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DINING GUIDE

95 Ocean is open to the public and one of the best places to get lobster in Kennebunkport. Enjoy creative comfort foods and fresh Maine seafood with waterfront views and live entertainment at The Nonantum Resort. Our menu highlights freshly caught salmon, lobster, scallops and much more. The resort grows 100% organic gardens on property with herbs and vegetables. 95 Ocean Avenue Kennebunkport. 967-4050, nonantumresort.com.

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.

Barnacle Billy's, known for luxury lobster, steamed clams, large luscious drinks, barbecued chicken, homemade clam chowder & of course, the lobster roll & lobster stew. Features extensive indoor & sundeck seating where guests can enjoy both the beauty of the harbor & the ocean beyond. Perkins Cove, Ogunquit, 646-5575, barnbilly.com

Bayside American Café (formerly Bintliff's), owned and run by Joe & Diane Catoggio since 2003. The menu includes delicious items like house-made smoked salmon, corned beef hash, crab cakes, sandwiches, salads, Benedicts, and more. Come and discover why customers love Bayside American Café. Breakfast, brunch, and lunch are served daily starting at 7 a.m. 98 Portland St., Portland, 774-0005, baysideamericancafe.com.

Benkay sushi bar and Japanese restaurant is back! At our new location on 16 Middle Street, chef Ando has designed an authentic Japanese culinary experience close to Portland's waterfront. Full bar and menu including premium sushi, sashimi, and rolls. Monday-Friday: Lunch, 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.; Dinner: 5 p.m. - close. Saturday - Sunday: 11:30 a.m. - close. 773-5555, sushiman.com.

Bistro 233 has something great and affordable for everyone in the family! Come in for our Maine mussels, New York strip steak, baby back ribs, fish tacos, chicken piccata, fish & chips, jambalaya, and our Bistro Burger. No more arguing about food style when you come to Bistro 233—we have it all! Fun, laid-back environment. 233 U.S. 1 Yarmouth. 846-3633, bistro233.com.

BlueFin North Atlantic Seafood in the Old Port harnesses all that Maine is and positions it into a delicious dish. Executive Chef Tim Labonte creates new and unexpected meals using fresh, locally-caught seafood and seasonal ingredients. From breakfast through dinner and anything in-between, your next adventure may just be your next dish. 468 Fore Street. 775-9090, bluefinportland.com.

Bolster, Snow & Co. is located in the spectacularly reincarnated brick mansion, The Francis (formerly the Mellen E. Bolster House). With executive Chef Nicolas Verdisco at the helm, Bolster Snow provides guests

Magic at 3 Spring Street

Third time's another charmer for chef Cara Stadler.

BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER

UP A SHORT FLIGHT of stairs overlooking the city in motion, we discover the wizardry of **Lio**, chef/restaurant and three-time James Beard Rising Star Chef award nominee Cara Stadler's newest restaurant. With high ceilings, non-stop plate-glass windows, and curvy wrought-iron-tube chandeliers, it's like being up in a chic treehouse.

A serpentine bar with lots of low-backed, upholstered stools dominates the center of the main dining room, where we're shown to a great table at a window overlooking Spring.

There's also outdoor patio seating and a smaller dining room on the other side of the huge open kitchen. We spot chef/owner Cara Stadler in spotless whites, looking serene and smiling as always, among her busy kitchen team.

She and her mother, Cecile Stadler, opened the acclaimed Asian-fusion Tao Yuan in Brunswick in 2012, and Port-



land's beloved Bao Bao Dumpling House in 2015. Lio arrives with a unique—and non-Asian—menu.

Lio's a wine-taster's dream, with more than 30 wines—most, but not all, from Europe—offered by the glass (\$10 to \$18) or half-glass (\$5 to \$9). The bar is rigged with a Napa Technology wine preservation system that allows them to open expensive bottles and offer them by the glass without degradation to the quality in the bottle. The glass-encased wine room at the top of the stairs is quite a sight.

The menu is a celebration of local sea-

food, meat, and vegetables. We share asparagus that tastes just-picked (\$12). The grilled-marked* spears, dressed with tart *beurre noisette*, sit on a bright swoosh of puréed asparagus. Tiny cubes of vinegary boquerones and piped dabs of whipped butter, which we capture with bits of baguette, are nicely contrasting garnishes.

