

# THE DEPENDABLES AND THE DISCOVERIES

## THE YEAR IN FOOD, 2004

# FOOD

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42 RESTAURANT ROULETTE



365 Natural Italian Sodas



Panisse With Smoked Salmon, Capers, and Anchovy Mayonnaise at Cafe Caprice

PHOTOS BY JOHN ANDERSON

## VIRGINIA B. WOOD'S BEST BITES OF 2004

### Sweet

1) **Lemon Curd:** My friend Suzann Dvorken gave antique apothecary jars of this rich, tangy spread for Christmas gifts, and I was lucky enough to get some. I've been spreading it on toasted scones every day.

2) **Dolce al Formaggio Che Crollare:** a creamy, elegant lemon dessert that was the crowning glory of my visits to TinTinNio.

3) **Upside Down Apple Pie:** Crisp apples under a buttery caramel crust make up this signature dessert from the McCormick & Schmick's chain. It's topped with a huge scoop of Amy's cinnamon ice cream when they serve it here – an Austintatious match.

4) **Peach Gelato:** Matt Lee of Teo's whipped up my favorite summer flavor to complement my birthday feast.

5) **365 Natural Italian Sodas:** Tangerine and Lemon flavors helped chill out the summer, and the Cranberry added some sparkle to the holidays. Splendid refreshers from Whole Foods.

6) **Bat Creek Farm Apple Cider:** Fresh pressed cider was the highlight of a fall visit to the Downtown Farmers' Market.

7) **SXUL Chocolate:** Rick Bristow's voluptuous gold-flecked bonbons are truly divine.

8) **Kakawa Pure Whole Bean Chocolates:** Tom Pedersen roasts the finest cocoa beans, then dips them in chocolate and rolls them in cocoa – chocolate candy at its most basic and distinctive.

9) **Pure Simple Shortbreads:** Vespiaio pastry chef Barrie Cullinan's crisp, buttery shortbreads were my cookie addiction this year in plain, dark chocolate, spice, and cherry almond.

10) **Mary Lou Butters' Brownies:** Mary Lou makes many different flavor combinations, each one more decadent than the last. Bring on plenty of good coffee or cold milk.

### Savory

1) **Dinner at the Roger Mollett benefit:** Everything from Amuse Bouche's appetizers and Salad Lyonnaise, Larry Perdidó's Bouillabaisse, assorted pâtés from Le Marseillais and the marvelous stinky cheeses chosen by Ike Johnson, an exquisite salmon fillet with Dupuy lentils prepared by Aquarelle, to the creme caramel from Marta's Desserts and petite sweets from the Texas Culinary Academy came together to make a truly remarkable meal and an unforgettable evening.

2) **My birthday feast at El Meson:** We braved the summer heat and devoured *huitlacoche* quesadillas and unique rellenos. *Que magnifico!*

3) **Panisse With Smoked Salmon, Capers, and Anchovy Mayonnaise:** My visit to Cafe Caprice was very early in the year, but the taste memory of the delicate fried batons of chick-pea flour, the cool salmon, and tangy mayo still lingers.

4) **Crawfish Pie:** This delicacy from Cajun Creative Specialty Foods in Jennings, La., offers rich crawfish étouffée in an incredibly flaky crust – mighty good eating.

5) **Saffron Risotto With Petit Veal Osso Buco:** A sprinkling of orange zest was the perfect grace note in this deeply satisfying dish at TinTinNio.

6) **Sauces at TinTinNio:** Whether it was the mustard cream sauce with the mussels, the marinara served alongside the fried artichokes and risotto balls, or the elegant brandy and peppercorn reduction that bathes the veal ravioli, the sauces here are very impressive.

7) **Wagyu steaks:** Luxuriously marbled and packed with flavor – really excellent beef – available at Henry's Butcher Block and the Westlake Farmers Market.

8) **SpiceBurst flavored salts:** The garlic is great on grilled meats, the chipotle salt adds zing to corn on the

cob, and the orange variety enhances steamed, sautéed, or roasted veggies. Look for them at Grapevine Market.

9) **Deviled eggs with smoke-dried tomatoes:** *Chronicle* contributor MM Pack whipped up a batch of these for a wine dinner at Spicewood Vineyards, and they disappeared in a flash. (I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the Boggy Creek Farm tomato crop makes it this year, because my stash of smoke-dried tomatoes is officially gone now.)

10) **Gulf Shrimp and Rio Star Grapefruit Salad With Avocado Sauce:** Joy Peppers ([www.joypeppers.com](http://www.joypeppers.com)) were the secret ingredient in the sauce that made this salad such a hit at the same wine dinner.

### MICK VANN'S TOP 10 CAMPUS-AREA EATERIES

My day job is at the university, in the School of Biological Sciences, and during the past 11 years I've become intimately familiar with every eating venue anywhere close to campus. I've developed a short list of my favorites over time, and because I trust you with this valuable information, I now divulge:

1) **Madam Mam's Noodles and More** (2514 Guadalupe, 472-8306): Truth be told, I eat here about 90% of the time. At Mam's, you'll find the most authentic Thai food that I've eaten outside of Thailand. They present a widely varied menu of dishes made from fresh ingredients, in big portions, at very reasonable prices. I spend most mornings trying to decide what I'll order that day. Excellent!

2) **Kismet Cafe** (411 W. 24th, 236-1811): Kismet offers a somewhat limited menu of authentic Middle Eastern cuisine, heavy on the pita wraps and salads. It's all great, and you have to try really hard to spend more than 10 bucks. Greek salad with chicken, hummus, chicken schwarma, falafel: yummm.

3) **Burger Tex II** (2912 Guadalupe, 477-8433): Sometimes nothing but a burger will do, and this Korean-run spot has the best. Exceptional burgers, bulgogi burgers, and tempura onion rings. An added plus, you get to dress them just the way you like from the toppings bar.

4) **Veggie Heaven** (1914-A Guadalupe, 457-1013): You'll be packed in like a sardine, but the large menu of vegetarian and vegan offerings is a delight. Authentic Chinese flavors, low prices, and nice portions. I generally dislike veggie options, but these folks yield assertive tastes.

5) **Oma's Kitchen** (Dobie Mall, 472-8018): For Korean diversions, Oma's is the real deal. Mother and daughter cook up a storm at this small street-vendor-style paradise in the food court of Dobie Mall. Stick to the Asian dishes and you can't go wrong.

6) **Hoover's Cooking** (2002 Manor Rd., 479-5006): When you need some Southern soul food comfort, Hoover's is just a short jaunt down Manor Road. Plate lunches to die for, and it's easy on the budget for big portions of satisfying goodness. Top it off with a slab of cobbler and try to resist the nap.

7) **Niki's Pizza** (Dobie Mall, 474-1876): Most Austinites don't even know this bona fide New York-style pizza joint is here, but they have dynamite thin crust slices and whole pies that are just as good as those from the Big Apple. The eye candy is a plus.

8) **Sampaio's** (2809 San Jacinto, 469-9988): Brazilian hits the spot when you're in a quandary for something a little different. Genuine flavors from Rio and Salvador – gimme those cheese *bolinhos*, the *moqueca*, and a steaming platter of *feijoada*. We love those crazy *siganos Brasileños!*

9) **Yen Ching** (2910 Guadalupe, 472-4754): My favorite comfort Chinese dish is *ma po tofu*, loosely translated as "Mrs. Po's Pocked Bean Curd." It's really Szechuan-style spicy bean curd with pork in hot bean paste, and these

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