

# RECOMMENDED

# WITHOUT RESERVATIONS



Most of these restaurants have been open less than a year, but are achieving success. We invite you on a cross-country table-hop.

## SET MY PEOPLE FRITES!

**Bandol** is not the flavor-of-the-month, hot new restaurant in Seattle. In fact, few locals even know about it. This unassuming bistro, whose name says it all, offers the flavors and sips of southern France to sun-starved Seattle-ites.

The décor is plain and functional. Bandol's strengths are clearly its food and wine, both made for sampling in snack-sized portions. Better yet, during Happy Hour (3–6 pm M-F), much of the main menu is available at a steep discount.

Try the deep-fried stuffed olives; the decadent pommes frites; the frisée salad with its luscious bacon vinaigrette and poached egg; the saffron-scented fish soup or the thick, flavorful cassoulet. Then dive into the wine list, a tantalizing mix of modestly priced French and Pacific Northwest wines that offers three dozen selections by the glass, *pichet* or bottle. The featured tasting flight—"Three Great Wines from Bandol"—includes generous pours of Bandol blanc, rouge and rosé for just \$12.

Dig through the Captain's List and you'll find such gems as a Soter Vineyards Brut Rosé from Willamette Valley, a Buty Winery Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc from Walla Walla and a Domaine Chantrel Les-cure Volnay. But the best part of Bandol is its genuine lack of pretension. Unlike the better-known bistros in all-too-hip Belltown, the service here is as good as the food, and you don't have to be a regular to get a table. *Bandol, Smith Tower, 508 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA; 206/447-0222*

— PAUL GREGUTT

## FOIE GRAS, NOT FROU-FROU

Chef Laurent Manrique's bistro, **Sonoma Saveurs**, has quickly become a favorite haunt for locals and tourists who congregate in Sonoma town's fashionable Plaza. It is intimate, crowded and, best of

all, unpretentious. The menu (lunch and dinner are the same) is wine-country fancy, with modestly priced grill and roti plates, sandwiches, fresh soups and salads, an extensive selection of take-home charcuterie, and plenty of foie gras. The wine list is color coded to guide diners through a spectrum that ranges from crisp, racy white wines to full-bodied reds—50 selections, all local. *Sonoma Saveurs, 487 First Street West, Sonoma, CA; 707/996-7007*

— STEVE HEIMOFF

## THE RE-OPENING OF THE DOOR

In one of San Francisco's most anticipated openings of the year, the new **Slanted Door** restaurant reopened in the Ferry Building, the grandly restored marketplace located downtown on the Bay. Chef Charles Phan's French-inspired Vietnamese fare has been wowing diners in several locations since he first opened in 1996.

Slanted Door's food is worth seeking out. Signature plates, such as grilled Willis Ranch pork loin with ginger-soy-shallot sauce and fresh Florida gulf shrimp with sing qua and giant oyster mushrooms, highlight the powerful balances of heat and sweet Phan is famous for. It's a cuisine around which wine director Mark Ellenbogen has carefully crafted his 85-item wine list, with its reliance on fruity German and Austrian white wines and Loire reds. Bottle prices are kept relatively low by incorporating value appellations, such as Chinon, Bourgueil and St.-Aubin, although label fanatics can choose stalwarts like Haut-Brion if they want. There's also a good selection of wines by the glass.

Slanted Door's eclectic new look, by famed San Francisco designer Olle Lundberg, is museum-tech modern, with exposed steel plates, natural stone and floor-to-ceiling windows with staggering views of the Bay. Reservations are tough to get, so plan ahead. *Slanted Door, One Ferry Building, San Francisco, CA; 415/861-8032*

— S. H.