



Located across the street from Seattle's iconic Pike Place Market sign, Matt's in the Market bustles with energy.

Photo by Nick Jurich

## COASTING

# SEATTLE *standouts*

Food lovers keep returning to these six restaurants for a reason

By Robyn Roehm Cannon, special to The Spokesman-Review

If there's anything that provides a great excuse to visit Seattle, it's a smoking hot restaurant scene. Talented chefs are hatching new spots monthly – the list of where to eat and drink has grown long and varied. From time to time, Coasting will take a look at newer stars of the culinary stage and give you some solid choices across a wide price range. But here are six spots that are local favorites – they've been around at least a decade and in some cases more than two, and you're guaranteed a delicious meal, great service and a fair value.

### Flying Fish

Even after 17 years, walk into Christine Keff's Flying Fish and there'll be fish on the menu you've never heard of – but order it and you'll be an instant fan. This James Beard award-winning chef is all about sustainable seafood and simple, uncomplicated preparation. The idea for Flying Fish came from her travels in Thailand and a stop on the island of Koh Samui, where beach restaurants served fish just out of the water simply grilled, while patrons wiggled their toes in the sand. "It was so direct, it seemed like a good idea," she recalls. Even the most health-minded have to fall off the wagon once in a while, so try her chocolate chip cookies with a secret ingredient: bacon grease – "Trust me, you want these," she promises, adding, "the best part is that everyone has BLT's for dinner the night before!" 300 Westlake Ave. N., (206) 728-8595, [www.flyingfishseattle.com](http://www.flyingfishseattle.com).

### Tutta Bella Neapolitan Pizzeria

The pizza here is so exceptional that President Barack Obama requested it during a visit to Seattle and it was delivered to Air Force One. Its authenticity subscribes to strict guidelines set forth by the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana in Naples, Italy. Only organic San Marzano tomatoes, fresh herbs and fresh yeast are permitted – and the 650-degree wood fired oven has to be approved, too. Chef Brian Goidjics spent weeks in Naples being trained in his technique and he dreams up mouth-watering combinations like Pizze Gioia, with fresh mozzarella, prosciutto crudo, arugula, shaved reggiano, topped by two softly cooked eggs that bind it all together. Add a view of the Space Needle at the Westlake location and a hip industrial space ... Bellissimo! 2200 Westlake Ave., Suite 112, (206) 624-4422, [www.tuttabella.com](http://www.tuttabella.com) for additional locations.

### Portage Bay Café

For the past 15 years, Portage Bay Café has walked the talk when it comes to finding organic, local, ethically raised and highest quality sources for all that goes on the breakfast and lunch menu at its three locations. With their motto, "Eat Like You

Give a Damn," it's no accident the restaurant often attracts more than 800 guests for Sunday brunch at their South Lake Union location. Young urban families with tiny tots to hip retirees and baby boomers who care about what goes in their bodies all flock to this airy space and belly up to the "Berry Bar," to load up their organic French Toast. Arrive early to avoid long lines, but definitely join them. 391 Terry Ave. N., (206) 462-6400, [www.portagebaycafe.com](http://www.portagebaycafe.com) for additional locations.

### Matt's in the Market

If you love the energy of Pike Place Market, head straight for Matt's, across from the red neon "Public Market Center" clock and those guys who toss the salmon. You'll have a bird's eye view of Elliott Bay and all that's going on in the stalls below and with every forkful, taste the benefit that chef Shane Ryan gets from having his buzzing open kitchen located just steps from the producers. Ryan's a master of taking simple ingredients and transforming them into delicious food, like his heavenly Seafood Stew – or a juicy grilled pork chop you've never seen the likes of. A competent sommelier will find just the right glass for what's on your plate and the inventive desserts are the perfect ending. Except if you favor a great whiskey – step across the hall to owner Dan Bugge's hip new Radiator Whiskey where an enormous cask and bar stocked with every label of brown liquor awaits in a cozy room. 94 Pike St., Suite 32, (206) 467-7909, [www.mattsinthemarket.com](http://www.mattsinthemarket.com)

### Serafina Osteria and Cicchetti

Susan Kaufman's candlelit restaurants that sit side by side in the Eastlake neighborhood near the University of Washington are two of the most romantic spots you'll find anywhere. Not only the perfect spot to hold hands, gaze into each other's eyes and possibly propose marriage, the food will make you swoon, it's so gloriously tasty. Kaufman hails from New York City and arrived in 1991 to open Serafina. Twenty-four years later, a loyal clientele are still coming in droves for chef Christian Chandler's moderately priced handmade rustic pastas, porcini-braised pollo and a spicy calamari brasato that defies description. A late night menu of



Courtesy of Serafina

The food and ambiance at Serafina make it a favorite for lovers of Italian cuisine.



Courtesy of Wild Ginger Asian Restaurant and Satay Bar

Seven Element is a coconut curry chicken soup with egg noodles served at Wild Ginger.

Venetian-inspired cicchetti ("small plates," pronounced chi-KET-ee) is served until midnight, (1 a.m. on weekends) at her tiny Mediterranean spot of the same name across the courtyard. The ebullient Kaufman will likely stop by your table and you'll feel just like a member of her Serafina Famiglia. Did I mention the salted caramel panna cotta? Mmmm. Reserve a table for a special dinner, or go for Sunday brunch with the family and relax with live jazz. 2043 Eastlake Ave. E., (206) 323-0807, [serafinaseattle.com](http://serafinaseattle.com); 121 E. Boston St., (206) 859-4155, [www.cicchettiseattle.com](http://www.cicchettiseattle.com)

### Wild Ginger Asian Restaurant & Satay Bar

Back in 1989, Wild Ginger set a standard for authentic Asian cuisine that has yet to be equaled. The New York Times calls this spot "...perhaps the most provocative, and fun, dining spot in Seattle" and you'll be bowled over by the sheer breadth of the offerings, from the Pacific Rim countries of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, China and Vietnam. Order a Cracked Coconut Martini and grab a seat at the satay bar in this grand architectural space for a close up view of the kitchen, or reserve a comfy table with big wicker seats for an elegant and relaxing experience. Service is stellar and there are some not to miss items, among them the Fragrant Duck with soft house made buns. If you're vegan, this is your spot and you can even order your supper to go if you prefer. Wine lovers, take note: The award-winning list is the largest in Seattle, with 15,000 bottles of every vintage and price point. They'll walk you through it, and even the savviest customer will find something never before tried. 1401 Third Ave., (206) 623-4450, [www.wildginger.net](http://www.wildginger.net).

Robyn Roehm Cannon is a travel and lifestyle writer who lives in both Spokane and Seattle; read more of her food travels at [www.robyncannon.com](http://www.robyncannon.com).