



# CALGARY HERALD

## The top 12 of 2007

### Best new restaurants in and around Calgary

John Gilchrist, Calgary Herald

Published: Sunday, December 30, 2007

It's hard to believe that after the bumper crop of restaurant openings in 2006, we'd have such a huge number of newcomers in 2007.

Somehow, though, restaurateurs are still finding the ways, means and locations to open new eateries. In fact, if construction were faster, we'd have even more new places to choose from.

So, here are my picks for the best of the best that opened in our area this year. This is, admittedly, an unusual and diverse list. To me, after the top three, numbers four through 12 are very close and I have re-sorted them several times. Enjoy!

#### 1. Crazyweed Kitchen

1600 Railway Ave., Canmore

403-609-2530

I could quibble that Crazyweed is technically a "move" rather than a "new" place, but the change is so significant that I'm naming it the Best New Restaurant of 2007. The sod-covered, slope-roofed building in Canmore is a fine showcase for Richard and Jan Hrabec's restaurant dream. And Chef Jan's global-influenced cuisine is simply the best. I had a braised pork hock at

Crazyweed recently just to see what she could do with it. It was outstanding and perfectly paired with an apple-cabbage slaw.

#### 2. JARObLue

1314 17th Ave. S.W.

237-5276

The best food we had at a new restaurant in Calgary this year was from Jonas Hamre's tapas menu at JARObLue. The flavours are rich and sultry -- a stacked, seared beef tenderloin and potato rosti are particularly memorable -- and the tapas approach is the best-executed version I've seen so far in Calgary. And a molten maple cake with white chocolate cream and dried cherries was a perfect balance to the tapas. The room design, with its huge photos of Sable Island horses, is bold, provocative and oh-so stylish.

### **3. The Trough**

725 9th St., Canmore  
403-678-2820

Back to Canmore for Rosie Gair's eclectically elegant cuisine and Michael Western's service flair. This old house has seen many residents -- most recently the Copper Door -- but the comfortable contemporary tone has brought it into the 21st century with panache. I had the best ribs of the year at The Trough, glazed in a pineapple-citrus sauce. You either love or hate the name -- few people sit on the fence about a place called The Trough.

### **4. Fassil**

3608 17th Ave. S.E.  
387-0555

Ethiopian cuisine, Gondar style, is served with rich, robust flavours at this Forest Lawn restaurant. Rekiya Mebrat and Moses Seid blend cardamom, coriander, fenugreek, nutmeg and a multitude of spices with meats and chickpeas and vegetables to create lush, complex wots or stews. There are particularly good vegetarian dishes too. But don't be in a hurry here. This food takes time.

### **5. The Mission**

750 2nd St. N., Three Hills  
403-443-3611

It would take about 20 meals to feed the entire population of Three Hills at The Mission.

On the one hand, the 200-seat upscale casual restaurant seems a bit incongruous to this small town on the prairies. But on the other hand, it's busy and it's well-conceived. It has some of the most pleasant and earnest staff I've seen anywhere lately, and it's good for the whole family.

### **6. Mine**

626 Main St., Canmore  
403-609-2627

A Japanese snack house that serves traditional cuisine in downtown Canmore, Mine (pronounced meenay) admirably fills the space formerly occupied by Crazyweed. Sitting on the patio one warm summer day, we enjoyed a bowl of handmade ramen noodles in coconut cream with chicken and boiled egg pieces, a plate of soy-braised pork belly and sake sipped from wooden boxes.

### **7. Phil & Sebastian Coffee Co.**

Calgary Farmers' Market  
667-8004

They only do one thing -- coffee -- but they do it sooooo well. Great beans, fine machines and a commitment to all things caffeinated are what P&S are about. Check out the lineup Friday through Sunday at Phil & Sebastian's Farmers' Market kiosk as coffee aficionados wait twitchily for their fix.

### **8. Alloy**

220 42nd Ave. S.E.  
287-9255.

Hands-down the prettiest restaurant to open in 2007, Alloy is currently the hottest ticket in town. Designed by the McKinley Dang Burkhart Design Group -- who also did JARObLue -- Alloy takes advantage of its sunwashed California-style industrial bungalow building and unusual location off Macleod Trail to surprise its visitors. Rogelio Herrera's global-fusion cuisine slides neatly into the setting like a sultry Latin tango dancer.

### **9. Il Gallo Nero**

211 17th Ave. S.E.  
237-9077

Roasted squash, pine nuts and sage ravioli in a buttery Parmesan sauce, braised short ribs with saffron risotto, a list of super Tuscan wines. Former Da Paolo partner Claudio Carnali has blended Italian traditions with contemporary Italian cuisine at his new

Il Gallo Nero by the Stampede Grounds.

### **10. Tommy Burger Bar**

9629 Macleod Tr. S.  
258-0668

Way more schmancy than any burger joint needs to be, Tommy comes through with some pretty good burgers. That's burgers with prosciutto and blue cheese or guacamole and maple-pepper bacon. It offers a decent milkshake, too.

### **11. Blowfish**

625 11th Ave. S.W.  
237-8588

Almost forgotten among the bulk of new sushi bar openings, Blowfish stands out for its combination of traditional and contemporary sushi. Order tuna belly nigiri and one piece might look like standard sushi bar fare while a second piece might be topped with a ginger-ponzu compote. Both will be excellent sushi.

### **12. Nectar**

Upstairs, 1216 9th Ave. S.E.  
263-8486

Rebekah Pearse's dessert bar draws folks up the stairs off 9th Avenue for a sweet journey of excess. Expect fine seasonal fruit pastries, luscious chocolate temptations and crunchy meringues in this eclectic Inglewood hideaway.

**Other 2007 openings of note include (alphabetically):**

- Alcatra
- Bolero
- Communita (Canmore)
- Gaucho
- Juilliard
- La Pachanga
- Niko's
- Oishii Village
- Railway Deli (Canmore)
- and Rincon Latino.

**Several restaurants are on the move too**, as places such as Penny Lane are demolished. This year we've seen the return of various dislocated, but good, restaurants:

- Sultan's Tent
- Laurier Lounge
- Valbella Deli
- and Escoba.

Look for more in the near future.

It's been such a busy year, there are **new restaurants I haven't even eaten at yet**. Those will unfortunately have to wait for the New Year.

Included on this list are:

- 3 Ravens
- BLVD
- Mile 1 Tavern
- Nirvana
- Seven
- and Tangerine.

They'll be up for consideration on my 2008 list, along with all the other newcomers.

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