

DINING



MAGNIFICENT VIEW CAPITAL

CAPITAL BITES

TOM O'MALLEY IS EATING OUT OF DOORS

Me in Beijing can be summed up in two words: *al fresco*. Restaurants around town have swept away five months of winter grime from terraces and emptied Lotus Flower Market of decorative *zhua* (bamboo), hanging baskets and the ubiquitous *liu* (bowing "green king") potted plants.

Unsurprisingly, the most eagerly awaited outdoor space belongs to **Capital M**. For the first time, diners can enjoy the signature pavilion in the open air, with a side order of eye candy—Tiananmen Square, Zhongnanhai and the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Views of both Hushu Lake and the majestic Drum & Bell Towers make the terrace at Vietnamese restaurant **Maqui** a lovely setting, and **Crystal** at the Emperor Hotel has a wooden rooftop overlooking the forbidden city. **Autor Grill**

at the St. Regis boasts a terrace planted with lavender, vanilla and other herbal herbs, and both **Orsaerie Flo** and Italian restaurant **Assagi** have upper-floor patios well worth a sunny afternoon.

For livelier rooftop dining, how about Peking duck and Yangjiao at **Xiao Wang Yu** by Yuan Park's North Gate? Or try Jiugulou's busy strip of restaurants, starting from French-Vietnamese joint **Le Little Saigon** and heading north past hip chicken-wing dives. Close by, **Nanluoguo Xiang** tends to be a great spot for food with a view, but this year's rental hikes and closures have cast a dark shadow. Still, you can probably enjoy a cinnamon muffin and grande latte at a **Starbucks** there, too.

Back on terra firma, **Dali Courtyard**, with its summery Yunnan flavors and garden setting is wildly popular with

foreigners, but for a brand-new Yunnan courtyard restaurant we think is even better, see page 2. And if you want to impress a date with a true hidden gem, dine in the ornamental Chinese garden at the **Changfu New Otani Hotel**.

If picnics are your thing, **Chuyang Park** (near the lake), temple of heaven (north side) and the Old Summer Palace are three of the best spots in town. Instead of buying pricey Jenny Holzer-style fountains, go to your local **jiuchang** (family-style Chinese restaurants) and get a take-away order of **daifengshuo** (literally "big harvest"), a selection of raw julienned veggies with a dipping sauce; **jiuwei shuanyu**, thinly sliced stewed beef; and **congyoubing**, scallion pancakes. And hurry up about it. In a matter of weeks, we'll all be indoors again covering under the air-con.

NIBBLES

ARRIVALS

Toro Bar in 1949—The Hidden City is now open for business. It keeps the pastries and libanos of former tenant **Sugar Bar** with gourmet Japanese offerings like barbecued Kobe beef, truffle-vidon noodles, shrimp tempura and green tea ice cream.

Manana Fish, a Pan-Pacific grill restaurant, has opened above **White Rabbit** in Sanlitun. Its centerpiece is a robata grill, a Japanese cooking method involving hot coals and a bed of sand. Coincidentally, the same type of grill can be found at **Rak Manza**, a new Japanese joint just west of The Place. And both sell mackerel for RMB 10, daily.

Barolo, the fine-dining Italian restaurant at the **Ritz-Carlton**, mentions an excellent new head chef **Massimo Maggioni**. A protégé of triple Michelin-starred Marco Pierre White, he's cooked for everyone from the Sultan of Brunei to footballer Frank Lampard.

After a brief hiatus, **Bludapest** is open and back under Hungarian management, with a native chef to boot. (Egyszerestül? To your health! ... or something like that.)

Following news that cupcake mania has finally imploded in the West, **Lollipop Bakery** has just opened in Beijing. Their delicate creations are iced to order at RMB 200-220/dozen. E-mail: cupcake@lollipopbakery.cn for more info.

DEPARTURES

The **Legation Quarter**, Beijing's trendiest restaurant zone, suffered another blow in April with the departure of **The Meat & Wine Co.** (winner of "Best Steak" in our 2010 Reader Restaurant Awards) with Cantonese joint **Zuo 1902** next on its heels. This leaves just **Maison Bonnet** and **Mitsukoshi Saffier** clinging on at the site of the original US Embassy. **Agua**, **Shiro Masala** and **Fac Bar** closed late last year due to rental disputes.

Rental hikes of up to 400 percent on **Nanluoguo Xiang** have caused havoc among longstanding restaurant tenants. **Rich Nation** and **Mirch Masala** have already given up, and Korean restaurant **Savann de Corée** says it will close too when its current lease expires.

NEW MENUS

The trend of tartly savory nibbles continues. Popular Moroccan restaurant **Argana** has launched a tapas menu that includes chorizo à la plancha, paprika king prawns, anchovy bruschetta, jamon ibérico and more.

Dining – Nibbles

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