

Deals for designated drivers

Hamilton Street Grill in Yaletown is hosting a multi-course dinner for New Year's Eve. The meal comes with an \$85 price tag, including wine. Designated drivers get the dinner at \$60, and a gift certificate for a free lunch. Expect both a casual and sophisticated atmosphere, with private rooms available for up to 25 people. – QMI AGENCY

A saucy encounter

Today is the last day to catch local chef Ann Kirsebom's live demonstration of her line of sauces and other products. Kirsebom will be on hand with her new Grand Marnier sauce – perfect to add a little zing to your Christmas turkey – at Urban Fair Yaletown on Christmas Eve from noon to 7 p.m. – QMI AGENCY



For \$85 and an additional \$30 for the cocktail pairing, raw vegans can enjoy a multi-course work of art created by the greatest culinary minds in the city. PHOTO RAJ TANEJA

VEGAN QUEST

The last grand pilgrimage



Raj Taneja
@tinhead

My captivity may be over but the effects of six weeks among raw vegans will probably last me the rest of my days. I've lost almost 18 kilograms, my workouts are better, I feel better and overall I'm happier. The true test starts now.

On a recent outing to one of Vancouver's most notable restaurants, I challenged the chef to prepare a guilt-free raw vegan feast. Not any chef, though. This was Robert Clark and C Restaurant was hosting the dinner. At his side

was C's executive chef Lee Humphries.

Sommelier Justin McAuliffe and bartender Jason O'Brien conjured up cocktails to go with each course. Amazing, since they had little notice to prepare an accompaniment to four courses, an amuse bouche and a dessert.

Imagine sipping a cocktail made from Swiss chard, yellow peppers, Roma tomato, basil and a little bit of lime while snacking on Humphries' play on tabouli – cauliflower and broccoli couscous, a side of beans infused with mint, lemon and olive oil and accented with

pickled shimji mushrooms and Dijon.

It's extraordinary even just talking about it. Clark prefaced one of Humphries' creations by assuring me the dish would take my palette to places it's never previously been. If I ever make it to heaven, I now know what the food there tastes like.

Raj Taneja is part technologist, part entrepreneur, part social media thought leader and part foodie. He has taken thousands of food and people photos over the years. Check them out at <http://bit.ly/um-photos>. Got something to say? He goes by @tinhead on twitter.

Brews best fit for under the tree



Colin Jack
Justthereforthebeer.com

Today, the mad scramble is on as last-minute shopping makes people somewhat desperate and delusional.

Beer offers the perfect gift. It is mysterious, adventurous, timely, consumable and inexpensive. Most importantly, it can bring a smile even to Scrooge's face.

Quite simply, a hand-picked basket full of beer says, "Thank you, you are important and appreciated."

Under My Tree:

R & B Brewing – Auld Nick Winter Ale – \$5.25

A great name for a winter beer that is complex yet easy to sip. Try Auld Nick with dark chocolate truffles and old cheddar cheese.

Fernie Brewing – Sap Sucker Maple Porter – \$4.95

Subtle hints of maple balance the dark roasted malts. Maple adds a touch of palatability to the strong dark

chocolate essence.

Howe Sound Brewing – Father John's Winter Ale – \$7.99

Bold mixture of malts and seasonal spices (prominently nutmeg and cinnamon) create this winter brew. Available in a one-litre, resealable bottle that is the perfect centrepiece.

Listen to Just Here For The Beer Radio next Tuesday Jan. 4 at 6 p.m. on AM 650, or visit justthereforthebeer.com



Ciliège filate made for the sinful end to a memorable meal. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Q4 al Centro a treat



Sarah Rowland
Dining Chronicles

When most restaurants first start out, they pretty much have to win over one diner at a time to get the word out about their menu.

Not so with Q4 al Centro. Considering it's the sister restaurant of Q4 Ristorante in Kitsilano, it already has an inherited good name among fans of Italian fine dining. Reputation alone, however, is not enough on which to base a re-

view. That said, I made a point of dining there just so I could commentate on the food with authority. I'm happy to report, Q4 al Centro (780 Richards St.), which officially opened its doors earlier this month, is more than worthy of the reputation that precedes it.

As its name suggests, "al Centro" is very central and will surely be the next Cinq à sept hotspot for the downtown nine-to-five set.

The intimate space is perfect for an after-work glass of wine

and bite to eat. It's also an ideal for a long and lingering romantic dinner.

I strongly recommend the seafood linguini, followed by the ciliège filate, a phyllo pastry layered with whipped mascarpone cheese, cream and sour cherries for dessert.

I'm a hardcore chocoholic, so you know if I'm highlighting this one as my favourite that it's pretty damn good.

In fact, the whole dining experience was five-star all the way.

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