

Dining Guide 2009

PART THREE: THE WESTERN FRONT

Chinatown ■ Preston Street ■ Hintonburg, West Wellington, Westboro
Old Ottawa West ■ Britannia ■ CentrepoinTE ■ Bells Corners

Celebrating
diversity from
Chinatown
to Bells Corners

BY ANNE DESBRISAY

Part 3 of the Dining Guide focuses on the restaurant-rich neighbourhoods of Ottawa's western front, from Chinatown and Preston Street, to Westboro to CentrepoinTE and west to Bells Corners.

As for every entry in this year's guide, these are restaurants I recommend, some unequivocally, others with reservations. But for whatever mood you're in, budget that fits you or demographic you fit into, you should be able to find something that suits.

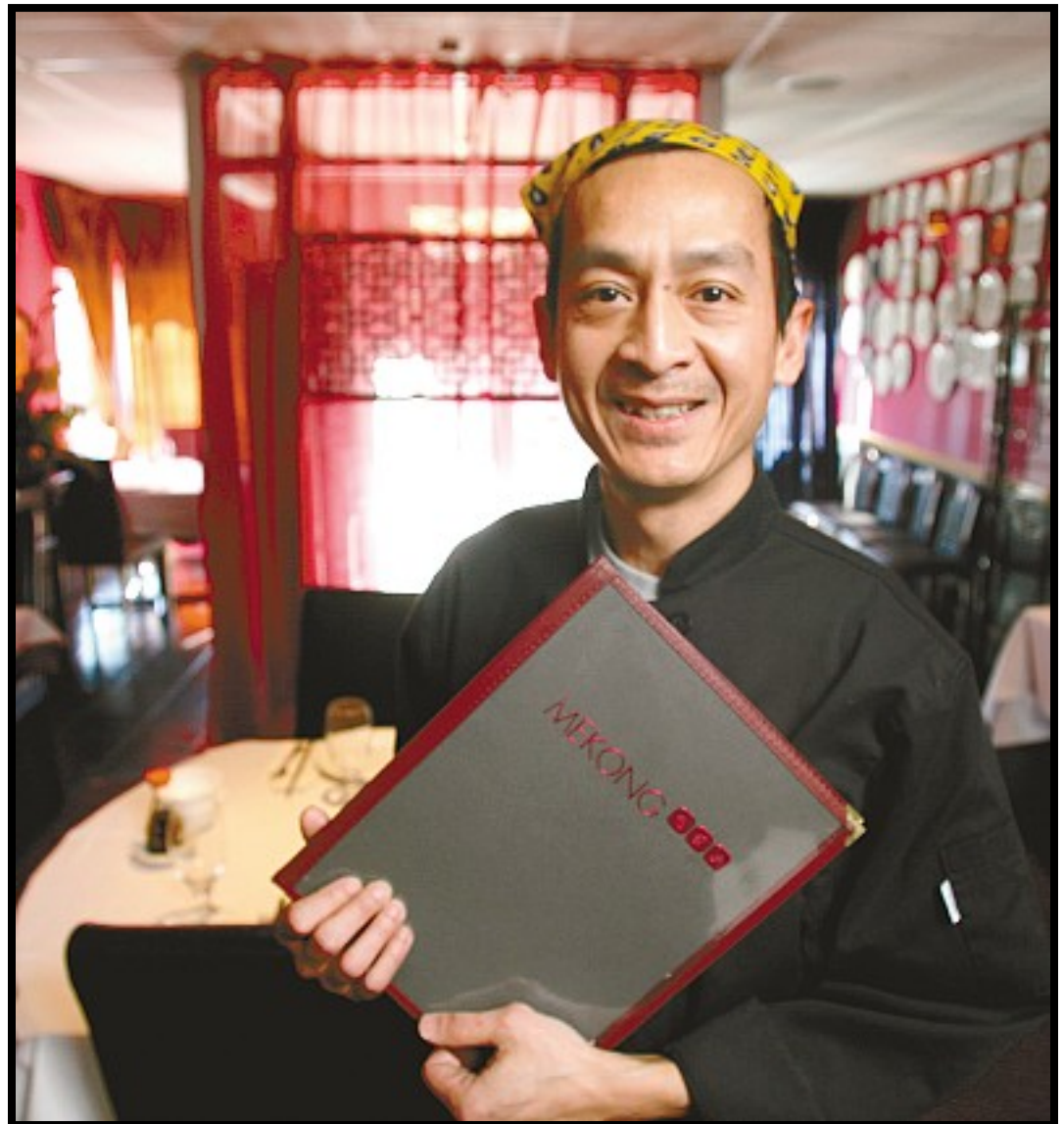
Please keep in mind this list is a guide only, based on my experiences. There's no guarantee of what you will find.

