

The Daily Traveler

Boston Chef Tony Messina: The Best Thing I Ate This Week

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JULY 9, 2014, 12:00 PM



PHOTO BY TONY MESSINA

Each week, we ask one superstar chef to tell us the best thing they've tasted recently, out and about in their home city.

Today we present Tony Messina—an Italian East Boston native whose symphonic omakase at [Uni Sashimi Bar](#) is one of Beantown's most rarified food experiences. Messina keeps his head down in a 24-seat room just off the lobby of the Eliot Hotel, sending out raw and cooked specimens that can soar from smartly restrained to baroque and luxurious. The chef raids a global pantry at Uni, bringing international flavors like mescal, harissa, chermoula and cilantro into a Japanese context. But on a recent night out, Messina indulged his Mediterranean roots at Cambridge Italian restaurant Giulia.

What I ate: Semolina cakes with parmesan and crispy prosciutto

Where I ate it: Giulia (1682 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge; 617-441-2800, giuliarestaurant.com)

Why it's so good: "The warm semolina cakes with house-cured lardo at chef Mike Pagliarini's Giulia is easily the best thing I've eaten recently. As a matter of fact, I had to order a second round. The cakes are light and super moist, and this version came with a pumpkin puree and lardo. I love them because they're small bites that won't fill you up before the rest of the meal. They're sweet, salty, savory, and almost melt in your mouth—pretty much the best snack ever. I could make a meal out of just these cakes, but the rest of the menu at Giulia is stellar, too. Always try the pasta there; I had the *emmer farro casarecce* and it's as solid a dish as you could ask for. Even the desserts are great, which is something I don't usually anticipate from an Italian restaurant. Giulia is always warm and inviting, but we usually end up sitting at the bar for a more relaxed vibe."