

**BILL O'REILLY'S A RAGING NARCISSIST
WHO GOT ME FIRED!** BY BARRY NOLAN

CLASH OF THE
CASINO TITANS
BY JASON SCHWARTZ

Boston

NEW RESTAURANTS PREVIEW

WHERE TO

EAT

2012





WHERE TO EAT IN 2012

WHAT'S NEW

WHAT'S NEXT

YOUR GUIDE TO THE CITY'S MOST EXCITING RESTAURANT DEBUTS,
THE GRAND OPENINGS TO COME, THE HOTTEST CULINARY NEIGHBORHOODS,
AND THE CHEFS WHO ARE MAKING WAVES ALL OVER TOWN.

BY DONNA GARLOUGH AND LEAH MENNIES

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES DAY ~ FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI



WHERE TO EAT IN 2012

WHEN WE SET OUT

to create a guide to all that's buzzy on Boston's food scene, we faced one monumental challenge. It wasn't that projects were being delayed by construction, that liquor licenses were falling through, or any of the other obstacles that so frequently hamper our attempts to report on the latest and greatest. It was that we couldn't keep pace with all the openings. Every time we looked up, we'd see design renderings of another new cocktail bar, spy a menu for some proposed bistro, or hear that one more big-name chef was planning to branch out. In other words, 2012 is bringing us more diverse dining options than ever before. All of the restaurants featured here either opened in the past six months, or are slated to open soon. Some of the launches are so new, they don't even have phone numbers yet. There's Japanese bar food in the South End and Central Square, Caribbean-influenced tapas in Union Square, and novel cocktails and addictive snacks at bars all over the city. And, perhaps most intriguing, there's a world-class chef shaking things up in Watertown. So come on, try a new spot—and then try 24 more.



← THE HAWTHORNE

500A Commonwealth Ave., Boston, 617-532-9150, thehawthornebar.com.

YES, WE'RE
OPEN

Walking into the Hotel Commonwealth's new cocktail bar (formerly the Foundation Lounge) feels like you've stumbled into someone's sprawling, ultracool city apartment. And that's the point. Dreamed up by husband-and-wife team Stephen and Alison Sheffield, the place was designed to make guests feel at home. And you will, at least once you've had one of the painstakingly made cocktails—such as the “Paper Plane,” an *apéritif* of bourbon, bitters, and fresh lemon. Pop a few of the pricey-but-worth-it bar nibbles, like cornichon-and-prosciutto-topped deviled eggs and tiny twice-baked fingerling potatoes, and you'll be loath to head back to your own pad.

SUCCESS, SQUARED

BY ERIN BYERS
MURRAY



CATALYST



AREA FOUR



BONDIR



KIKA TAPAS



ABIGAIL'S

KENDALL SQUARE WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THE NEXT BIG NEIGHBORHOOD SUCCESS STORY. BUT THE SUDDEN RESTAURANT BOOM IN THE SHADOW OF MIT IS NO MERE FLUKE.

If, back in 2008, you'd asked restaurant-insider types to predict Boston's next great eating neighborhood, most would have pointed in one direction: Fort Point Channel. After all, between the new Flour bakery, Sportello, Drink, and the restaurant project that would become Menton, chefs Barbara Lynch and Joanne Chang were blazing what seemed to be a white-hot trail to Southie.

Few, on the other hand, would have looked to Kendall Square, that once-desolate grid of new-construction office parks. But four years later, it's Kendall that has sneaked up as the latest culinary Cinderella story, while Fort Point, long the up-and-comer, lies mostly fallow. In fact, Kendall has managed to steal the spotlight even as corporate backers remade that other Southie frontier, the Seaport, into a chain-y, neon-lit dining Disneyland. "Two or three years ago, I would have said, 'I'll believe it when I see it,'" says Nick Zappia, the owner of the Blue Room restaurant, a 20-year-old Kendall stalwart. Well, Zappia can certainly see it now. But how did it happen?

The past 18 months have seen several high-profile openings in Kendall and its environs. It all began with the debut of Bondir—Jason Bond's tiny gem in a nearby corner of Cambridge called Area Four—which immediately drew the attention of critics and the interest of locals. That was followed a few months later by the buzzy opening of Lumière chef Michael Leviton's coffee shop/eatery Area Four on Technology Square, and then by the launch of former Aujourd'hui chef William Kovel's Catalyst, which sits steps away. Meanwhile, a host of smaller spots have filled storefronts from the Longfellow Bridge all the way to Central Square: Meadhall, a craft-beer bar serving pub fare; Fuji, a sushi restaurant; the petite bistro and raw bar Abigail's; and the coffee shop Voltage (not to mention Firebrand Saints and Kika Tapas, which you can read more about on pages 60 and 63).

