

YOUR ULTIMATE TWIN CITIES GUIDE

METRO

TWIN CITIES METROPOLITAN 12/07

THE 10 BEST HOLIDAY SHOWS

Hilarious, inventive entertainment that will make your month

THE 2007 FOOD SCENE
TOP RESTAURANTS,
CHEFS & DISHES

WARNING: ENDANGERED

Why landmarks you love may soon close their doors

+
SMOKIN'
HOT PARTY
DRESSES



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CODY
JUN
THIS YEAR
LITTLE MISS
SUNSHINE

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INFORMATION
FOOD IN REVIEW**THE ACCESSIBILITY OF GOOD FOOD**

Foodies have been lamenting the loss of some of our finest eateries—Auriga, Levain, Five. And while saying goodbye is hard to do, the places that have arrived in their wake—**CAFÉ LEVAIN**, **HARRY'S**, **THE BULLDOG N.E.**—are serving a perhaps more noble mission than their illustrious predecessors: bringing food with integrity to the masses. Even the world's most remarkable dish is so much rubbish if no one is there to eat it.

BRASA

Chef Alex Roberts has managed something remarkable in our current dining climate. His much-revered fine-dining bistro, Alma, remains, still doing a robust business, even as he reinvents the idea of fast food. At **BRASA**, quality is nary a hair below that of upscale Alma, but it all gets wrapped up with a no-muss quickness. I predict every neighborhood will be clamoring for their very own Brasa.

THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

Two groundbreaking books in particular—**THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA** by Michael Pollan (Penguin, 2006) and Barbara Kingsolver's **ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MIRACLE** (HarperCollins, 2007)—had a life-changing effect on the American diet this year; and unlike fads like the Atkins Diet, this one may actually be for the best. Both au-



thors demonstrate with great poignancy that it's no longer enough to trust the term "organic" stamped across your bag of pre-washed greens. For the good of the economy, the community, the farmer, the planet, the animals and not least of all our bodies, we must once again get back in touch with our food on a local level.

STEVEN BROWN

Much ado was made when Steven Brown, one of the Twin Cities' most acclaimed fine-dining chefs, went to work for **HARRY'S FOOD & COCKTAILS**, a fashionable yet casual burger-and-beer place in downtown Minneapolis. "Steven Brown is *flipping burgers*," carped many foodies, in the tone of someone with a lingering bad taste on their tongue. Added to that, the burgers turned out *not* to be the very best in town. Then, in only a handful of weeks, it was rumored that Brown was acting only as a kitchen consultant at Harry's, and next the leak that he would be leaving burgers behind. Gourmands can rejoice in reports that he will be back to flipping foie this month at the new Ivy Hotel in Minneapolis.

SAFFRON

It will come as no surprise to readers of this column that I think of **SAFFRON** as the most interesting restaurant opening of the year. Heck, I've already come clean: I've got a *crush* on this place. In an eating landscape lean-



ing toward ground beef and fried potatoes, chef-owner Sameh Wadi and his brother Saed throw caution to the wind and open an envelope-pushing concept. Sameh, a student of Tim McKee (*La Belle Vie* and *Solera*), plates food with the precision of a Fabergé jeweler and mixes Middle Eastern fare with fine-dining sensibilities.

THOM PHAM

It seems like a bit of *schadenfreude* to include Thom Pham's uncanny troubles in a list like this one, but if we pretended it wasn't interesting, we'd be lying. First the eccentric owner of the trendy eateries **AZIA** and **TEMPLE** gets dined and dashed on, twice, in a single night. He manages to apprehend the suspects until help arrives and goes on to local-hero status in the papers. A few short months later, he is badly beaten while leaving one of his restaurants—all amid a tide of real estate confusion. By all accounts Pham is an all-around good guy, and by his accounts these problems are merely coincidental. Here's to hoping he stays comfortably out of the news for a while.

Above (from left): Restaurant Alma chef-owner Alex Roberts won our hearts with charming, down-home Brasa. It's been an interesting year for trendy restaurateur Thom Pham. Sameh Wadi has stuck gold with his Middle Eastern cuisine at Saffron.