The answer will be in next month's issue.

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In order to have a lasting affect, all Aesthetic Dentistry must start with quality Dental care, healthy gums, and proper hygiene. A comprehensive approach requires your willingness to get your teeth and gums into the best shape possible. This critical effort on your part will greatly increase the life of your Aesthetic Dentistry.

Having a perfect smile is really specific to each individual. One smile cannot fit all. A perfect smile is subjective to the person who wants it, and the environment in which the person intends to be in.

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"In over 20 years of Practice I have learned that the best Aesthetic Dentistry occurs only in an imperfect world. I try my best to copy and maximize the beauty of that imperfect world. Rather than trying to make every tooth geometrically the same I try to lean in the direction that nature's form and function takes me; unique to each individual.

I purposely make teeth ever so slightly "imperfect" with tiny chips, waves, twists, and turns, but I do so in the way Mother Nature would make these teeth. The net result is a "perfect smile," but not a fake smile.

-Quote by Dr. Wayne J. Yee