At first glance, there's no obvious change—no beneficial shift in liquor-license policy, sudden drop in commercial rents, or surge in hungry residents—that's precipitated this boom, so observers of the dining scene have been caught off-guard. But on closer inspection, something did change in 2008,

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SUCCESS, SQUARED

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around the same time that Google unveiled its new Kendall headquarters.

“Kendall has attracted companies from the life sciences and information technology fields for decades. So much innovation has happened here for mankind. What hadn’t occurred was revitalization on the street level,” says Steve Marsh, managing director of real estate for the MIT Investment Management Company, which is putting the finishing touches on a proposal that would put another \$700 million into developing the area. “Restaurants are one key mechanism where people can get together, enjoy themselves, and socialize.” As a result, one of the goals of MIT’s latest investment is to create a thriving dining scene.

A key component of the push is landlord participation, and so far property owners have bought into the idea of restaurant tenants. “The landlords have really figured it out,” says Michael Krupp, who runs Area Four with Leviton. Their space is managed by Alexandria Real Estate Equities, which handles several tech-centered properties around Kendall. “They sought us out and offered us a very favorable rate,” Krupp says. “They understand that they’ve got to spend money smartly to make more money.”

“Landlords are making it very attractive,” confirms Charlie Perkins, a real estate expert with the Boston Restaurant Group. Developers are usually willing to pay in order to help restaurants, he says, but they’re particularly loose with the purse strings in Kendall Square.

Why? Because it typically costs around \$300 per square foot to build out a restaurant space in the Boston area, far more than many aspiring restaurateurs can afford. So landlords courting restaurant tenants often offer financial breaks, commonly by discounting rent. But more and more, the incentives are in the form of up-front cash, which can be used for HVAC upgrades, bathrooms, and other infrastructure that’s needed to get a restaurant started. The going rate for these “tenant improvement” funds, if they’re offered at all, is around \$50 per square foot, Perkins says. In Kendall, though, it’s now much more. Though Kovel won’t say how much, if anything, he received for Catalyst, Perkins believes “that particular landlord was giving out as much as \$100

per square foot in [tenant improvement] money.” For 4,000 square feet of dining and kitchen space, for example, that would be \$400,000 toward a brand-new custom build.

For Gary Strack, owner of the artsy-techy Firebrand Saints, that type of developer support was the main attraction. “They were very hands-on from the beginning,” he says about Marsh and the landlords at One Broadway.

Blue Room owner Nick Zappia credits city planners for the improvements, too. “The city of Cambridge, in their zoning controls, have mandated that new buildings have to have street or retail presence,” he says. “They’ve done a good job holding landlords to that.”

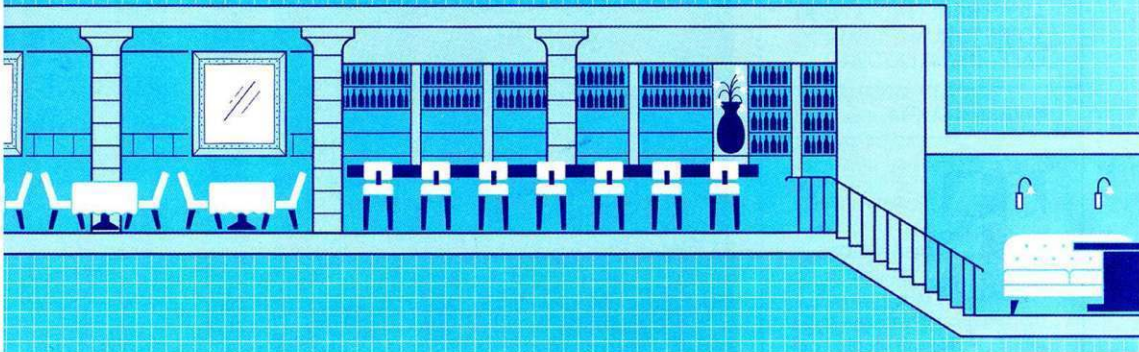
Of course, some of Kendall’s new-found allure is simply its proximity to the river—and the population on the other side of it. Just ask Alexis Gelburd-Kimler, the former general manager of the South End’s Aquitaine, who, along with former Aquitaine chef Matthew Gaudet, plans this spring to open the French spot West Bridge in the same complex that houses the Blue Room. Gelburd-Kimler says her regulars used to “joke that they’ll have to get out their passports to come to the new space. But then they’d hear ‘Kendall’ and say, ‘Oh, that’s just over the Longfellow.’”

