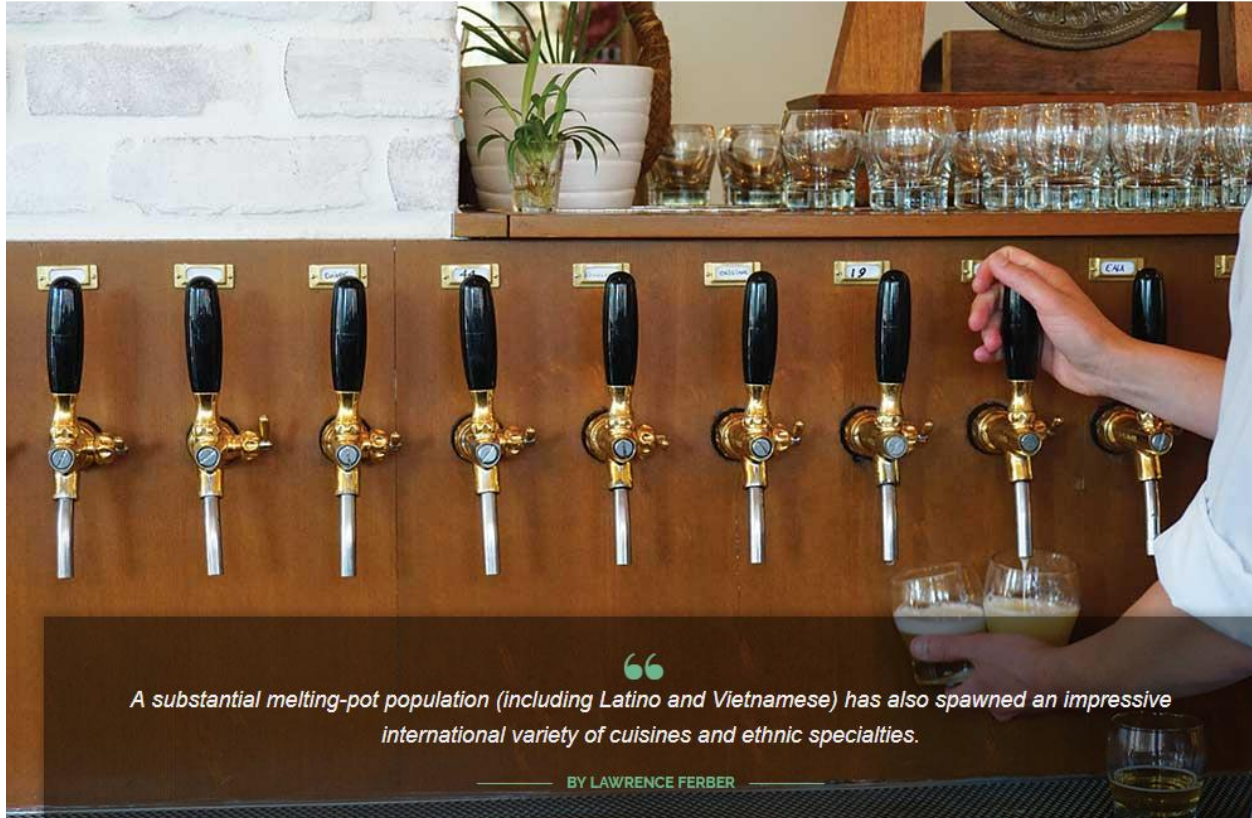


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Home > Worlddeats > Worlddeats — The Best Dining In Montréal.

WORLDEATS — THE BEST DINING IN MONTRÉAL.



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A substantial melting-pot population (including Latino and Vietnamese) has also spawned an impressive international variety of cuisines and ethnic specialties.

BY LAWRENCE FERBER

Montréal has long offered delights to fans of gastronomy, but there’s a major difference between the culinary scene of today and even just a decade back. Whereas Montréal used to be chock-a-block with amazing, homey French-style bistros and holes in the wall, today’s Québécois chefs have truly embraced the region’s indigenous farm-to-table bounty and flavors, and married them with contemporary technique and innovation.

A substantial melting-pot population (including Latino and Vietnamese) has also spawned an impressive international variety of cuisines and ethnic specialties from Peruvian Nikkei fusion at **Tiradito** to authentic Salvadorian pupusas(a sort of corn tortilla pouch stuffed with savory fillings) at neighborhood fave, **Los Planes**.

