

CRAVINGS

Icon Grill's Ultimate Mac and Cheese



SAY CHEESE

Our city's known for fresh seafood and organic produce, but some of the best comfort food anywhere—classic elbow-pasta-and-béchamel-sauce mac and cheese and variations on the theme—is simmering in the pots of local restaurants. *Haidn Ellis Foster*

BEECHER'S HANDMADE CHEESE

Made with penne pasta swimming in a rich blend of two house-made cheeses, the award-winning World's Best Mac and Cheese comes plain or in the "Maiachi" version—spiked with smoky Anaheim peppers. Pike Place Market, 1600 Pike Place; 206.956.1964; beecherscheese.com ☹

ICON GRILL

Just like Mom used to make—but dare we say, better? The Ultimate Mac and Cheese is luxuriously creamy (courtesy of Velveeta), topped with crunchy toasted bread crumbs and shaved tomato, basil and shallot "snow." Downtown, 1933 Fifth Ave.; 206.441.6330; icongrill.com \$\$

VEIL

A higher indulgence, Veil's lobster mac and cheese with succulent chunks of lobster is finished with crème fraîche and a dash of tarragon. Bonus: A nutty Parmesan crisp on top adds bite. Lower Queen Anne, 555 Albia St.; 206.216.0600; veilrestaurant.com \$\$

BLUE ONION BISTRO

For those who like a little zing with their comfort food, the Blue Ribbon Mac and Cheese with bleu cheese and onion (scallions, more precisely) made with egg rosette noodles is a signature favorite, but it's not for the faint of heart. Ravenna, 5801 Roosevelt Way NE; 206.729.0579; theblueonionbistro.com \$

CRAVE

Crave throws mushrooms into the mix with their shitake mac, made with large shell pasta and creamy Mornay sauce and topped with seasoned bread crumbs and baked to crispy perfection. Capitol Hill, 1621 12th Ave.; 206.388.0526; cravefood.com \$

THE CAN CAN

The folks at Can Can can (and will) let you select steak fillet, chicken or mushrooms to top their indulgent but classic Three-Cheese Mac. Sounds just right. Pike Place Market, 94 Pike St.; 206.652.0832; thecancan.com \$

and lemon thyme, or cherry bomb peppers and fennel sausage. Lunch Mon.–Sat.; dinner Mon.–Sun. 316 Virginia St.; 206.838.7388; tomdouglas.com/serious. \$

NEW! TASTE: *Eclectic.* The new restaurant at the newly expanded Seattle Art Museum is trying to bridge the gap between simple museum cafeteria and fine dining landmark, with thus far mixed results. Ingredients are stellar and many preparations—a long-braised pork belly, a fine pâté, a luscious roast guinea fowl in its own jus—are just scrumptious. The all-Northwest wine program is well developed too. But so far service is clunky at best, and the crisp modernist atmosphere doesn't yet transform at night into something more enticing. Lunch and dinner Tue.–Sun. 1300 First Ave.; 206.903.5291; tastesam.com. \$ T F F

TULIO RISTORANTE: *Italian.* Comforting Italian fare is on the menu, which is in the hands of executive chef Walter Pisano: fresh pastas, roasted meats and those ever-delicious sweet potato gnocchi. Breakfast and dinner daily; lunch Mon.–Fri. In the Hotel Vintage Park, 1100 Fifth Ave.; 206.624.5500; tulio.com. \$\$ P T F F

UNION: *American.* At his restaurant Ethan Stowell presents seasonal food with rare elegance and restraint. The daily-changing menu ranges broadly, but seafood options are especially broad, including fluke tartare with celery and green apple, calamari stewed with white beans and silken escolar with Meyer lemon oil. The appealing wine list offers generous by-the-glass and half-bottle options. Dinner daily. 1400 First Ave.; 206.838.8000; unionseattle.com. No checks. \$\$ T C F F

WATERFRONT SEAFOOD GRILL: *Seafood.* El Gaucho's fishy sibling is the kind of power seafood restaurant you'll want to visit with out-of-towners or potential clients—if you're feeling flush. The Indulgence (\$94 for two people) includes chilled Maine lobster, prawns, oysters, Barents Sea red king crab claw, tuna tartare and more. Dinner daily. 2801 Alaskan Way, Pier 70; 206.956.9171; waterfrontpier70.com. \$\$\$ T C

WILD GINGER ASIAN RESTAURANT & SATAY BAR

Asian. Wild Ginger combines the cuisines of several Asian countries: Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and China. The chicken satay is some of the best in town. Lunch Mon.–Sat.; dinner daily. 1401 Third Ave.; 206.623.4450; wildginger.net. No checks. \$ T C F F

