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Los Angeles Times Magazine

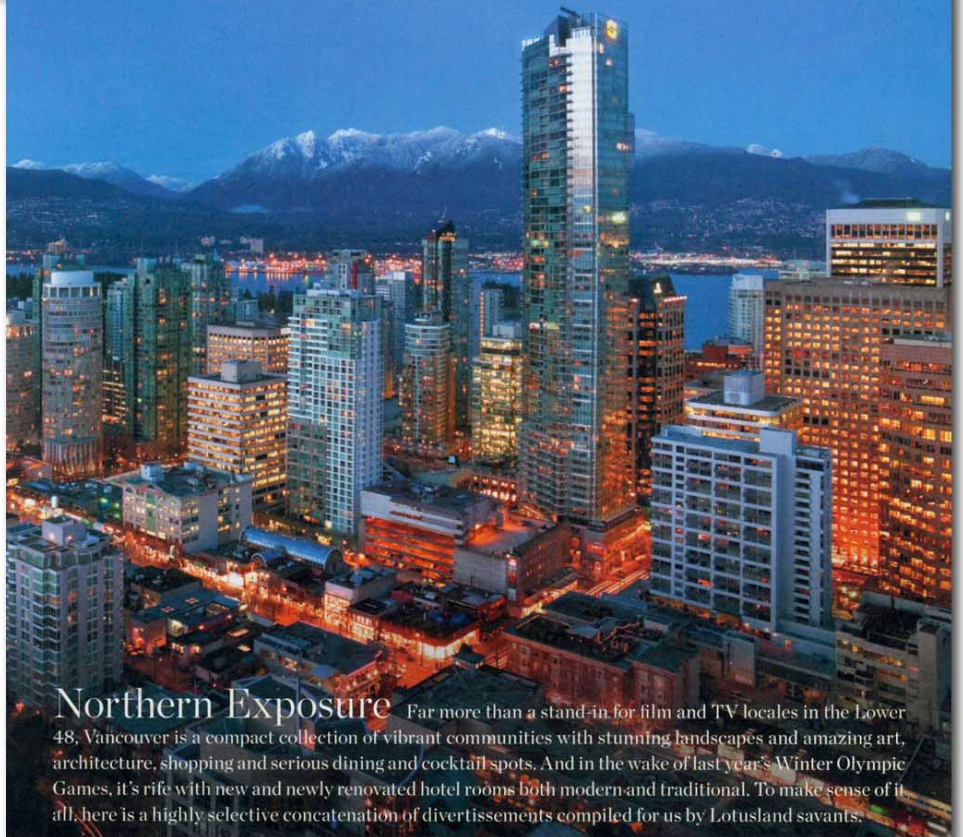
Amber
HEARD
Unbuttoned

A Vancouver
Adventure

Bill Maher:
Still Cranky

OCTOBER 02, 2011

Vancouver



Northern Exposure Far more than a stand-in for film and TV locales in the Lower 48, Vancouver is a compact collection of vibrant communities with stunning landscapes and amazing art, architecture, shopping and serious dining and cocktail spots. And in the wake of last year's Winter Olympic Games, it's rife with new and newly renovated hotel rooms both modern and traditional. To make sense of it all, here is a highly selective concatenation of divertissements compiled for us by Lotusland savants.



BAO BEI



MAENAM



CHAMBAR



ENSEMBLE



CIBO

L'Abattoir

604-568-0701
labattoir.ca

Chef Lee Cooper is clearly a disciple of kitchen gods Heston Blumenthal and Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Chicken salad? A marvel of mousse with paper-thin pickled cauliflower, foie-gras mayo and pink-shrimp crackers. And that same innovation is applied to cocktails.

Bao Bei

604-698-0876
bao-bai.ca

This thoroughly modern restaurant is a bit of the old (retro-Chinatown neon sign and black-and-white photos of the owner's relatives) and a big whack of the new, as it shape-shifts traditional family-size plates into singlingly flavorful small plates. Cocktails play with Chinese herbs from Chinatown shops.

Café Régala

604-733-2213
caferegala.com

The ooh-la-la here resides in the captive soul of classic bistro

dishes: heavenly beef bourguignon, succulent duck à l'orange and juicy steak with frites. The son of the father-son operators worked as a pastry chef at Joël Robuchon's L'Atelier in London and with Meilleur Ouvrier de France pâtissier Olivier Bajard in Perpignan, France, so save room for his île flottante or tarte tatin.

Chambar

604-879-7119
chambar.com

Any of Nico Shuermans' establishments (Chambar, Dirty Apron Deli, Café Medina,) would be worth a visit, but this is the siren, a standout in the casual-sophisticate category. A little bit Moroccan, a little bit Belgian... and a whole lot West Coast.

