

BRILLIANCE LOST:
The alarming brain
drain from Silicon
Valley to Mumbai

Artful silhouette

FASHION NOW: Sculptural shapes, genius
MEN'S STYLE REPORT: Dapper collides w

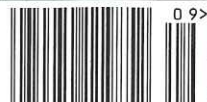
San Francisco



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MODERN LUXURY





Osteria Stellina

Hyperlocal Italian food impresses in West Marin.

POINT REYES STATION

Christian Caiazzo calls his cooking Point Reyes Italian, another way of saying he has concocted a rustic menu peppered with proper names. From Star Route Farms beets in a salad of baby arugula and ricotta salata to grass-fed Marin Sun Farms beef, turned tender in a stew and served over polenta, Caiazzo relies on the bounty of a region known as an Eden for conscientious eaters. While the chef respects the purity of his products (witness a starter of braised kale, rosemary, and cannellini beans), he's not afraid to press them into unfamiliar roles—hence roast-chicken salad chock full of cherries, and blistered, briny pizza adorned with lemon thyme, oysters, and cream. Desserts by Laura Matis match the chef's aesthetic (her coffee-cardamom pot de crème is effortlessly sweet), and the setting suits the sustenance. Though the service can have a gruff, coastal edge, the waitstaff treat you well enough—even if, unlike the meats and produce, you come from a long way away. 11285 HWY. 1 (AT 3RD ST.), 415-663-9988 **\$5 RW ★★½**

BY JOSH SENS

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURA FLIPPEN

Brix

A new chef amid splendid wine-country surroundings.

YOUNTVILLE

One way to refresh a wine-country restaurant with old rootstocks is to graft a new head chef onto it. At Brix, they've gone with a strain of Gingrass—as in Anne Gingrass-Paik, now planted in a kitchen where her ex-husband, David Gingrass, used to work. Gingrass-Paik, a Postrio veteran, has pruned back an overgrown menu in order to shed light on the seasons. The result is unpretentious, if fairly plain-Jane, cooking. While grilled swordfish with artichokes speaks simply and clearly, asparagus soup studded with green garlic is so subdued that it leaves you with only two choices: enliven it with salt or administer last rites. Along the way, sparsely topped flatbreads make an appearance (a search party is required to confirm the alleged presence of smoked salmon and leeks), along with rustic roasts and sweet desserts, like a rhubarb sundae with anise ice cream. But nothing on the plate competes with the setting: The refurbished dining room, awash in golds and rich reds that straddle the line between bold and gaudy, overlooks a patio, the restaurant's vast, green gardens, and a sea of vineyards. It's an arresting vista, and you suspect it will always be Brix's main attraction, no matter who's in charge. 7377 ST. HELENA HWY. (BET. YOUNT MILL RD. AND WASHINGTON ST.), 707-944-2749 **\$55 RW ★★**

BY JOSH SENS

Midi

There's nothing middle-of-the-road about this new downtown restaurant.

FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Located in the geographic purgatory between Union Square and the financial district, Midi balances a sophisticated bar and lounge on its ground floor with an upstairs aerie with right angle after right angle of welcoming banquettes. Chef Michelle Mah, formerly of downtown's Ponzu, has abandoned that restaurant's pan-Asian small plates for a familiar Bay Area trope: light, seasonal French-influenced cuisine. But Mah's food is far from common, and, like Midi itself, also straddles a halfway point—in this instance, between husky and delicate. Her fried sweetbreads, tossed with cubes of pancetta, tread lightly, thanks to a refreshing salad of celery leaves and fennel. In a bistro classic, brown butter blankets skate wing, but briny capers level the richness; hearty braised lamb shoulder bellows "winter," but its circle of basil oil and its gently cooked mix of eggplants, summer squash, and tomato murmur "high summer." Mah manages an impossible tightrope walk: She gives diners precisely what they crave while outwitting their expectations. 185 SUTTER ST. (AT KEARNY ST.), SF, 415-835-6400 **\$55 RW ★★**

BY SCOTT HOCKER