

THE ITALY ISSUE

bon appétit

PIZZA! PASTA! GELATO!

C'MON, HOW COULD YOUR KIDS NOT LOVE ROME?

ULTIMATE RECIPES FROM ITALY'S HEARTLAND

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*THE SECRET? SAVE THAT PASTA WATER AND FINISH WITH (WHAT ELSE?) BUTTER

The Foodist

Q:

Dear Foodist:

We're always urged to purchase the best possible cookware, yet I see restaurant and TV chefs using cheap-looking, banged-up aluminum pots and pans! What gives?

Elsa Morrow
Oakdale, MN

A:

Dear Elsa:

Sounds like you spent a small fortune on a cookware set and, after peeping the pros' junky pans, you feel burned. Don't: Pots and pans are not the place to save money, whether at home or in a restaurant. The biggest reason pros use cheap cookware is money. Restaurants will splash out for tableware, chairs, and decor; sauté pans are way down on the priority list. That's a shame. Quality cookware (from brands such as Le Creuset, All-Clad Metalcrafters, and Calphalon) doesn't dent, it's easier to clean, the handles don't come loose, and it's a pleasure to use. I talked to chefs—among them Andrew Carmellini of New York's **The Dutch** and Chris Cosentino

of San Francisco's **Incanto**—who insist on having the quality stuff in their restaurants. “The two most important places to spend money in the kitchen are knives and cookware,” says Daniel Patterson of **Coi** in San Fran. “And at home, I'd put cookware first.” In other words, Elsa, ignore those chefs who are cooking on pans that look like they've been used for target practice. They'd kill to have your hardware.

Andrew Knowlton is the Foodist. He answers your questions here and at bonappetit.com/go/foodist. E-mail him at foodist@bonappetit.com.

HUMMUS SPREADS OUT

I've never been a hummus fanatic, but lately I've noticed that the Middle Eastern spread, traditionally made with chickpeas, has been getting a makeover—with tasty results. At **Saltie** in Brooklyn, the Clean Slate sandwich consists of lentil hummus, bulgur, pickles, and yogurt on naan. Lima beans get the hummus treatment at **Monarch Restaurant** in St. Louis. In Atlanta, the most popular appetizer at local fave **Wisteria Restaurant** is a



hummus made with black-eyed peas. Nearby, chef Hugh Acheson of **Empire State South** uses another Dixie staple, boiled peanuts, as the base for his honky-tonk hummus. “Boiled peanuts are our local rich legume,” says Acheson. “They remind me of briny chickpeas, and so we just tried it out.” Fanatic? Not yet. But I'm definitely a fan. —A.K.

FOR BOILED PEANUT HUMMUS AND KARA-AGE RECIPES, GO TO BONAPPETIT.COM/GO/TAKEAWAY

JAPANESE FOR “PUB”

To most Americans, Japanese food means sushi. But there's a world beyond raw fish, as the recent **izakaya** explosion shows. Think of an **izakaya** (pronounced ee-ZAH-ka-ya) as a Japanese tapas bar: a place to grab drinks and small plates. And while hooch was the original draw of **izakayas**—from the words *i* (to sit) and *sakaya* (sake shop)—the food has driven the boom here.

Izakaya standards include *yakimono* (grilled skewers of various ingredients; *yakitori* refers only to chicken), *tsukemono* (Japanese pickles), *agedashi-dofu* (fried tofu with tempura dipping sauce), and that global superstar: steamed edamame.

My go-to *izakaya* dish is *kara-age*, or bite-size pieces of fried chicken. At personal favorite **Biwa** (biwarestaurant.com) in Portland, Oregon, chef Gabe Rosen marinates chicken pieces in sake, soy sauce, ginger, and scallions, then dusts them in cornstarch and wheat

and rice flours before frying. He serves his *kara-age* with lemon wedges and Chinese-mustard dipping sauce. Thankfully, most big cities now have great *izakaya* where you can wash down *kara-age* (you'll want two orders) with several Japanese or, even better, local beers. Here's to busting stereotypes, one bar snack at a time. —A.K.

FIVE MORE OF OUR FAVORITE IZAKAYAS

1 **KUSHI**
WASHINGTON, D.C.
EATKUSHI.COM

2 **MISO IZAKAYA**
ATLANTA

3 **ABURIYA TORANOKO**
L.A.
TORANOKOLA.COM

4 **NOMBE**
SAN FRANCISCO
NOMBESF.COM

5 **HAPA**
VANCOUVER
HAPAIZAKAYA.COM

Biwa's izakaya fried chicken: The nugget meets tempura.



AESOP'S TABLES

How do you know you're in one of Paris's cooler restos? Go to the bathroom. If you see Aesop's products on the shelf, you've made it. The natural-beauty label chose eight restaurants—such as **Le Verre Volé**, **Spring**, and **Le Chateaubriand**—to receive the goods. In these kitchens, “ingredients matter,” says Aesop director Dennis Paphitis. A bobo-chic clientele doesn't hurt, either.

—CHRISTINE MUHLKE