Cibo Trattoria

604-602-9570
cibotrattoria.com

He might have left London's River Café, but the River hasn't left chef Neil Taylor, judging by his rustic, delicious Italian food. If you like the occasional offering of offal, he obliges

with dishes like ox tongue with bone-marrow salsa. Next door, Uva (under the same chef) gives really good breakfast.

Cioppino's Mediterranean Grill & Enoteca

604-888-7496
cioppinosyaletown.com

Giuseppe "Pino" Posteraro's pricey but classic Italian food is the best in town, and the place is consistently given the "top formal Italian restaurant" accolade from Vancouver magazine. Veal, fish, gnocchi...whatever you choose, you can't go wrong.

Ensemble

604-568-1770
ensemblrestaurant.com

Life's been turbulent for chef Dale MacKay. He survived Gordon Ramsay and dodged bullets as owners battled at Vancouver's Lumière, only to see it close under superchef Daniel Boulud this year. He competed in Top Chef Canada on Food Network and won. And here, all that fight is deliciously poured into his French-bistro food.

Feastro the Rolling Bistro

604-868-8339
feastro.ca

Think street food with high-end goals. The operators are fierce about freshness, and the seafood is local: Bonzai prawns, f and chips, oysters, tuna carpaccio and more. Bonus: It's right near the postcard-pretty 2010 Olympic torches.

Hawksworth

604-673-7000
hawksworthrestaurant.com

A glam room with exquisite food by A-list chef David Hawksworth.

COCKTAILS BY JOANNE SASVARI



GRANVILLE ROOM



THE REFINERY



YEW



TIKI BAR



THE DIAMOND

Calabash Bistro

Cocktail: Calabash Dark and Stormy
604-688-9882
calabashbistro.com

A slice of the Caribbean on a dodgy street between Gastown and Chinatown, this funky reggae-centric joint has the city's best array of aged rums

Granville Room

Cocktail: Maple Mark
604-633-0066
dunnellygroup.ca/granvilleroom

Art Deco lamps, exposed brick walls and meticulous barkeeps make for a sophisticated anomaly on the Granville party strip. Where else can Ed Hardy-clad kids and culture vultures down handcrafted libations together?

Lobby Bar at Fairmont Pacific Rim

Cocktail: The Maker's Plan
604-688-8350
fairmont.com

Forget the stodgy hotel bar stereotype. Escapees from the Vancouver Convention Centre venture across the street to a coolly elegant space filled with live music, a funky crowd and cutting-edge cocktails.

Pourhouse

Cocktail: Don't Mind If I Do
604-568-7022
pourhousevancouver.com

With its vintage style, historic surroundings and speakeasy vibe, this bar is a perennial Gastown favorite, with cocktails based mostly on pre-Prohibition recipes and spirits.

The Refinery

Cocktail: Cold Tea
604-687-8001
therefineryvancouver.com

Up above the mayhem that is Granville is a taste of West Coast authenticity, with fresh, local ingredients, house-made

bitters and a cool, stripped-down aesthetic. Those weary of the classics will rejoice in the bar's 240 unique contemporary cocktails. Note: Only 10 to 12 cocktails appear on the menu, which is changed monthly.

Tiki Bar at the Waldorf Hotel

Cocktail: A Young Coconut
604-253-7141
waldorfhotel.com

Canada's original tiki bar has reclaimed the glam of its '50s heyday. A faux night sky, tiki-rific Edward Leeteg paintings, retro vinyl on the sound system and booze-forward classics make this a must-visit.

Yew Restaurant + Bar

Cocktail: Dill Fling
604-682-4939
fourseasons.com

This airy, modern room has long been the city's meeting place for suits and celebs. They may come for the socializing and seafood, but they'll stay for the culinary-inspired cocktails based on local ingredients.

Hawksworth Bar & Lounge

Cocktail: Hotel Georgia (circa 1945)

604-673-7000

hawksworthrestaurant.com

A well-heeled crowd flocks to this beautiful boîte in the renovated grande dame of the city's hotels for imaginative cocktails inspired by the classics.

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The Keefer Bar

Cocktail: Opium Sour
604-688-1991
thekeferbar.com

This dark, sexy bar pays homage to the apothecary traditions of its Chinatown hood, from backlit anatomy prints to exotic drink ingredients. Tincture of astragalus or yun-zhi, anyone?

Vancouver's vibrant cocktail culture, its epicenter is in this historic building with a long, gin-soaked past, where top bartenders shake up classic and contemporary drinks for a diverse crowd.



HAWKSWORTH