The excellent "Beyond the Market" walking tour from gay-owned, decidedly nontouristy **Spade & Palacio Tours** (Tel: 1-514806-3263. www.spadeandpalacio.com), features a pupusa tasting stop at Los Planes, bites from other venues including Montréal's famed Jean Talon Market, where vendor **Fromage Fermier's** local goat cheese and **Havre-aux-Galce's** seasonal ice cream and sorbets alone are worth a visit. The tour concludes with a picnic lunch and takeaway "cheat sheet" with a map of their favorite restaurants and cafés.

Of course, here we have a Montréal "cheat sheet" of our own, which runs the gamut from a game-changing restaurant that has since launched Montréal's biggest new generation of kitchen talents to a lesbian-owned craft beer pub to a new, buzzy Japanese-fusion bistro. Bonus: those with a penchant for international fine dining can find Canada's first **L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon**, from French superstar chef Joel Robuchon, at Casino Montréal.

BRASSERIE HARRICANA

Montréal's craft-beer scene easily warrants its own feature article: there are some 35plus-brew pubs within the city at present, and around 150 microbreweries throughout the Québec region. A lesbian-owned, threeyear-old brasserie and microbrewer, straddling the Mile Ex and Little Italy neighborhoods, Brasserie Harricana represents a fabulous spot to give some of these brews, ciders, liquors, and even local kombucha a whirl. As indicated on the drinks menu, some draughts are served at specific temperatures, with alcohol content indicated. The Brasserie's space is lovely, and be sure to crane your neck and glance upward at the ceiling's enlarged images of women's body parts, which are partially obscured by wooden panels resembling window shutters. I created my own flight with tastes of several Harricana brews, including a sourapricot wheat beer, a Berliner Weisse infused with coffee from artisanal local roasters Dispatch, and a raspberry milk stout, plus lip-smacking ice cider from rural Québec's Cidrerie Milton. The food menu, meanwhile, encompasses gastropub fare: deviled eggs, ale-braised lamb shank, beerroasted chicken, and generous veggie options. Weekend brunch sees crêpes, stuffed French toast, a bacon and egg brekkie sandwich with potato latkes, and decadent ribeye eggs Benedict. *95 rue Jean Talon West. Tel: 514-303-3039.*

www.brasserieharricana.com



Toqué!

TOQUÉ!

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2018, this Montréal game changer helped bring a farm-to-table, sustainable ethos to the city and launched many chefs and restaurateurs' careers in its kitchen, including local superstars David McMillan and Frederic Morin of Joe Beef, and CharlesAntoine Crête, and Cheryl Johnson of Montréal Plaza. Toque co-owner Christine Lamarche apologized that co-owner and chef, Normand Laprise, would not make an appearance during my meal since he was deep in Québec's forests shooting a French television segment (as good an excuse as any for a foodie). What Toque's chefs do with all of their seasonal, local ingredients is absolutely gorgeous and elegant, and has certainly evolved with the times to represent 21st-century Instagram-worthiness. My lunch included a gorgeous Arctic char tartare with lime crème fraiche, radish leaf purée, cucumber, and daikon, bursting with flavor, freshness, and texture. Housemade lemon gnocchi were dainty and succulently saucy, complemented by shiitake mushrooms, cherry bomb pepper, and Parmigianino. Desserts were equally stupendous and artful. 900 Jean-PaulRiopelle Place. Tel: 514-499-2084. www.restaurant-toque.com