We follow with Summer Squash and Shrimp (\$10). Behind this simple name hides cool poached shrimp dressed in dill, parsley, tarragon aioli with a bit of lemon. This herby salad is concealed in a roll of mandoline-sliced and marinated zucchini and yellow squash slices. It's colorful, inventive, and so summery.

As we graze, we sample a fruity white *Insolia* from Sicily's Feudo Principi di Butera, a Steinger rosé from Austria, and a nicely astrin-



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DINING GUIDE

with warm, genuine hospitality, gracious service, and fiercely seasonal food and drink that are representative of the Northeast Region. 747 Congress St. Portland. 772-7485, thefrancismaine.com

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, plus 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. 773-7210, bullfeeneys.com.

Congress Bar and Grill, serving Portlanders delicious food and beers for years! Fully embrace Portland's laid-back, no frills attitude. Try Thai chili wings and the best fries in the city while vintage game shows play on-screen. Happy hour everyday 4 p.m.- 6 p.m. & 10 p.m. - 12 a.m. Late night menu Fri & Sat. Open 7 days, 11:30 a.m. to 1 a.m., 617 Congress St., Portland. 828-9944.

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gent Redentore sauvignon blanc from Italy (\$11-\$12 per glass). Lio's tall, delicate stemware shows them well.

Turning to hot dishes, olive-oil poached Maine Halibut is a delicate revelation (\$17). The tender fillet sits atop puréed potato and fennel laced with bits of crabmeat, forming an island in a glass bowl pooled with shellfish broth. The dish is subtle, yet the clean, fresh flavors are clear and concentrated.

A dish of Squid Ink Spaghetti (\$14) is a wonderful contrast. Black, toothsome strands of fresh pasta are tossed with chopped razor clams, very tender, and Calabrian chili, anchovy, lemon, and parsley. It looks and tastes dramatic and bright.

Our server, Carrie, has explained earlier that, as at Stadler's other establishments, dishes are delivered as they are turned out in the kitchen, and are intended as family-style, to be shared. This system worked well for us because we found it impossible not to taste everything.

Lio's ambitious menu includes such



share-worthy starters as house-made potato chips with crème fraîche and caviar (\$15), and potted foie gras (\$24). There's no shortage of meat and fowl, with such unexpected choices as Frogs Legs (\$10), Duck Breast with cherries (\$15), Lamb Loin with potato gratin (\$17), and even Sweetbreads with caramelized fennel (\$16). There are so many reasons to return!

We start winding down with a half-glass each of Spanish Bodegas Hermanosa Peci-

na tempranillo (\$7) and a Foris Rogue Valley Oregon pinot noir (\$5.50) as we consider dessert.

A square of mousse-like milk chocolate caraway tart shot with orange caramel, which is flanked by a scoop of toasted brioche ice cream and scattered with crunchy dark chocolate crumbs (\$9), is an absolute show-stopper to conclude this delicious feast. ■

Lio, serving dinner Wed. through Sun. from 5-9 p.m. 3 Spring St., Portland; 808-7133; lio-maine.com

Editor's note: This exceptional review was on Claire Z. Cramer's computer after we tragically lost her just weeks ago. Her family generously provided it because all of us couldn't bear not to share it with you. We've starred the interesting phrase "grilled-marked" asparagus spears because Claire and I might have had a half-hour conversation about that, just one of many things we'll miss about her. I'd likely have wondered if "grill-marked" were better, and she'd likely have pointed out my reductive POV as a diner. By using "grilled," she's emphasizing the creation, not just what it looks like afterward to a stranger. Because she wasn't a stranger to words or food. She felt the process and the work behind it. She was bringing the dish all the way to you, the reader.

MEAGHAN MAURICE



DINING GUIDE

The Corner Room features bright, wide-open space complemented by handcrafted woodwork. Patrons can expect a warm, comfortable atmosphere, marked by the rich aromas of house-made pastas, pizzas, antipasti, and artisanal breads. Enjoy the taste of Venice in the heart of Portland, ME! 879-4747, 110 Exchange Street. Visit thecornerroomkitchenandbar.com.

El Corazon, Mexican food from the heart. Authentic family recipes passed down through generations, plus an "oversized tequila selection." Try Portland's own "Marisco"—a Mexican seafood cocktail of shrimp, bay scallops, clams, octopus, and, naturally, Maine lobster. Open lunch and dinner, Mon.-Thur. 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.; Fri.-Sat. till 11:00 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m.-9 p.m. 190 State St. Portland. elcorazonportland.com, 536-1354.

