

THE WOMEN & RESTAURANTS & CARS WE LOVE ISSUE

Esquire

THE SEXY WOMAN ALIVE

IS

SCARLETT
JOHANSSON

THE
NEW POLITICAL
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IT'S BIGGER THAN WE THOUGHT
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— *Esquire* —

BEST NEW RESTAURANTS 2013

The Encyclopedia of Eating Now

- Twenty places you should eat tonight!
- Esquire's Chef of the Year
- Veal parmigiana
- A legendary restaurant family
- Chinese food, German food, and bar food
- And pretzels
- A heated debate about tipping
- And Esquire's 2013 Restaurant of the Year

BY JOHN MARIANI /// PHOTOGRAPH BY JOYCE LEE

Page: Photographed at the Elm in Brooklyn (see page 100). Our models enjoyed turbot with beans and bacon. All food was actually consumed.



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↳ **RETRO** A return to American classics, the most notable trend of 2013, from the baked Alaska at the Grill Room in Washington, D. C., to patty melts and carrot cake—and the year’s best cocktail, a highball made with Michter’s rye and smoked Coca-Cola syrup—at the Butterfly, chef Michael White’s new homage to the Midwest, in New York. You’ll find chicken soup with carrots and clam chowder with pork belly and Wellfleet clams at Will Gilson’s Puritan & Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Donald Link serves fried fish sticks and chocolate-peanut-butter-banana pie with Butterfinger crumbles at his new restaurant, Pêche, in New Orleans. In Las Vegas, Kim Canteenwalla of Honey Salt is going against the high-roller grain by offering a rich corned-beef hash seared crisp and hot. The trend actually began a few years ago, when the bottom fell out of the economy and serious chefs started gussying up mac and cheese. By now it’s clear that we—diners, writers, chefs—ac-

tually like this kind of food. (See also: veal parmigiana; wistfulness.)

Rolf and Daughters NASHVILLE

Everything about Rolf and Daughters is suffused with gentle southern understatement. Its Web site tells “a little bit about us,” saying it’s really a “neighborhood restaurant” in the historic Werthan factory in Germantown that “takes

Rye

American whiskey made from at least 51 percent rye, and the unofficial spirit of 2013, thank heavens. Small-batch producers like Redemption and WhistlePig along with standbys like Old Overholt and Rittenhouse have reacquainted us with rye’s not-as-sweet-as-bourbon pleasures. Bully Boy, a new distillery in Boston, is using rye in its excellent American Straight whiskey. All are so rich and interesting and delicious that you won’t mistake them for Canadian Club. (Due respect.)



reservations for dinner by phone, you can leave a message and we will call you back to confirm,” and that they’re “humbled and superexcited to be a part of what’s happening right now in Nashville.” The site doesn’t even give the name of the shy owner, Philip Rolf Krajeck, who says he cooks “modern peasant food.” What that actually means: **tender heritage chicken with lemon and soft, sweet garlic**; fabulously rustic pastas, like gemelli with hen-of-the-woods mushrooms, black kale, and Parmesan; and generous meatballs with a pungent gremolata (crushed garlic, lemon peel, and parsley). Or a simple plate of heritage country ham sliced thin on chewy sourdough toast with pretty little local radishes.

The vibe extends to handcrafted communal tables and the way walk-ins are cordially greeted. There is a bo-

na fide industrial cast to the space, a former boiler room: worn brick and heavy metal framing and a lumberyard of reclaimed wood on the ceiling. It all fits together at Rolf and Daughters, an exemplar of the kind of excellence now found in great southern cities like Nashville. 700 Taylor Street; 615-866-9897; rolfanddaughters.com

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Spoon Bar & Kitchen DALLAS

At a time when the cossetting of guests seems rarer and respect for the hard-won mastery of cuisine is fading, chef John Tesar’s Spoon Bar & Kitchen is a reminder that excellence is not about spontaneous combustion in the kitchen. Tesar built his reputation at the Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas. Following a zigzag career, he has returned to open Spoon, certainly the most exciting new seafood restaurant in America since New York’s Marea opened four years ago.

Tesar’s restraint shines in dishes like raw yellowtail sweetened by chunks of Texas ruby-red grapefruit and roasted beets, and Singapore-style chile lobster on Texas toast. His classic French training shows in the intensity of his red-wine reduction with a swordfish steak in a wild-mushroom crust. His recipe for potato gnocchi with jumbo lump crabmeat and black-truffle essence should be required reading at every culinary school.

Serve all this in a low-lit, low-decibel-level dining room in soft grays and sea-foam colors, with a pleasantly dressed staff that knows its stuff and is cordial, and you