

# top 5

## places to indulge in elegant décor

Sure, good food is important, but it's a bonus when an eatery boasts an impressive décor to boot. Here are the top-five restaurants with fabulous furnishings:

### THE KEG STEAKHOUSE AND BAR

1011 Mainland St.  
The steak chain's newest location in Yaletown is one swanky affair. With four spacious floors, a beautiful rooftop bar, and leather couches aplenty, it offers a unique (and luxurious) dining experience.

### CHAMBAR

562 Beatty St.  
There's lots of eye candy at this Belgian restaurant - the walls are continuously decked with evocative artwork from local artists. Moreover, the warm lighting emanating from the numerous candelabras and the sleek design of the dining room give the joint a cozy, romantic feel.

### KAKURENBOU JAPANESE DINING

793 Jervis St.  
Styled like an ancient Japanese temple, this restaurant evokes a long-lost world. The ceiling and paneling are adorned with intricate hand-carved wood that'll keep you captivated throughout your meal.

### COAST

1054 Alberni St.  
Coast, which recently relocated from Yaletown to its ultra-chic downtown digs, has received much praise for its modern and innovative design. In October, the restaurant won a Best of Hospitality Design award from the International Interior Design Association.

### IL GIARDINO

1382 Hornby St.  
You can escape to Italy for a few hours thanks to the Tuscan charisma of this traditional ristorante. A large and elegant dining space coupled with charming Italian artifacts.

# Bliss inspired by faith

**DHARM MAKWANA** - Bliss comes from many places.

For David Ngomane the recipe for Bliss, his fruit-based hot sauce, came from above.

"I suspect this is a long lost recipe, but it came back through me even though I'm not a chef at all," Ngomane said at his stand inside Granville Island Market.

"That is why before I made my sauce I raised my hands and just felt the power of the universe."

Ngomane, who arrived in Vancouver from South Africa by way of Toronto, said his 10-week-old endeavour into the competitive hot-sauce market is inspired by faith not hope.

"Being an entrepreneur takes a lot of courage, determination and above all faith," he said. "The word hope does not exist in my vocabulary because I can lose hope but I cannot lose faith. Therefore, I have faith in my product."

Bliss Hot Sauce comes in three varieties: Apple, strawberry-apple and strawberry



David Ngomane founded Bliss, his fruit-based hot sauce, which he sells at Granville Island Market.

banana.

The sauce, made from a chili extract, is ideal for international cuisine can be used as marinade or for dipping.

"I've tasted a lot of hot sauces out there but I've never found something really flavourful," Ngomane

said. "Most hot sauces are salt, vinegar and pepper but there's no flavour."

With Bliss in hand, Ngomane hopes to market his product worldwide through online retail sites such as eBay and at finer food stores across the Lower Mainland.

To get your hands on

*"That is why before I made my sauce I raised my hands and just felt the power of the universe."*

Bliss visit David at Granville Island Market or e-mail him at [ngomezulu@yahoo.ca](mailto:ngomezulu@yahoo.ca).

## Armed in the kitchen

**Dirty Apron Cooking School**  
Day 2: Cuts Like a Knife

**SARAH ROWLAND** - "If you try to knock me you'll get mocked/I'll stir fry you in my wok."

That's a line from one of my favourite Beastie Boys' songs: "Intergalactic." And now thanks to Dirty Apron Cooking School [www.dirty-apron.com](http://www.dirty-apron.com), I can rap that verse with a whole new confidence.

Yup, last Friday, I completed "The First Step - The Knife Skills Class". And can I just say "Wow!" I didn't know knives came that sharp. I usually just chop stuff up with whatever cutting utensils my mom picks up from garage sales. But under Chef David Robertson's superb tutelage, we used the crème de la crème of knives for all our cooking.

First though, we warmed up with little Julienne 101. That's when the teacher's assistant complimented me on my nice onion! Of course, he



Chef David Robertson puts students through the paces.

was referring to the way I cut my vegetable into long thin strips.

After that, we made the most delicious grilled corn and clam chowder with double smoked bacon (see recipe), which we enjoyed with a nice glass of wine.

Then we put all our newly-acquired skills to work on a full-on, finely chopped chicken and vegetable stir-fry. Let me tell you, I was a slicing and dicing machine.

This is definitely a great class to take for beginners. Believe me, if I can do it, anyone can.

### GRILLED CORN AND CLAM CHOWDER

#### Ingredients

100g double smoked bacon (cut into 1/2 inch dice)  
2 shallots (diced)  
1/4 carrot (about 70g) - (diced)  
2 cloves - garlic (minced)  
120 g peeled red skin potatoes (small dice)  
240 ml clam nectar  
20 fresh clams  
125 white wine  
250 ml heavy whipping cream  
20 ml lemon juice (approx 1 wedge)  
1 corn on the cob  
1 tsp fresh thyme (chopped)  
1 tsp chives (finely sliced)  
1 tsp cornstarch mix with 1 tbs cold water  
salt, pepper

#### Method

In a small sauce pot, heat white wine over medium-high heat and add clams, steaming with a lid on

until all clams have opened. Once opened, remove from the pot, separate the meat from each shell and reserve both the clam meat and juices in the pan for later use. In a separate sauce pot, sauté bacon over medium heat until brown and crisp, about five minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to paper towel and allow to rest. Pour off all but about one tbs of the bacon fat from the pan. Next, add onions, carrots and garlic to the pan and sauté for about two minutes. Add in the potatoes, clam nectar and clam juices and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes. While the soup is simmering, grill cobs of corn on all sides. Using a sharp knife cut the kernels off the cob. Add bacon and corn to soup and serve with salt and pepper to taste.



## >> Brulée quest

The search continues for Vancouver's undiscovered crème brûlée.

### Episode 6 - Grand Marnier Finale

Years ago, I embarked on the journey to create Vancouver's comprehensive guide to crème brûlée. After several tastings and a bit of scribbling, it became apparent that no guide would ever be complete or accurate. Crème brûlée recipes tend to change on a whim - be it a change in season, or a change in the chef's twitter status and compiling such a guide would be an impossible task. When I found a local restaurant was sticking to its original recipe and had no plans to change, I was intrigued. Au Petit Chavignol is a wine and cheese bar based on the beloved 'Les Amis du Fromage' cheese stores around town. Located on East Hastings, the tale of a much lauded crème brûlée was worth the daunting travel. When I arrived, the Vancouver Table Tennis Club across the street put me at ease. This was no longer the neighbourhood where you roll up your windows and pray for a green light. I was just outside of Japantown one block East of the Astoria Hotel in Strathcona. The restaurant, the fare, the grower champagnes, were all exquisite (how can you go wrong with wine and cheese?) For the grand finale, the Grand Marnier Crème Brûlée delivered what was expected. A one-two punch of Grand Marnier and orange zest, balanced with vanilla, topped with sugar and burnt to perfection. The best part? This one isn't going anywhere anytime soon.

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