

HUNGRY? HERE'S WHERE TO EAT

This month we're visiting an intimate new restaurant from a 2018 James Beard nominee, a favorite Italian space and a long-time Boulder fine-dining establishment with a knock-out view.



ROOTING AROUND A CARROT AND PEA SALAD AT ANNETTE

ANNETTE

Home cooking with panache

NOW OPEN Exclaiming about Annette to friends is a bit like telling them they have to see this great new show called “Hamilton.” The intimate, 15-month-old restaurant in the Stanley Marketplace is already a much-buzzed-about destination for Denver foodies, nominated for a 2018 James Beard award as the nation’s best new restaurant.

Still, it’s worth adding our voice to the chorus of huzzahs. Chef Caroline Glover has created a little gem, open for dinner six nights a week and Saturday and Sunday brunch, in a cozy space that quickly fills with an eclectic mix of folks, from elegant older couples to neighborhood regulars. It’s hard to say exactly why Annette, which Glover named after her “feisty” Aunt Netsie, is so warm and inviting, but the lack of stuffiness carries through from the stylish but simple décor to the warm, knowledgeable wait staff, who appear at one’s table interchangeably to pour more water or just to check in, as if it’s a busy home that happens to seat 60.

Then, of course, there’s the food. The often-changing menus are simple but dazzling. Besides entrées that have included a wood-fired half chicken, \$29, that is the best I’ve ever tasted and a roasted whole fish with kale and salsa verde, market price, there are wonderful salads (a roasted beet-and-frisée version comes with charred orange vinaigrette, cilantro and Satsuma mandarins, \$14) and smaller dishes, such as a yummy gnocchi with fennel, Brussels sprouts, spinach and parsley root, \$15, and an unusual roasted maitakes and kohlrabi dish with sunflower hummus and scallion fritters, \$10. (Don’t get me started on desserts, \$7: Ginger and bay leaf ice cream sandwich? Brownie and anise sundae? Lordy.)

The Sunday brunch is just as amazing, with a “standard breakfast Sammy,” \$13, made with fresh bacon and a sunny-side-up egg served on a house-made English muffin, a smoked trout rilette, a melt-in-your-mouth quiche of the day and an ever-changing waffle, \$10. (The day we went, the yeast waffle showcased carrots, ginger, pecans and, yes, cinnamon whipped cream cheese—needless to say, we waddled out.) And the amaranth porridge with dates, pomegranate, quince and banana, \$10? Killer. —*Alison Gwinn*

• Stanley Marketplace, 2501 Dallas St., Aurora; 720.710.9975;

SARTO’S Contemporary Italian

NEW CHEF While in Verona, Italy a few years back, Taylor Swallow and his now wife, Kajsa, were inspired to open a restaurant. Swallow didn’t have professional culinary training, though he says he has always loved to cook, but more than three years since opening Sarto’s in Jefferson Park, he’s at the top of Denver’s Italian dining game.

Housed in a lovely turn-of-the-century building that was once home to a fabric shop—to which the restaurant pays homage with both its name (“sarto” is Italian for “tailor”) and whimsical touches (“fitting rooms” rather than restrooms; antique sewing machines on display, door handles and olive picks in the shape of needles)—you’ll find a scratch menu from executive chef Garret Meyer (Old Major, Mizuna), at the helm since late last year. Meyer quickly revamped the cicchetti bar, where diners can grab an Aperol Spritz, \$9, and small bites, \$2.50 each, that change daily (think octopus deviled eggs or chicken liver crepes topped with crispy chicken thigh skin).

Our faves: the burrata, \$13 (Sarto’s offers lessons in making the dish); the Ravioli con Patata, \$15, pasta dumplings stuffed with potatoes and taleggio; the Canneloni con Coniglio, \$19, spinach pasta with rabbit; and the Pesce Spada, \$26, grilled swordfish. For brunch: Try the gnocchi tots, \$5, Pizzetta, \$13, with sausage, spinach and a sunny-side-up egg, \$13, and the Strawberry Marjolaine Cake, \$5, a layered dessert on the menu since the beginning. In a rush? Stop by The Pantry, Sarto’s Italian food counter and mini market. As they say in Verona: *Delizioso*. —*Lesley Kennedy*

• 2900 W. 25th Ave., 303.455.1400, sartos.com



FLAGSTAFF HOUSE Refined French-American food

NEW CHEF If you’ve never been to the fine-dining mecca Flagstaff House, you might think you’ve taken a wrong turn when you start the twisty road to the top of Flagstaff Mountain. But once you arrive, you see what all the fuss is about: an elegant edifice with huge windows overlooking miles of Boulder. Its location is the first reason Flagstaff, owned by the Monette family since 1971, has earned a *Forbes Travel Guide* four-star rating 40 years in a row, AAA Four Diamond status 29 years in a row and *Wine Spectator*’s Grand Award every year since 1983.

The second reason? The food. “Chopped” champion Chris Royster has been in the Flagstaff kitchen for six years and, with his recent elevation to executive chef and partner, has worked with the Monettes to create two experiences: a traditional three-course menu, \$88, also available à la carte, and a five-course tasting menu, \$118, with optional wine pairings from Flagstaff’s 16,000-bottle collection, \$74. “My favorite thing to do is jump into different restaurants and grab small plates,” he says. “It was great to do the menu with that same creative progression.”



We loved the melt-in-your-mouth Hamachi Crudo, \$16, a perfect bite of fish adorned with baby radishes and sesame crisps, and Magret de Canard, \$48, duck breast with strawberry, basil and pink peppercorn. But it was the rich Hudson Valley Foie Gras, \$24, and flambéed s’mores, \$18, with a chocolate dome melted table-side over a graham cracker blondie, that we’re still dreaming about. —*Kendall Kostelic*

• 1138 Flagstaff Road, Boulder; 303.442.4640; flagstaffhouse.com