

**FOOD & WINE**  
DECEMBER 2007

holiday favorites

best roasts  
easy sides  
plus cookies  
party wines  
gifts & more



best restaurant dishes  
*of 2007*

**duck with mustard spaetzle**  
*hen of the wood; waterbury, vt*

Winter in Vermont gets cold enough to freeze your eyelashes, and I was still defrosting as I looked over the regionally focused menu at Hen of the Wood in Waterbury. I ordered the duck breast with whole grain-mustard spaetzle, not for the bird but because the

*inside dish*  
The best place to eat at Hen of the Wood in summer is the new terrace overlooking Thatcher Brook.

20-below temperature outdoors made me crave the spaetzle. The tiny dumplings were flawless: pillowy, nutty and clearly made fresh that day. However, its duck is what I still think about. Chefw-owners Eric Warnstedt and Craig Tresser took over the bistro two years ago and share the cooking, so it's unclear which of them brined, lightly smoked, then pan-seared the duck to give the moist meat wonderfully subtle juniper, allspice and pepper flavors and an extraordinary crispy-caramel skin. But I warmly thank whoever was responsible (92 Stowe St.; 802-244-7300). —Emily Kaiser



**maitake consommé**  
*chez tj; mountain view, ca*

In addition to being the center of the Google universe, the San Francisco suburb of Mountain View is home to funky Chez TJ. Its Victorian setting provides an incongruous backdrop to chef Christopher Kostow's avant-garde food, as in his heady maitake consommé. Kostow brings out every bit of the intoxicating flavor of the meaty, nutty mushroom (also known as hen-of-the-woods) in his mahogany-hued broth. I also loved Kostow's playfulness—the consommé arrives in a teacup with an oversize tea bag holding the mushrooms (938 Villa St.; 650-964-7466). —Tina Ujlaki



**pizze bianca**  
*pizzeria mozza; los angeles*

"Learning to make pizza was on my to-do list," says Nancy Silverton, who perfected the art of bread baking at Los Angeles's La Brea Bakery. "It was something I put off until I didn't have a choice." That obligation came when Silverton (an F&W Best New Chef 1990) and star chef Mario Batali found a space for what would become their restaurant, Osteria Mozza, with a pizzeria attached—the future Pizzeria Mozza. After installing a big Italian wood-burning oven, Silverton began working on the pizza dough. The crust she came up with is chewy and charred, loaded with glorious Cal-Ital toppings like egg, speck and squash blossoms. I especially love Pizzeria Mozza's most decadent selection—the Bianca. It's covered with creamy mozzarella (Silverton is L.A.'s mozzarella queen), pungent Fontina and the truffle-infused, aged-cow's-milk sottocenere, as well as a few well-placed crispy fried sage leaves. The dish was Silverton's idea ("I love the look of a white pizza"), but she consulted with Batali on the components. Now she's waiting to see him in action: Though he's rumored to be an expert pizza maker, Batali has yet to make Silverton a pie (641 N. Highland Ave.; 323-297-0101). —KK

*inside dish*  
Pizzeria Mozza's adjoining Osteria Mozza has a mozzarella bar with 11 different selections.

