

Walls covered with mariachi photos.
TEN TABLES, 597 Centre St., Jamaica Plain, (617) 524-8810. \$19-\$24. Ten Tables is just like it says, so reserve ahead to get into a neighborhood jewel that's turning into an incubator for young chefs. Currently, Tim Weichmann is bringing classic French technique to bear on a chicken liver mousse to die for, but not before you've finished the cannelloni-bean garlic soup, house-smoked salmon, seared scallops, and chocolate mousse. It's Jamaica Plain, so come as you are.
ZON'S, 2 Perkins St., Jamaica Plain, (617) 524-5667. \$7-\$17. Dark and loud, but some of the best

tions on Italian themes. When done as well as it is here, it can be even more satisfying than authentic Italian food, especially the impressive dessert course. Go with soup or salad for an appetizer, and then the grilled Chilean sea bass or the osso buco. Try not to eat too much of the oily flatbread with pesto and white bean paste as you go along, since you want to save room for the poached pear and the chocolate torte and the panna cotta.
MAMMA MARIA, 3 North Sq., Boston, (617) 523-0077. \$18-\$32. Multi-level, candlelit spot with pink tablecloths and fresh flowers on the tables. Seasonal menu, with an emphasis on the innovative.

thus lacking the touristy feeling, along with some of the amenities. Not every dish on the menu will be there, but what there is, is choice.
THE NIGHTINGALE, 578 Tremont St., Boston, (617) 236-5658. \$16-\$19. Kind of the perfect South End restaurant of the moment: jazz soundtrack, big windows overlooking Tremont Street, minimalist decor, kinda-French food, with the right balance of moderating prices and hip. But you must have the wild mushroom tart, creamy polenta with wild mushroom ragout, roasted halibut, and cinnamon panna cotta. Very well matched wines by the glass, too.

THEATER DISTRICT

LEGAL SEA FOODS, 26 Park Plaza, Boston, (617) 426-4444. \$12-\$46. This Legal Sea Foods location is the most mod, almost a giant trendy bistro with really good food. Leaving the Park Plaza Hotel gave them a chance to upgrade the kitchen and dining rooms with a complete remake of the former Benihana. Wood-grilled seafood is still the most amazing thing on the ever-expanding menu, which includes a few Caribbean dishes from the lamented Legal C Bar.
ROCK BOTTOM BREWERY, 115 Stuart St., Boston, (617) 742-2739. \$10-\$16. Where have all the brewpubs gone? Well, 27 Brew Moons were merged into Rock Bottom Breweries. The beers are more constant, especially in the lighter styles, while the food has become more predictable, albeit moderately priced and served in immense portions. Our critic advises skipping the appetizers and anything quasi-Mexican, and having a steak or the alder-smoked salmon, and Key lime pie. The quick service is an asset in the Theater District whether you're dining before or after a show.
VIA MATTA, 79 Park Plaza, Boston, (617) 422-0008. \$16-\$45. Like Great Bay, this is another restaurant from the Radius team, and again more focused than the original, this time on hearty Italian flavors, along with superior local produce and seafood. If you ate lightly, it would be moderately priced, but you won't want to miss a course, as we couldn't find a lowlight. High lights included the chilled shellfish and citrus salad, the chitarra and maltaglia pastas, the grilled swordfish, the trio of semi freddi... we really all the desserts. All-Italian wine list still favors the reds, though the gap is narrower. You're downtown and may want to dress up a little, though the name means "crazy way."

NOSHING

Bread & Butter Baking Company raisin-pecan loaf

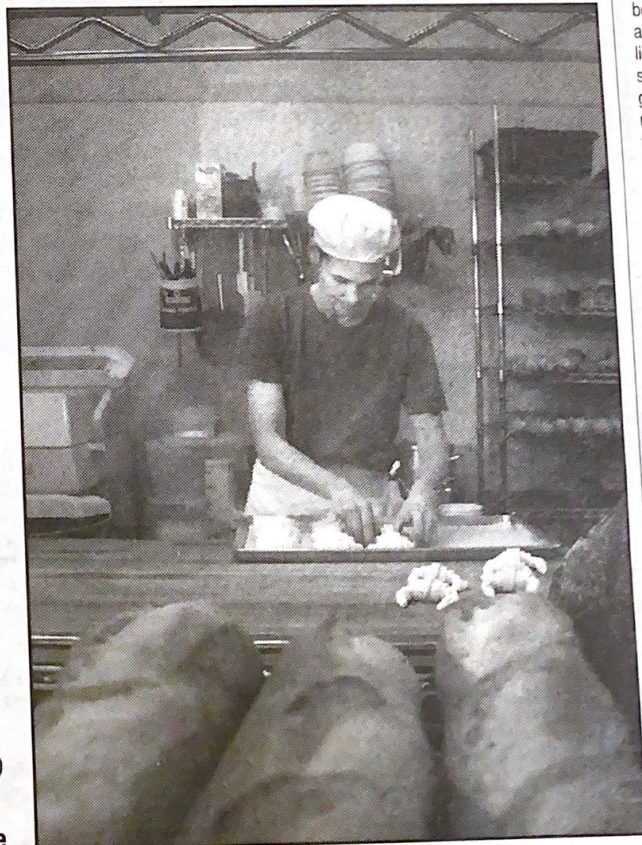
Slice is sweet

Until recently, I liked my bread plain. If I felt adventurous, I might opt for some whole grains in it, but nothing else. Then I went to Bread & Butter Baking Company, a semi-new addition to Jamaica Plain. When I tasted its raisin-pecan loaf, my bread preferences were history. The loaf has a crispy crust, but a soft, moist middle colored light purple by raisins. Each bite perfectly combines the sweetness of the fruit and the crunchiness of the nuts.

Though the bread can hold up as a delicious snack (or meal!) on its own, it also serves as an interesting base for a cheese sandwich or some butter or olive oil. The only way to improve this bread: get a loaf warm from the oven — which you can manage fairly often, since Bread & Butter does all its baking on the premises.

Available on Saturdays for \$4 a loaf at Bread & Butter Baking Company, 2246 Washington Street, Jamaica Plain. Call (617) 983-8688.

— Christine Junge



RAYNALD CARRE

Cambridge

CENTRAL SQUARE

CUCHI CUCHI, 795 Main St., Cambridge, (664) 2929. \$6-\$15. Not a dance bar, not *The Boat*, not a '70s trip. This Cuchi Cuchi just re-Charo's Spanish birthplace in a fabulous tapas menu completely made up of small Mediterranean plates like roast lobster tail, beet and potato lamb porterhouse, fried long beans, and bread pudding, just to list some of the raves.
GREEN STREET GRILL, 280 Green St. bridge, (617) 876-1655. \$13-\$18. Used to dive with brilliant, highly-spiced Caribbean. Now it has yellow walls, track lights, tabl and milder food, but is perhaps more appealing, especially the salads, ribs, calan steak, and crème caramel. It's great jazz—although the food service ends well below excellent live music comes on.
IZZY'S SUB SHOP, 169 Harvard St., C (617) 661-3910. \$3-\$8. Cheap, pler clean dinners in a somewhat bland Pu style, which therefore favors the sou variety of fried savories for the nostalg ally big and fun selection of imported