

Best Bites of 2009: Main Course

Continuing a three-part series of the year's best bites, this week I reveal my choices for the best entrées I've tasted in Portland. From pizza, sandwiches, and a low-cost ethnic eatery to higher-end restaurants, foodie standbys to newcomers on the scene, these are the dishes I crave—my most memorable mains of 2009, in no particular order.

Coastal Margarita Pizza at Apizza Scholls

Brian Spangler makes the best pizza that I've eaten outside of Naples. His years as a baker explain the flawless crust: crisp and blistered on the outside, with just the right amount of chewy dough to sink your teeth into. A Simple topping of tomato, fresh mozzarella, and basil is enough, but I highly recommend stepping it up with salty anchovies.

apizzascholls.com

Pork Belly Reuben at Bunk Sandwiches

Thick slices of succulent seared pork belly, aged Swiss, fresh sauerkraut, and dark rye spread with co-owner Nick Wood's housemade Russian dressing is the recipe for an incredible new take on a classic sandwich.

bunksandwiches.com

Spicy Noodles with Pork Ribs at Lucky Strike

This authentic Sichuan spot on the outskirts of town is worth the trip for the spiciest food around. The heat is balanced with intoxicating spice in a dish of mian noodles, braised pork ribs, and an aromatic broth of clove, star anise, cinnamon, dried orange peel, and chile oil.

503-206-8292

"Cabbage" at Castagna

The subtle contrasts in texture and flavor between a braised leaf of savoy cabbage enrobing a tender, sous-vide cooked fillet of halibut, nestled onto delicate ricotta with whey, demonstrates Chef Matt Lightner's refined style.

castagnarestaurant.com

28-Day Dry-Aged Steak at Laurelhurst Market

If you are going to splurge on a steak dinner, it might as well be Laurelhurst Market's nightly cut, dry aged for 28 days to concentrate the gamey-rich beef flavor. Complement it with potatoes puréed Robuchon-style with an equal ratio of butter. It doesn't get more decadent than that.

laurelhurstmarket.com