EASTLAKE

SERAFINA: *Italian.* This Eastlake haven has been serving up intimate, cozy dining Italian style for more than a decade. The menu features dishes—veal meatballs with green olive tomato sauce topped with ricotta salata and braised rabbit—that smack of home-cooked meals done up with a sophisticated flair. Sunday brunch treats eggs and other breakfast fare to uniquely Italian touches. Brunch Sun.; lunch Mon.–Fri.; dinner daily. 2043 Eastlake Ave. E; 206.323.0807; serafina-seattle.com. \$ T C F F

SITKA & SPRUCE: *Northwest.* Matt Dillon's intensely personal Eastlake eatery is singularly devoted to showcasing local ingredients in an informal (chalkboard menus, unequivocally casual service) manner. The menu changes with what ingredients are on hand. Simple, light-handed pastas, salads and tasty desserts make Sitka and Spruce worth watching as it evolves. Lunch daily; dinner Tues.–Sat. 2238 Eastlake Ave. E; 206.324.0662; sitkaandspruce.com. \$ P C

EASTSIDE

CAFE JUANITA: *Italian.* Reliability isn't always sexy, but it is when you find a restaurant you can count on. From the first sparkling aperitif to the last spoonful of chocolate soufflé, Holly Smith's Cafe Juanita manages a

rare dining trifecta: pitch-perfect northern Italian by way of Northwest farms, great service and is exquisitely conducive to conversations—8 murmured. Dinner daily. 9702 NE 120th Plac; 425.823.3505; cafejuanita.com. \$\$\$ P T F

THE HERBFARM: *Northwest.* After 12 years as a new chef in the garden—Keith Luce, just took the reins from Jerry Traunfeld in October—reservations and be prepared—the seasonal take hours to unroll. Dinner Thu.–Sun. 14599 Woodinville; 425.485.5300; herbfarm.com. Club, Discover. \$\$\$ P F C

MAYURI INDIAN CUISINE: *Indian.* The points south house most of the area's respectables, and strip-mall-based Mayuri is one of the best mix of northern-style classics such as also good (lilflower and potatoes) and lamb rogan (osh, a few pancake-like treats from the south: dosas, rava dosas. Lunch and dinner daily. 15400 NE Bellevue; 425.641.4442; mayuriseattle.com. \$

MIXTURA: *Latin American.* Emmatual Piquero revivify the cuisine of his homeland, Peru. In the Kirkland restaurant, he deploys the Andean seafood cebiches, fruit-scented chiles and zing with great playfulness. It's too bad the dining room, but certain dishes add their own cheer, a scary-sounding but scrumptious beef heart skewer daily. 148 Lake St. S, Kirkland; 425.803.3310; mixtura.com. \$\$\$ P T F C

THE ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE

The Portland-based chain makes wonderbread and presents them with plainspoken pastas and someone at the table orders one of the 20 specialty pancakes: the apple pancake or the Dutch baby. Weekends can get astounding; you can grab the time, choose a weekday or starchy short stack. Breakfast and lunch Mon.–Sun. 130 Parkplace Center, Kirkland, 425.803.3310; originalpancakehouse.com. No checks. \$ P F C

POMEGRANATE BISTRO

Northwest. Caterers Lisa Dupar and Jonathan Zimmer bring attitude to their Redmond eatery. Breakfast and Take-out options? Yup. Pizzalike "firebread," Cassoulet, tamales and tuna tartare on the sa course. The family-friendly vibe and open kitchen rather new restaurant the feel of a longtime fixture. Brunch Sat.–Sun.; lunch daily; dinner Mon.–Sun. 18005 NE 68th St., Suite A150, Redmond; 425.882.8888; pomegranatebistro.com. No Diners Club. \$\$\$

PORCELLA URBAN MARKET

Eclectic. A place to fritter away the mortgage payments and nibble luxuries—including asparagus vinegar-gleaming jars of preserves from French cork and \$15 jars of pickled beets—beckon you to practical is Porcella's food case, for taking good house-made salumi, gorgeous hearty tasty soups and salads, and lots of roasted home and reheat in the oven. Breakfast and dinner Tues.–Sat. 10245 Main St., Suite 103; 425.286.0080; porcellaurbanmarket.com. \$

PURPLE CAFÉ & WINE BAR

American. Wine here, including bottles lining the extensive global list and tasting flights of 10 2-ounce samples. The menu suits a variety of filling salads and shareable appetizers to pizza meaty treats such as chicken marsala and grilled downtown Seattle location is grander still. Lunch Mon.–Sun. 14459 Woodinville-Redmond Road; 425.483.7129; 323 Park Place, Kirkland, 425.425 Fourth Ave.; 206.829.2280; thepurplecafe.com. Diners Club. \$ P T F C