Kozu

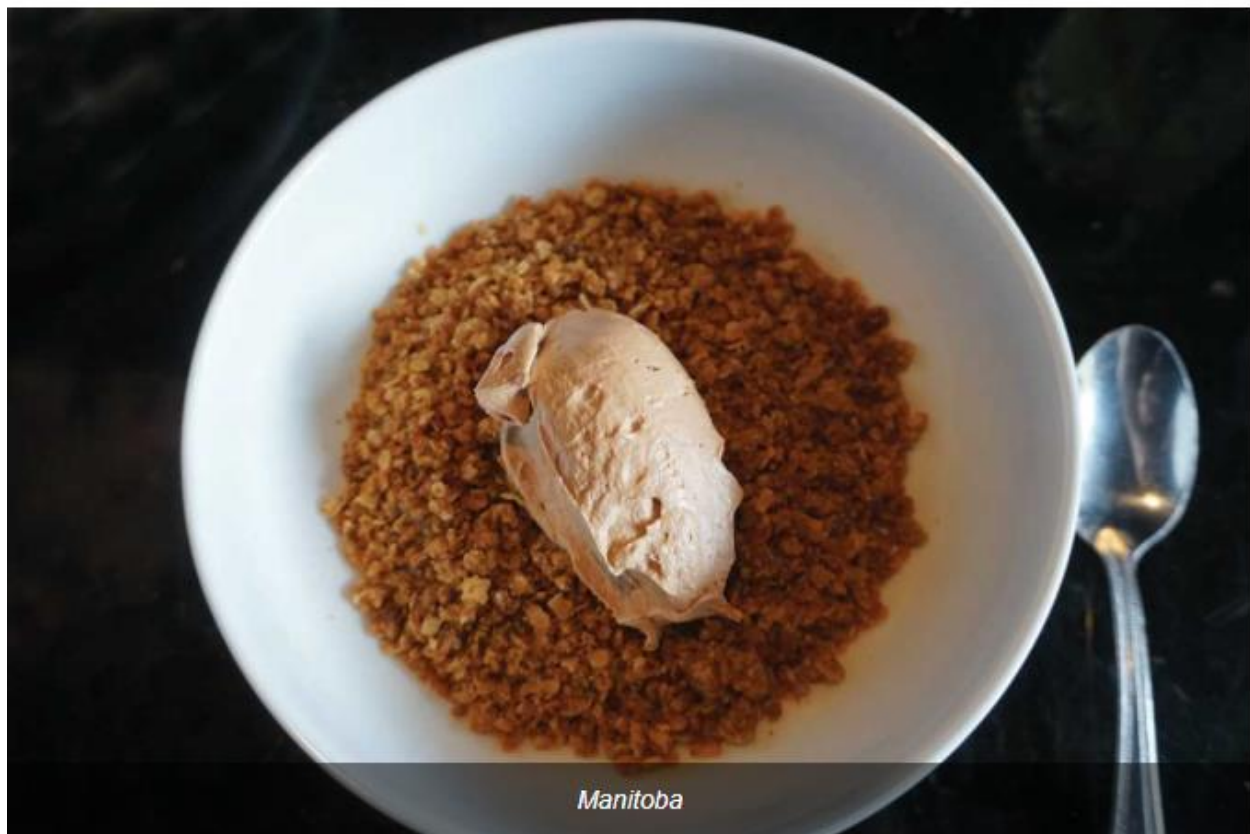
KOZU

Visiting Asian-fusion spot Kozu during its opening week in June 2017, the place was abuzz and packed to the gills, as if already a neighborhood fave. It's no wonder, given the team's impressive experience and followings. Restaurateur David Schmidt of 2016 hit Tiradito, chef Olivier Vigneault of Jatoba and Québec City's Yuzu, and sommelier Maxim Laliberté of Daniel Boulud's Maison Boulud, plus an expedient, personable front of house largely culled from service-forward hotels. Dishes can come flying fast and furious from the open kitchen, which is utterly fascinating to watch from the marble chef's counter. Located in the Plateau neighborhood a few blocks off rue St. Denis, the space, once a bar called Rachel Rachel, has been transformed by designer Amlyne Phillips to evoke a "chic Scandinavian cottage" with loads of beautiful, detail-rich wood finishings and potted greenery. Meanwhile, Vigneault's menu draws inspiration and ingredients from all over Asia, although it heavily leans to Japan. I adored the red tuna tartare, served in four taco-like nori "shells" with shredded cucumber, mizuna, avocado, and a tempura-flake topping. A soft-shell crab bao is tinged with heat from red-eye chili, while shrimp and pork gyoza (there's an entire dumpling section on the menu) came perfectly crisped outside. The oven-roasted black cod, tender and moist yet succulently seasoned with Chogo miso marinade and touch of char may be the tastiest iteration I've savored in North America. Plenty of vegetarian and gluten-free options are also available, while big parties can order up the six-person, \$300 "La Totale" feast. Don't forget the yummy cocktails! 500 rue Rachel Est. Tel: 514-524-4446. www.kozumontreal.com

