

# Marin in the Marina

LOCALS OPEN RESTAURANTS  
SOUTH OF THE GOLDEN GATE

BY SOMER FLAHERTY  
PHOTOS TIM PORTER



THIS PAGE: A meal at Roam Burger and at right, restaurant owner Josh Spiegelman. OPPOSITE: Chef Gary Rulli is precise with pastry; Bechelli's owner Pat Bechelli at his Marina restaurant.

# Marina

If the last time you were in San Francisco's Marina District was during your post-fraternity, pre-marriage-and-kids days, then you'll notice a lot of changes. When landlords in the formerly high-priced district started dropping commercial rents and merchants joined forces to remove zoning laws that restrict restaurants, the result was almost a dozen new spots opening up. Marin natives took advantage of the quick drive to work—less than 15 minutes from Sausalito—and set up new dining spots.

One of the best new family-friendly restaurants comes from Marin native and Redwood High School graduate Josh Spiegelman, who along with his business partner, Lynn Gorfinkle, has built a better burger crafted from local and sustainable ingredients. At **Roam Burgers** you can choose from grass-fed beef, free-range turkey, all-natural bison or organic veggie patties and wash it down with Kombucha on tap or house-made agave-sweetened sodas. The earth-friendly design of the 49-seat restaurant includes reclaimed wood, total composting and eco-plateware. One of the coolest green initiatives Roam has undertaken? Its fry oil is transformed into biofuel. *Roam, 1785 Union St., 415.440.7626, roamburgers.com*



Chefs Gordon Drysdale and Edward Carew; mixed green salad with seared scallops at Delarosa.



Down the street from Spiegelman's burger joint, San Rafael native Devin Glasser opened **American Cupcake**. The unique concept started as a cupcake catering business but morphed into what Glasser describes as a "soda fountain meets dessert lounge concept," complete with white patent leather banquettes. The menu includes interesting takes on the dessert concept with cupcake-and-champagne paired flights, a Bison Brewery chocolate stout "beer float," and an entire peanut butter and jelly menu with spin-offs like artisanal quince preserves and house-made almond butter—oh, and as the name would suggest, they sell cupcakes too. *American Cupcake, 1919 Union St., 415.896.4217, americancupcake.com*

For refined rustic fare pull up a seat at the Parisian-style brasserie **Café des Amis**. Executive chef and Mill Valley resident Gordon Drysdale along with chef and Tiburon resident Edward Carew, formerly of the Cottage Eatery in Tiburon, are making a name for the new space with beyond-the-farm items like grilled

calf's liver, crispy frog legs and beef tartare. If you're looking to impress a date or you're on an expense account, don't leave without indulging in the seafood tower. The \$135 grand version includes oysters, clams, cracked crab, lobster, shrimp and mussels. *Café des Amis, 2000 Union St., 415.563.7700, cafedesamis.com*

On Chestnut Street, Greenbrae's Gary Rulli of Emporio Rulli fame has transformed his once-sleepy corner restaurant into **RistoBar**, one of the best-designed dinner spots in the Marina. The modern interior includes a massive marble bar, Venetian glass chandelier and an Enomatic wine system that dispenses by-the-glass selections. Rulli and chef Angelo Auriana have created one of the largest cheese lists in the area, including selections from as far away as Piemonte and others from as close as Petaluma. Although the menu includes tasty pasta creations like cavatelli with yellow pepper purée, it's the pizza menu that's wowing locals. Don't miss the crispy Divisadero—a tomato sauce, radicchio, pecorino and balsamic

combination that is so good you won't even consider sharing. *RistoBar, 2300 Chestnut St., 415.923.6464*

For drinks, head over to the always-packed **Delarosa**. The team behind the Mission District's popular Beretta restaurant created a communal-table-heavy restaurant made even more popular by the small bar and good drinks. The cocktail list is hefty but favorites include the Monarch, a mix of gin, lemon, elderflower and mint, and if you opt for the restaurant's take on the Manhattan with rye, vermouth, curacao, absinthe and bitters, flag a cab for the ride back to Marin. *Delarosa, 2175 Chestnut St., 415.673.7100, delarosa.com*

If it's too early for drinks, stop in for a cup of coffee and plate of eggs at the Marina mainstay **Bechelli's Coffee Shop**. Owned by Corte Madera's Pat Bechelli and his brother Mark, who have operated the diner for over three decades, the relaxed eatery has classic breakfast options for low prices. Set at the quieter end of Chestnut Street, it's a short walk out of the mid-blocks bustle, but worth it for the friendly service. *Bechelli's Coffee Shop, 2346 Chestnut St., 415.346.1801*

It's hard to get lost in the area; just stick to the two parallel thoroughfares of Union and Chestnut Street, which can be reached via Fillmore Street off of Lombard. If you opt for street parking, remember the meters are numerous and so are the meter maids—be sure you've loaded up on quarters. For garage parking, there are two large lots on the most popular shopping streets in the district at 1910 Union Street and 2055 Chestnut Street.