Fish Bones American Grill offers creatively prepared American cuisine along the canal in the historic Bates Mill complex in the heart of downtown Lewiston. Open seven days, offering dinner Monday through Sunday, lunch Monday through Friday, and brunch on Sundays. Come get hooked at 70 Lincoln Street, Bates Mill No. 6! fishbonesmaine.com, 333-3663.

Flatbread Company Portland, Tucked between two wharves on Portland's waterfront, this family-friendly restaurant features signature pizzas plus weekly carne and veggie specials—all made with local ingredients, baked in a wood-fired, clay oven. Everything is homemade, organic, and nitrate-free. Twenty local drafts and cocktails featuring all-local breweries and distilleries. Flatbread has a perfect waterside, relaxed atmosphere for any occasion. 72 Commercial St., 772-8777, flatbreadcompany.com/portland.

Homage Restaurant dazzles with scratch-made, hand-crafted food and cocktails. Tuck into our mushroom tarts, Mom's Fried Chicken, Steak "Wellington," Steak and Scallops, Squash and Beans, Gingersnap Creme Brulee, or Blondie Sundae. 9 Mechanic St. Freeport, ME. 869-5139 homagetherestaurant.com.

Hurricane Restaurant, New England cuisine with an international twist. Local produce and seafood, full bar, award-winning wine list, in-house dessert chef. Nurturing the seacoast palate for over 25 years. Good restaurants come and go. Great restaurants get better and better. Lunch and dinner seven days a week. Bar menu always available. 29 Dock Square, Kennebunkport, Maine. 967-9111. hurricanerestaurant.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.

Maria's Ristorante is Portland's original classic Italian Restaurant. Greg and Tony Napolitano prepare classics like Zuppa de Pesce, Eggplant Parmigiana, Grilled Veal Sausages, Veal Chop Milanese, homemade



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Pearl Kennebunk & Spat Oyster Cellar is Chef Rebecca Charles's (of Pearl Oyster Bar, New York) newest restaurant. Enjoy elevated beach food, including Charles's famous reinvention of Maine's lobster roll. Happy Hour on Wed., Thurs., and Sun. from 5 p.m. - 6 p.m. for \$1 oysters, \$5 wines, and well cocktails! 27 Western Ave., Kennebunk. pearloysterbar.com/pearl-maine/, 204-0860.

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, pedrosmaine.com. 967-5544.

Portland Lobster Company Experience "Maine's Best Lobster Roll," lobster dinners, steamers, fried claims, chowder, and more before visiting our outdoor bar for an ice-cold local beer or a glass of fine wine. Then relax on our deck overlooking the gorgeous Portland Harbor while listening to daily live music. 180 Commercial Street, 775-2112, portlandlobstercompany.com.

Ricetta's Brick Oven Ristorante, a Maine Italian favorite since 1989. Experience a modern, family-friendly atmosphere with a versatile menu filled with award-winning brick oven pizzas, pasta, grill, and Italian entrees, using as many locally sourced ingredients as possible, plus gluten-free options. Sunday - Thursday 11:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.; Friday & Saturday: 11:30 a.m. - 10 p.m. 240 U.S. Route 1, Falmouth. 781-3100.

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 10 Cotton Street in Portland. (774-6044). And 2 Hat Trick Drive, just off I-295 in Falmouth (747-4020), rivalriesmaine.com.

Tally's Kitchen at Bayside, located on 84 Marginal Way in Portland, is a unique breakfast and lunch boutique. Life-long Portlander Julie Taliento Walsh builds on her reputation for quality and affordable classic fare with vegetarian & gluten-free options served in a friendly setting that feels like home. House made baked goods, artisan sandwiches, soups, salads, freshly brewed coffee, and blackboard specials that change daily. Breakfast and lunch: Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. 207-400-2533, tallyskitchen.com.

Twenty Milk Street welcomes diners with warm, intimate décor and a lovely brick fireplace. Located in the Historic Portland Regency Hotel, we offer Sunday brunch, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, specializing in modern American dishes with a New England flourish. We're proud to serve local produce, seafood and beef, pork, chicken, and turkey from our own farm! 774-4200.

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