

The Restaurant Reporter

Special Edition: The hottest restaurant "super-trends" of the year BY ANDREW KNOWLTON



Scene meets substance at Barclay Prime in Philadelphia.

is divine. Stained-glass windows depicting biblical scenes remain, while pews have been replaced by an oval bar that glows from underneath (1005 East Carson Street; 412-431-4256). **SAN DIEGO** The newly redesigned **LAUREL** has a posh dining room with Miró-inspired mirrors and Swarovski crystal chandeliers (505 Laurel Street; 619-239-2222). **SEATTLE CRUSH** is a modern oasis of cool. Ebony floors contrast dramatically with the all-white walls, tables, and curved chairs by Danish artist Verner Panton (2319 East Madison Street; 206-302-7874).

STAR BARS

Remember when the restaurant bar was nothing more than a way station between the front door and your table? Today, the bar *is* the destination for cutting-edge cocktails, a first-rate menu, and a lively dining experience.

BALTIMORE At chef Cindy Wolf's recently redesigned **CHARLESTON**, a sophisticated crowd gathers at the bar for mint juleps chased by crispy cornmeal-crusted oysters served with cayenne mayonnaise for dipping (1000 Lancaster Street; 410-332-7373). **SONOMA BARNDIVA** in picturesque Healdsburg offers two things most restaurants in wine country don't: good cocktails and a late-night bar menu (231 Center Street; 707-431-0100). **NEW YORK** Named for a former British officers' club in Rangoon (and its signature house drink), **PEGU CLUB** features mixologist Audrey Saunders's carefully crafted cocktails like her Gin-Gin Mule and the resurrected

DESIGN IS THE DESTINATION

These days, good food isn't enough. Any restaurateur who doesn't have a world-renowned architect or a museum-worthy designer on board might as well forget about a four-star review. At the following spots, the decor is every bit as inspired as the food.

NEW YORK PERRY ST unites the Asian-inflected cooking of über-chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten with the all-glass architecture of Richard Meier's Perry St Towers (176 Perry Street; 212-352-1900). **PHILADELPHIA** Restaurateur Stephen Starr tapped visionary Parisian India Mahdavi to design **BARCLAY PRIME**, an elegant, upscale steakhouse where the Kobe beef slider is a must (237 South 18th Street; 215-732-7560). **CHARLESTON** A 150-year-old former

bank has been transformed into a three-level stunner, **OAK STEAKHOUSE**. The vault now serves as a walk-in wine room (17 Broad Street; 843-722-4220). **MINNEAPOLIS** Even before last year's \$130 million expansion, the Walker Art Center was a world-class art destination. Today, with the addition of Wolfgang Puck's sleek **20.21**, it's the restaurant's Asian-inspired menu that's garnering oohs and aahs (1750 Hennepin Avenue; 612-253-3410). **PHOENIX** Tucked into the newly minted Clarendon Hotel, **CAMUS** is pure thought-provoking design—from the computer-controlled lighting system to the reflective tabletops. Add to that the serious talent of chef Matt Donohoe (401 West Clarendon Avenue; 602-212-2687). **PITTSBURGH** Housed in a former church, **HALO CAFE**