

TOWN FOCUS

AMESBURY UNCOVERED

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northshore

MAY + JUNE 2016

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Hidden Gems

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FOR A NIGHT
ON THE TOWN
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FLOWER POWER

Melissa Glorieux's Essex floral farm grows into a co-op this season.

PHOTOS BY FAWN DEVINEY

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TINY TASTES

Small plates featuring seafood are all the rage around the North Shore.

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A group of local professionals restores an antique farmstead.

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THE BUZZ

The Hive art center in Gloucester makes an artist out of every visitor.

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DEACONS AND DEMONS

Deacon Giles distillery contributes gin and rum to Salem's spirits scene.

BY DINAH CARDIN

Brine's German Osetra on a butter-poached fingerling with pickled red onion soubise, egg yolk, and a fennel chip



Essex Flower Farm Co-op
Photograph by Fawn DeViney

THEY ARRIVE TABLESIDE

as edible art—alluring and colorful, delicately dotted with jewel-like herbs and aiolis, demanding beauty shots posted to Instagram and Twitter. Small plates are all the rage these days, and it's no wonder. They enable chefs to show off while pushing diners into new territory without too big of a commitment. And as the first impression, before conversation and cocktails blur attention to detail, they are quite possibly the thing diners will remember most about a night out.

"It's important to stand out," says Justin Shoults, executive chef at Brine in Newburyport, whose beautiful dishes will soon be inspiring social media posts at Oak + Rowan, the soon-to-open Boston sibling in Caswell Restaurant Group's growing empire. Like many North Shore chefs, Shoults draws special inspiration from the bountiful shoreline, with a full raw bar, a rotating array of trendy crudo—tiny slivers of raw seafood, dressed Italian style—and a caviar tasting menu that introduces guests to that rarefied delight in an approachable way. The restaurant offers a changing menu of caviar, starting at as little as \$10 for a sampling of Hackleback, a domestic buttery salty variety that is a good introduction to fish eggs, served atop warm buttermilk blini cooked to order, with a sprinkling of hard-boiled egg and a slash of crème fraîche.





Brine's caviar samples: steelhead trout roe; Italian, Siberian, and German Osetra; and Denmark trout roe; Above, the bartender makes a signature No. 10 cocktail

The caviar program at Brine has been growing fast, but it's still a fraction of business overall—and that's okay. Small plates are a great way to introduce diners to new tastes. "Small plates allow chefs to get creative with ingredients and techniques, because they are not committed to staying within certain boundaries to make dishes that will please a whole dining room," says Kim Vanacore, general manager at Foreign Affairs Wine Bar & Bistro in Manchester-by-the-Sea, adding that the tiny tastes can be crafted to appeal to the more adventurous "foodie" types.

Foreign Affairs always offers a crudo on the menu. Inspired by whatever is freshest, Vanacore says chef Ryan McGovern likes to keep the preparation simple, maybe dressed with a Meyer lemon vinaigrette, microgreens or foraged flower petals for a bite of fresh herbal notes, and perhaps a bit of spice from kimchi dust or

RECIPES

BUTTERMILK BLINI

BRINE

Chef Justin Shoults

Yields 20-30 blini

Ingredients:

- > 4 oz. cake flour
- > 1 tsp. baking powder
- > Pinch salt
- > 1 tsp. chives, sliced
- > 4.5 oz. buttermilk
- > 1 egg
- > 2 tbsp. butter, melted, plus more for the pan

Directions:

1. In a bowl, mix flour, baking powder, salt, and chives.
2. In a separate bowl, mix buttermilk, egg, and melted butter.
3. Add the wet and dry ingredients together and whisk about 13 stirs. It is important to not overwork the gluten.
4. Let the batter rest for 5-10 minutes, then place into a squeeze bottle with a wide tip.
5. Melt some butter in a nonstick pan over medium-low heat. Squeeze the batter out into small quarter-size rounds and cook until golden brown on one side, flip over and cook the rest of the way through. Serve warm. Can be topped with caviar or bits of smoked salmon.

NO. 10 AQUAVIT COCKTAIL

BRINE

Bartender Drew Hart

Makes one drink

Ingredients:

- > 1 oz. Brennivin Aquavit
- > 1 oz. celery/fennel cordial (see below)
- > 1/4 oz. lemon juice
- > Prosecco

Directions:

1. Combine Aquavit, celery/fennel cordial, and lemon juice in a shaker.
 2. Shake for 8 seconds.
 3. Strain into a champagne flute and float prosecco.
- Celery/Fennel Cordial:**
- > 2 c. sugar
 - > 2 c. water
 - > 6 oz. celery
 - > 1/2 oz. fennel seeds

1. Add water and sugar to a saucepan and heat at medium heat until sugar is dissolved (don't boil).
2. Remove from heat, add fennel seeds and cover for 15 minutes.
3. While fennel is steeping, juice the celery (a juicer is preferable, but a blender and fine strainer work, too).
4. After 15 minutes, add the celery juice and strain out the fennel seeds.