Chinatown

FUSCHIAN

726 Somerset St W., 613-230-6815 \$

Cuisine: Asian. Fresh, hot, fast and a good blend of Vietnamese and Chinese cuisines, run by very fine people. Fish is a strength, so are salad rolls and lemongrass chicken.



PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Continued on the next page **Mekong restaurant owner/chef Dennis Luc offers a good cross-section of well-treated Asian food.**

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HOT PEPPERS

495 Somerset St. W., 613-233-4687 hot-peppers.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Thai. It calls itself an "expressive Thai restaurant" with an upstairs wine bar. Fried oysters, curried mussels, spicy crab cakes with mango sauce, steamed salmon with plum and ginger.

JADELAND

625 Somerset St. W., 613-233-0204 \$

Cuisine: Chinese. It's not the decor that has folks lined up out its door. Maybe it's the food: pickerel with chili and garlic, squid with snow pea tips, bitter melon and beef in black bean sauce.

JO MOON TING

832 Somerset St. W., 613-237-8887 \$

Cuisine: Chinese. Ten tables in a pokey little room, or take-away counter with its window-view of barbecue treats. Whether in-house or to-go, the house chicken, roast pork and barbecue duck are the way-to-go.

MEKONG

637 Somerset St. W., 613-237-7717 mekong.ca \$

Cuisine: Asian. Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai dishes on the menu. Seafood is treated well. Good too are the soups, pot stickers, shrimp dumplings, crispy beef and braised duck.

NEW MEE FUNG

350 Booth St., 613-567-8228 \$

Cuisine: Vietnamese. Large dining room with a large menu. Order by number. Try No. 223 lemongrass chicken, or No. 136 spicy satay with rice noodles.

NEW PHO BO GA LA

761-763 Somerset St. W., 613-233-2222 \$

Cuisine: Vietnamese. Pho is noodle soup, Bo is beef, Ga is chicken and La is the large, extended family that runs this place and others like it on the strip.

PHO THU DO

765 Somerset St. W., 613-235-7116 \$

Cuisine: Vietnamese. One of the originals and as plain-Jane as

Price guide

Loosely based on a three-course dinner for two, with taxes, but before drinks or tip.

\$: Less than \$40
 \$\$: \$40 to \$70
 \$\$\$: \$71 to \$100
 \$\$\$\$: More than \$100

they come. Chipped formica and permanently scarred linoleum. But the sweetly scented noodle soups are wonderful.

SHANGHAI

651 Somerset St. W., 613-233-4001 shanghaiottawa.com \$

Cuisine: Asian. Mandarin martini, Brazilian rhythms, disco bingo, karaoke Saturdays ... This isn't your typical Chinese restau-

Unless stated otherwise, all restaurants accept major credit cards and reservations, and many now have websites where you will find their menus and hours of operation. Call about wheelchair accessibility.

rant, though it is the region's oldest. Food's all over the place too — North American Cantonese to Thai curries to Malaysian calamari.

SUSHI 88

690B Somerset St. W., 613-233-3288 \$

Cuisine: Sushi. For the sushi- novice, try the "I Like My Sushi Cooked" combo; for the well ini-

tiated, "Sashimi Surprise." Dining alone? "Sashimi Just For Me."

VIETNAM PALACE

819 Somerset St. W., 613-238-6758 \$

Cuisine: Vietnamese. First-rate seafood: scallops with lemongrass and chilies, shrimp with fresh pineapple, sea bass in black bean sauce. Sizable vegetarian section.

Preston Street

ALLEGRO RISTORANTE

422 Preston St., 613-235-7454 allegroristorante.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Italian. A traditional restaurant comfortably settled into its way of doing things, with a familiar menu and reliable food. Count on a good Caesar, homey soups, fresh, well-prepared fish and seafood, and fine pasta dishes.

ATELIER

540 Rochester St., 613-321-3537 atelierrestaurant.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Modern. Chef Marc Lepine's new avant garde, tasting-menu-only restaurant, based on the Barcelona model of the kitchen-as-laboratory. Twelve courses of mostly extraordinary food. Reservations required.

BIG EASY'S

228 Preston St., 613-565-3279 bigeasys.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Southern seafood. A new New Orleans-style seafood and steakhouse in the middle of Little Italy, with a long bar and oyster bed, good gumbo, excellent crab cakes, fat ribeyes, and a delicious pecan-sweet potato pie.

BLACK CAT BISTRO

428 Preston St., 613-569-9998 blackcatcafe.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Comfort Canadian. A new home for the old BC, born 30 years ago on Echo Drive, recently relocated from Murray Street, and now purring along nicely on Preston. Venison carpaccio with aged cheddar, fennel-seeded sweet-breads, duck with figs, lemon tart.



BRUNO SCHLUMBERGER, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

At Atelier on Rochester Street, chef Marc Lepine treats his kitchen like a laboratory, creating extraordinary food.