For the pre-boom Kendall restaurateurs who are seeing their neighborhood spring to life, the change is welcome, if a bit unnerving. In response to the uptick in competition, Zappia recruited chef Robert Grant of the Butcher Shop and Thomas Keller’s Bouchon Bakery in Las Vegas to take over the Blue Room’s kitchen—and made several cosmetic changes to his space in the past year. “I wouldn’t say [the influx] made me nervous, but it definitely inspired us to go a new direction,” he says, adding “If you weren’t part of the conversation, you could easily be overlooked.”

Zappia says the buzz about the newcomers has resulted in more filled seats for everyone. “In private-party business, we’ve just had our best holiday season in five years,” he says. And eateries that came to Kendall way before the boom, like Peter McCarthy’s relocated Evoo and the adjacent outpost of pizza spot Za, were packed on recent weekend nights. Could those subsidies from MIT and landlords lead to oversaturation? Perhaps. But if that happens, it’s a good bet that there’ll be plenty of room for aspiring restaurateurs in Fort Point. **E**

RESTAURANTS 2.0

THANKS TO SOME MAJOR CHANGES, THESE LOCAL STANDBYS HAVE US EXCITED ALL OVER AGAIN.



PIGALLE

Marc Orfaly's French-cuisine flagship has gotten an interior refresh. The most noticeable changes are at the bar, where you'll now find 10 seats rather than four. Meanwhile, a new coat of paint and improved lighting aim to pull in more patrons. The restaurant will also lure guests Tuesday to Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. by offering free—yes, free—bardside eats like barbecue duck buns, short rib *arancini*, and onion-ring-topped beef sliders.



THE BLUE ROOM

While the Kendall Square spot has long operated under the radar, that's about to change. Chef Robert Grant, a Butcher Shop vet, has revitalized the menu with a mix of charcuterie, vegan-friendly fare, and grilled dry-aged meats.



LOCAL 149

Lunchtime gets a bit more interesting at this Southie hangout, thanks to the addition of the in-house deli Pinky's. That means sandwiches stuffed with great combos like Gruyère and pastrami, house-roasted sirloin and Swiss, and duck prosciutto and bacon. Try the pots of pickles, tater tots, and pimiento-cheese-slathered fries on the side.

CLIO AND UNI

After 15 years, Ken Oringer has finally decided to strip his fine-dining establishment of its outdated leopard carpet. He's introducing an updated, sleeker interior and an expanded, illuminated walnut bar that better showcases barman Todd Maul's cocktail wizardry. Uni is getting a facelift, too, with a more distinguished entryway, lower sushi bar, and white-oak-paneled walls.



CHEZ HENRI

If we had to, we'd sit on the floor of a rundown bus depot to savor Paul O'Connell's famed Cuban sandwich. But we much prefer dining in Chez Henri's newly updated bar space, where deep red walls and burnished flooring create a polished look. The dining room's been gussied up, too, with handblown light fixtures and new artwork.

SAUS

This Faneuil hall *frites*-and-waffle shop is ready to make a play for downtown crowds seeking a proper lunch or dinner. They're rolling out a beer-braised chicken sandwich, as well as veggie croquettes and chicken satay. To wash it all down? Four rotating drafts, and about a dozen beers available by the bottle.



THE GALLOWS

We had just one beef with this South End gastropub: Sometimes cravings would strike for those griddled burgers or cool wedge salads in the afternoon, but—grumble—it didn't open until dinnertime. Thankfully, that's changed with the addition of a Thursday and Friday lunch menu, complete with tuna melts and blue-cheese-and-roasted-fig sammies.



UPSTAIRS ON THE SQUARE

Though the downstairs Monday Club Bar recently received a makeover, it lost none of its whimsy in the process—witness the paintings of zebras prancing across the walls, the gilded chairs, and the lacquered pink tables. The food is now more approachable, however, thanks to a new pizza bar that serves up crisp-crustured pies. Still, toppings like duck-fat potatoes, Robiola, and *ganciaie* keep this place feeling as luxurious as ever.



COMING SOON

PARK

📍 59 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, 617-491-9851, parkcambridge.com.

After the runaway success of Russell House Tavern, the Grafton restaurant group knew they were capable of greatness—so their college-friendly, nothing-special Harvard Square hangout Redline was ticketed for a redo. It's being reborn as Park, a polished restaurant/bar with bohemian-meets-vintage décor and a talented chef: Mark Goldberg, who most recently helmed the kitchen at Woodward. He'll be serving cocktail-friendly fare such as seared scallops with bacon and Brussels sprouts, roast lamb with apples and root-vegetable hash, and snacky toasts with toppings like Comté cheese, fried quail eggs, and pickled shallots.