

Restaurant Review Excerpts
The Riverfront Times

Luciano's

A word of caution, ladies: This is not ideal date lighting. One side of the table may be bright enough to stitch up an episiotomy, whereas splotchy shadows on the other side throw every wrinkle and blemish into relief.

Café Balaban

Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse, the [vegetable] medley reappeared with a mound of rice pilaf. Our taste buds went numb and we began to feel panicky, as though we had stumbled into a wedding banquet or—worse yet—a corporate retreat.

The Ritz-Carlton

Consider garnishes for a moment. The natty twists [the chef] designs for each dish are a metaphor for his clever, persuasive cooking . . . An ideal garnish underlines flavor notes, such as preserved lemon spiking a dish of oysters in lemon cream sauce. Whitehead trimmed his "rabbit two ways" with a self-garnish, if you will: a grilled cross-section of the rabbit's liver and a miniature kidney threaded on a slim skewer (the chef had presumably snacked on the kidney's missing mate).

Spaghetteria Mama Mia

The servings of spaghetti are more generous, but the pizza-parlor approach requires diners to purchase "toppings" that should be part of the sauce. Tacking on fifty cents for roasted garlic, for example, is like charging extra for the foam on a cappuccino.

Chez Leon

The place has a quaint ambience that inevitably inspires local writers to gush that it's "just like a little Paris bistro," or some such blather. With Bosnian waiters, a no-smoking policy and an absence of canines, it's safe to say that Jacques Pepin wouldn't become disoriented if he were to wander in off the street.

Zinnia

In keeping with his Birkenstock approach to presentation, Guempel does not like persnickety pastries. His desserts are splayed out on their plates, as hulking and unselfconscious as plus-size women working on their tans.