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DIVINO WINE STUDIO

225 Preston St., 613-221-9760 divinowinestudio.com \$\$\$

Cuisine: Small plates. Ottawa's first enoteca of exclusively Italian wines, the collection constantly changing. The food menu relies on small plates designed for sharing — polenta ragu, mushroom risotto, pappardelle in a leek and walnut sauce.

EFES

484 Preston St., 613-230-8828 \$

Cuisine: Turkish. Rib-sticking Turkish food in Little Italy. The meze platter could make a light supper on its own — and don't miss the doner kebab when it's available.

GIOVANNI'S

362 Preston St., 613-234-3156 giovannis-restaurant.com \$\$\$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Often busy, often loud, but service is top-notch, the food is flavourful northern Italian fare and the wine list is superior.

GREEN PAPAYA ON PRESTON

256 Preston St., 613-231-8424 greenpapaya.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Thai. The first Thai restaurant to immigrate to Little Italy. The pasta strip has made room for kwaytiaw, classic Thai soups and searing salads.

IL PICCOLINO

449 Preston St., 613-236-8158 ilpiccolino.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Comfortable, homey decor in a quirky house where pasta and pizza dominate the menu. Pretty summer patio framed with grapevines.

IL PRIMO

371 Preston St., 613-234-6858 ilprimo.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Il Piccolino's sister restaurant, this one is more formal, more contemporary. No pizza, lots of pasta, tender veal, inventive antipasti.

STONEFACE DOLLY'S ON PRESTON

416 Preston St., 613-564-2222 stonefacedollys.com \$\$

Cuisine: Eclectic. Thai soup, tarragon chicken, mussels, jerk chicken, Thai red curry mussels, jambalaya, and wacky pasta



ROD MACIVOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Bella Milito offers comfort food at her Bella's Bistro.

dishes, in modern surroundings in Little Italy.

TRATTORIA CAFFE ITALIA

254 Preston St., 613-236-1081 trattoriaitalia.com \$\$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Recently renovated, but red-and-white-check cloths still cover the busy tables. On the plate: kind portions of fresh, carefully made, affordably priced, traditional northern Italian food.

Hintonburg, West Wellington, Westboro

ABSINTHE CAFE

1208 Wellington St., 613-761-1138 absinthecafe.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Bistro. Patrick Garland's food is seasonally sound, locally sourced, and big on assertive flavours. Warm tomato salad, bacon-wrapped quail, red snapper, steak frites, profiteroles.

AGAVE GRILL

1331 Wellington St., 613-728-5588 agaveottawa.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Mexican. Go for the margaritas. Stay for the guacamole, burritos, tender steak bathed in a chipotle chili sauce, and anything with salsa verde on top.

ALLIUM

87 Holland Ave., 613-792-1313 alliumrestaurant.com \$\$\$

Cuisine: Contemporary. Monday night tapas at allium make Monday nights palatable. Other days, chef-owner Arup Jana dishes up big flavoured food, with particular pleasure found in game dishes and vegetarian arrangements.

ANNA

91 Holland Ave., 613-759-8472 thaitaste.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Thai. Traditional Thai vestiges mingle with contemporary decor. Good satay, ginger-steamed duck, prawn curry, mango ice cream with mango sauce.

BELLA'S BISTRO

1445 Wellington St., 613-724-6439 bellas.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Bella Milito prepares Italian comfort food, specializing in pasta fatta a casa, along with the usual vitello, pollo and pesci, all of it pretty primo.

CAFFE MIO

1379 Wellington St., 613-761-5510 caffemio.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Italian. Soup and panini on a sunny afternoon on the Mio patio is pretty hard to beat. This little neighbourhood restaurant satisfies with good service, fair prices and decent food.

CAFFE VENTUNO

1355 Wellington St., 613-729-9121 \$

Cuisine: Italian. A modern-look café attached to Nicastro's upscale Italian food and cheese shop. The menu offers pasta, risotto, thin-crust pizza.

CANVAS

65 Holland Ave., 613-729-1991 canvasrestobar.ca \$\$\$

Cuisine: Bistro. A petite space with a petite menu of bistro dishes — scallops, steak frites, short ribs, gnocchi, daily fish — named in honour of the galleries and theatre that surround it.

HABESHA

1087 Wellington St., 613-761-6120 \$

Cuisine: Ethiopian. Short menu, cheap prices, plain room, and on the menu, 10 fragrant and sometimes searing stews — beef, lamb, chicken, pulses, vegetables — served with injera.

JUNIPER KITCHEN AND WINE BAR

245 Richmond Rd., 613-728-0220 juniperdining.ca \$\$\$\$

Cuisine: Modern Canadian. A kitchen that looks locally for quality ingredients and then casts its net widely for inspiration. One of the neighbourhood's finest.

