

SEX

The woman who took on Peter Nygård and won

BOOZE

Wholesale hooch at the LCBO Clearance Centre

CRIME

Confessions of a teenage gang warrior

TORONTO LIFE

Best Restaurants

By James Chatto



Claudio Aprile's
RED SHAPPER ON SAFFRON
GELATIN WITH OLIVE CANDY
from Senses

PLUS:
The Top
20
Chefs
A PHOTOGRAPHIC
PORTFOLIO
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Restaurants



OPENING

Up and Away

Vertical responds to its skyscraping surroundings BY CHARLES OBERDORF

At the heart of the financial district, Vertical takes its name from the buildings around it (and possibly the ambitions inside them). An airy interior makes diners and food its focus, but when the 150-seat terrace opens later this month, just above the First Canadian Place waterfall, it will command the downtown's best one-day-all-this-will-be-yours view. A mainly Italian menu (and wine list) puts the emphasis on fresh whole fish and pastas, priced to please prudent Bay Streeters.

Vertical, First Canadian Place, 100 King St. W., 416-214-2252.

Restaurant reviews are done anonymously, paid for by *Toronto Life*; there is no connection to advertising. All restaurants listed are recommended. The five-star rating system reflects the quality a diner can reasonably expect to find, taking into account the kitchen's ambitions: ★ fair, ★★ good, ★★★ very good, ★★★★ excellent, ★★★★★ exceptional. Unless otherwise stated, a restaurant is licensed. Price quoted is for an average dinner for two with a bottle of house wine, if available, taxes and 15 per cent gratuity. ♻️ recommendations allow one person to dine well for \$25 or less, excluding tax, tip and alcohol; they are not star rated. Symbols indicate: ♿ wheelchair accessible; 🌿 outdoor dining; 🚬 separate smoking room; 🥬 vegetarian; 🍷 bring your own bottle; 🍴 kitchen open past midnight on weekends. For full-length reviews, see www.torontolife.com.

À LA MODE

BYMARK

★★★

The place still looks great, like an elemental temple built among the roots of Mies van der Rohe's towers, and suits of both sexes still flock to the bar for after-work martinis and then head to the underground dining room. The big-ticket items are still a draw: the shellfish and sashimi collation, the whole roasted foie gras, the many steaks. Other dishes may be more interesting, as in one day's special of slow-cooked pulled pork, the juicy, sapid meat strewn with thyme and served with sautéed brussels sprouts. But attention has slipped from a leathery vegetable roll as not-very-funny amuse and from rubbery octopus paired with squid in a tangy, chili-spiked citrus dressing. Steamed clams (\$18.95) are heaped with chopped leek, tomato, apple and croutons over an intensely rich, salty broth. Seared foie gras (\$25.95) is lovely with soft bourbon-glazed apples, spiced cherries and crunchy candied rosemary, but brioche toasts are mere sponges for fat. Desserts restore confidence, homespun dulce de leche ice cream (\$13.50) divine with a sturdy apple and goat cheese empanada. The long, detailed wine list offers many treasures (California in depth) and lots by the half-bottle or glass. Service? Spot on. Closed Sunday. \$255. 66 Wellington St. W. (at Bay), 416-777-1144. ♿ 🌿 🍴

PERIGEE

★★★★

The setting is unique—tables surrounding an open kitchen in a candlelit Distillery District room of old brick and massive beams—and so is the dining concept. Chef Pat Riley and his team improvise five-, six- or seven-course mystery dinners (\$90 to \$110, plus \$50 to \$60 for accompanying wines) and now also offer the Taste of Perigee (\$195 with wines), up to 20 small courses for enthusiasts prepared to dine for almost five hours. And why not, when dishes include an amuse of oyster stewed in brandy and cream served in a shot glass, or kale-steamed bocconegra with oxtail, shredded napa, crisp potato threads and pickled shiitakes? Butter-poached lobster and sweet onion jam become a tumbledown napoleon when layered with crisp phyllo over heady fennel purée. Crunchy fried chickpeas, sautéed spinach and turnip confit play Lebanese games with a perfect seared scallop. Warm frisée, capers and fresh date enhance the brawny flavour of soft veal cheek. Charcuterie experiments include a tiny pie of lean ham hock with chutney. Inventive and technically dazzling, the litany of treats leads up to a main course of roasted squab breast, tender as liver, paired with white asparagus wrapped in