

# BAR BULLETIN

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## When Practice Makes Perfect, or at Least a Favorite

*Practice, transitive verb definition 1(b): to perform an action customarily or habitually. (Merriam Webster) This definition of the verb applies to our frequenting some of our favorite dining spots. We have chosen a few of those favorites to feature for this issue.*

### **Favorite (relatively new) Restaurant Name**

**Willmott's Ghost** (2100 Sixth Ave.; 206-900-9650; <https://www.willmottsghost.com>) is burrowed within the South Lake Union's Amazon Spheres. Award-winning chef Renee Erickson's newest restaurant made a strong first impression the moment we opened the door.

Named in honor of English horticulturist Ellen Ann Willmott, Willmott's Ghost is not as big as Erickson's other restaurants, but it certainly is not cramped. Resembling the ambiance from the Whale Wins and the Walrus and the Carpenter, two other Erickson restaurants, Willmott's Ghost's bar seating features a partial view of the bustling kitchen.

Nevertheless, your focus will return to the bar where the talented bartenders left us to enjoy our cocktails, but remained within earshot; so we were not left waiting too long when it was time for a refill. After a brief wait for our table to be set, we turned to the impressive menu, which features numerous types of pizza, seafood, and a half-chicken under a brick.

On the recommendation of our hospitable waitress, we ordered the Margherita pizza, prepared in a wood-fired pizza oven, tossed with fresh mozzarella cheese and basil leaves. Paired with the homemade olive oil, it immediately be-

came obvious why the Margherita pizza is a popular choice.

Our side of Brussels sprouts, glazed in brown butter and served with potatoes mixed with a hint of sage, and fried squid complemented our dinner. Both sides did their best to upstage the pizza, but they were no match for the star of the evening — the chilled, custard-filled tiramisu. We left satisfied and talking about our inevitable return.

### **Favorite Out of the Way, But Still in Town Spot**

We were checking out a rumor of a candidate for "favorite pork chop" in town when we stopped by **Single Shot Kitchen and Saloon** (611 Summit Ave. E.; 206-420-2338; <http://www.singleshotseattle.com/#home1-1>). We were not disappointed. Everything we had there makes us nominate Single Shot for our favorite obscure location in town.

Nestled on Capitol Hill's upper west side, in a mid-rise residential neighborhood, Single Shot is well worth the search for parking or the Uber fare. The small restaurant can seat maybe 30 patrons at the tables and another 10 at the bar. We chose the bar and got to watch the bartender's intricate mixing of the elaborate drinks on the menu.

We tried the "Poire Madrone," a light, delicate and aesthetic gin drink with egg white, madrone bark infusion, St. George spiced pear and lemon. Also on offer was the lusciously named "Succulent Succubus," which included mezcal, averna, lime, fennel blossom liqueur and bitters. Although quite different, both drinks had complex characters that invited us to take time and savor their many flavors.

We started dinner with the seasonal celeriac soup with Dungeness crab, toasted celery seed and white truffle oil. This soup presents as a comfort food, with a creamy, root-based flavor that is the essence of warm autumn soup, and the celery seed added small, bright bursts of flavor. The crab was delicate and light — a delightful counterpoint and perfect complement to both the soup and the celery seed garnish, making the starter both intriguing and satisfying.

We then moved on the entrées, which did not disappoint. We had the pork chop, served romanesco with pomegranate seeds, Picholine olive and Marcona almond. This was a rich and satisfying dish, with a deep, winter flavor brightened by the crisp pomegranate seeds. The "Diver Scallops" with vadouvan curry, butternut squash, shaved fennel and hazelnuts, were also an excellent dish. We were concerned that the scallops would be overwhelmed by the curry sauce, but the dish was masterfully constructed. The sweet and succulent scallops were nestled on top of a dollop of vadouvan curry, so that the scallops were complemented rather than overwhelmed. The fennel added a light touch, and the hazelnuts provided a satisfying bit of texture.

Everything we had was packed with flavor — this is not a place for someone who has a simple palate. All of the menu items, drinks and dinners alike, had us slowly savoring the complex blends of tastes and after-tastes crafted into each one. This was definitely a fun place. Be aware that the menu changes and you cannot expect it to match the menu on the webpage, and also that it is a 21-and-over establishment.

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## **Favorite Low-Key, Date-Night Spot**

**Nell's Restaurant** (6804 E. Green Lake Way N.; 206-524-4044; [www.nellsrestaurant.com](http://www.nellsrestaurant.com)) turns 20 this year, which makes it a downright proper institution in Seattle's current fast-paced, pop-up style food culture.

What makes Nell's the place you go back to again and again is the reliably delicious European-style cuisine, the cozy and relaxed environment, and excellent service. It is the perfect place to spend an evening catching up with family and friends in a welcoming setting where you can easily hear the person sitting across from you and not once feel rushed. And the view of Green Lake does not disappoint — a nice spot to sit and enjoy one's vodka gimlet or one of Nell's many craft cocktails.

For special occasions or for bigger appetites, Nell's tasting menu is a fun option. The set menu consists of a list of small plates (starters) and big plates (main courses). The sweet onion tart has been on the menu for years, with slight variations, and is a favorite of ours, as is the duck. The most recent rendition of the duck was served in a cherry sauce so good it was tempting to lick the plate.

If there is anything to critique at Nell's — and that is not an easy thing to do — it is that for regular repeat diners the main course menu can start to feel a bit routine with a list of the usual suspects — chicken, duck, pork, steak — with only moderately different preparations and sauces. It is apparently hard to improve on such a great thing.

## **Favorite Veteran — Relaxed and Reliable**

In a city like Seattle where restaurants seem to pop up like worms on a sidewalk after a downpour, it can be easy to forget the old standbys. In the zone between Capitol Hill and downtown lies one such classic: **Ristorante Machiavelli**.

Machiavelli is not pretending to be anything it is not: pretentious, nouveau, leisurely. If you have never been there, be prepared: it does not take reservations, the restaurant is tiny, and the line starts to form almost immediately after the 5 p.m. opening.

Once you have scored a spot at one of the coveted tables, a wonderful dinner awaits. Machiavelli serves old-school, American-Italian food. Each diner is greeted with olive oil and some seriously delicious bread, and a manageable menu

full of Italian staples: spaghetti, pizza, eggplant parmesan, and almost anything you would want with tomato sauce.

The food comes in ample portions, the service is quick but warm, and the wine is cheap. No matter what you order, you'll have the option to top it with extra parmesan once it arrives. For an ideal date, arrive at 5 sharp, split a carafe of wine, lasagna bolognese, and a chicken piccata. Pay cash, and amble home, comfortably full with leftovers for tomorrow's lunch.

As the song goes, these are a few of our favorite things, and we will continue to make time to practice going to each of these even as we check out the new dining options in and around Seattle. ■

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*Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt is a multiservice, Northwest regional law firm with offices in Seattle, Vancouver, Portland and Bend. For comments on this article or to share your favorite places to eat or drink with the Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt attorneys, contact Christopher Howard at 206-407-1524 or at [choward@schwabe.com](mailto:choward@schwabe.com); see also [www.schwabe.com/dining\\_out.aspx](http://www.schwabe.com/dining_out.aspx).*