MAGGIE OAKES

Situated on bustling tourist strip Place Jacques-Cartier, the 127-room Hôtel William Gray brought a breath of hip, upscale boutique chic to Old Montréal when it opened in 2016. At their outstanding Maggie Oakes restaurant, *Top Chef Canada* contestant Derek Bocking crafts a menu of delicious local farmer-driven Canadian and bistro fare. There's even a wall of bright green microgreens and herbs growing in the spacious tan-and-grey interior, the work of Montréal's own Camdi Design firm. Open from breakfast until dinner, the menu includes charcuterie, raw bar goodies, wellseasoned and dressed bison or albacore tuna tartare, an entire vegetarian "from the garden" section, comfort fare with a twist (macaroni and cheese incorporating blue cheese, mozzarella, and mild cheddar), and steaks from an in-house dry-age meat cooler. Just having drinks? Sidle up to the shiny veined marble bar for wine or twists on classic libations including the Campari-Grand Marnier sparking wine Aperò Amaro. 421 rue St. Vincent. Tel: 514-656-5600.

www.hotelwilliamgray.com



Manitoba

MANITOBA

Located in an industrial stretch of Montréal's still scrappy Mile-Ex district, next door to the excellent Dispatch Coffee roasters and café, the three-year-old Manitoba feels like a discovery in the wilderness. That's certainly in line with its philosophy, which is all about bringing Canada's essence to your table (ditto for chef S'Arto Chartier Otis's year-old Hvor, where a deck serves as on-property produce and herb garden). Foragers regularly unload discoveries here, and each plate represents the flavors of a region. Industrial garage chic informs the design, with wood accents and an outdoor patio. Chef Cedric Nolet applies love and technique to his sterling, überfresh ingredients. Sitting at the chef's counter, I sampled a variety of dishes from the dinner menu, including a succulent, tenderbraised leek covered with smoked egg yolk Hollandaise, and a powdering of leek ash, all of which served as cover for whelks (sea snails), which fall somewhere between abalone and octopus in texture and flavor. I also sampled seal for the first time, tataki style, which tasted somewhat like a very rich, beefy cut of raw tuna steak, served under spaghetti-like ribbons of raw celeriac, with a flavorful Saskatoon berry, and smoked butter sauce. Heartier fare includes deer steak, while the desserts were utterly superb, notably a modest rectangle of sourcream cake with white chocolate and cranberries. Cocktails also incorporate fresh herbs, flowers, and infusions: try the amusingly named Spruce Springsteen, with spruce tree beer. Lunch, meanwhile, sees an abridged menu and power-lunching crowd from local offices. 271 rue Saint Zotique Ouest. Tel: 514-270-8000. www.restaurantmanitoba.com

MONTREAL PLAZA



Lined with hundreds of shops, ranging from bland retail chains to unusual one-off boutiques, Plaza St-Hubert saw one of the city's most exciting restaurants open its doors in 2015. The work of erstwhile Toqué! sous-chef Cheryl Johnson and chef de cuisine Charles-Antoine Crête, the space is eclectic and fun, from the red neon rooster that marks the entrance to reconfigured children's toys and antiques that pepper the white and wood interior (e.g. a teddy bear body attached to a plane and upside-down dollhouse dangle overhead). Talk about unstuffy! The fun doesn't end there. The tight menu of small plates is fun and seasonal, and downright yummy with

flawless juxtaposition of textures, herbs that scream with character, and uncomplicated presentation. My May dinner included delectable, buttery fiddlehead ferns with almond slivers, a bison tartare with grain for crunch, a chilled lobster salad tucked beneath a shell, a plate of asparagus with a thin, tasty aioli, and wonderful pastry selection, selected from beneath a glass dome on a marble table. Absolutely memorable in every way, and a must. 6230 St-Hubert. Tel: 514-903-6230. www.montréalplaza.com

LE MOUSSO

Chef Antonin Mousseau-Rivard not only dances to his own tune, but insists you do, too. His iconoclastic approach (a single set menu, wines for pairing, just a couple of off-menu cocktails) brings fresh creations that some describe as "challenging," but have nonetheless proved a resounding success. Located a few minutes' stroll from the St. Catherine gay village, the 34-seat space is divided into three levels: an open kitchen below, a ground level communal table and bar, and an elevated dining area in the rear. Hailing from an artistic family (his dad is a popular Québécois musician, Michel Rivard), the chef does offer quite the bargain. Each of the 11 courses is served spectacularly, on gorgeous plates and stones that evoke elements and nature. My menu included a wonderful, buttery porridge, a small loaf of black bread fashioned from fermented potatoes, unnervingly rare but tasty pork, a dessert involving cucumber granite, merengue slabs, and herbs, and seasonal cocktails driven by fresh botanicals. There was much essence and funk to be found in some courses, but I do love a challenge. 1023 rue Ontario Est. Tel: 438-384-7410. [www.facebook.com/LeMoussou-896950477044437](https://www.facebook.com/LeMoussou)