LES GRILLADES

85 Holland Ave., 613-792-3224 \$

Cuisine: Lebanese grill. Reopened after a fire and as good as ever. Fabulous flame-grilled chicken, hummus, roasted eggplant dips, grilled lamb, either for sit-down or takeout.

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MHK SUSHI

429 Richmond Rd., 613-798-0800 mhkrestaurant.com \$\$
Cuisine: Sushi. Fish swim in the walls and on the menu of this small, chic sushi restaurant. Seaweed salad to start, then à la carte treats, or one of the MHK maki platters.

MILAGRO GRILL

357 Richmond Rd., 613-722-8011 milagrogrill.com \$\$
Cuisine: Mexican. With an upscale decor and a drinks menu that offers tequila by the "flight," Milagro is Tex Mex for grownups. Food can be uneven. Upstairs patio is a treat.

PETIT BILL'S BISTRO

1293 Wellington St., 613-729-2500 petitbillsbistro.ca \$\$\$
Cuisine: Unpretentious restaurant offers small and large plates of eclectic dishes — curry chicken to maple scallops to eggplant can-nelloni.

PHNOM PENH

1100 Wellington St., 613-722-8588

phnompenhnoodlehouse.com \$
Cuisine: Cambodian and Chinese. The food is tasty, there's lots of it, prices are reasonable, service is fast and friendly, and the place has an engaging family-run feel.

SIAM BISTRO

1268 Wellington St., 613-728-3111 siambistro.com \$\$
Cuisine: Thai. A handsome new interior and the same familiar line-up of standard Thai dishes. Among its talents are its generous servings and pretty arrangements.

THE DINER

1385 Wellington St., 613-798-7800 \$\$
Cuisine: Diner grub. An agreeably grown-up sort of diner, where parents as well as their issue can feel at home. Hearty breakfasts, good pot roast, homemade soups, chicken pot pie, burgers.

THE FOOLISH CHICKEN

79 Holland Ave., 613-321-4715 foolishchicken.ca \$\$
Cuisine: Chicken and ribs. Rotisserie chicken, gooey ribs and homemade desserts are the



WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Chef-owner Arup Jana serves up 'big-flavoured' food at Allium Restaurant.

strengths at this affordable family restaurant.

THE LOCAL BAR

Irving Greenberg Theatre Centre, 1227 Wellington St., 613-236-5196 ext. 315 \$\$

Cuisine: Canadian. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, pre- and post-theatre nibbling, with a short, straightforward menu of well-flavoured dishes at fair prices.

THE TABLE

1230 Wellington St., 613-729-5973 \$\$

Cuisine: Vegetarian. Bright, utilitarian space for the orthodox vegetarian to feast all day, every day, at the pay-by-weight-of-loaded-plate buffet.

THE WORKS

326 Richmond Rd., 613-564-0406 worksburger.com \$

Cuisine: Burgers. Seven patties, 62 toppings, 12 upgrades make for innumerable options and permutations for burgers and fries at this busy, high-octane, family-friendly joint.

TRIO

307-D Richmond Rd., 613-722-3887 \$\$

Cuisine: Small plates, lounge food. A teeny neighbourhood eatery that's breezy, quirky, affordable and allows you to drop in at midnight for paté and pears, pasta or pizza.

VILLAGE CAFE

295 Richmond Rd., 613-728-2162 thevillagecafe.net \$\$

Cuisine: Café. A casual restaurant with an eclectic menu — tandoori salmon, Moroccan-style crab cakes, Thai-style prawns. A soup and sandwich lunch remains a draw.

WELLINGTON GASTROPUB

1325 Wellington St., 613-729-1315 thewellingtongastro.pub.com \$\$\$

Cuisine: Canadian gastropub. Fine dining in a relaxed venue: Ottawa's first gastropub offers a short daily menu of seasonal treats, many options for artisan beer and an international wine list.

Old Ottawa West

AMBER GARDEN and DALMACIA RESTAURANT

1702 Carling Ave., 613-728-0000 ambergarden.net \$\$

Cuisine: Eastern European. Traditional dishes from the Baltic to the Black seas — cabbage rolls, pierogies, schnitzels, goulash, kulebiaka, chicken Paprikash.

CARIBBEAN FLAVOURS

1659 Carling Ave., 613-237-9981 caribbeanflavours.net \$\$\$

Cuisine: Caribbean. In a plain-Jane location, but nothing plain about the cod cakes, jerk chicken, goat curry, rotis, saltfish, ackee and homemade ginger beer.

GOLDEN PALACE

2195 Carling Ave., 613-820-8444 \$

Cuisine: Chinese. This is the sweet-and-sour, battered-and-fried, red-dyed Cantonese treat food of the 1960s, with legendary egg rolls. Now in its 50th year of service.

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HO HO

875 Richmond Rd., 613-722-9200 hohorestaurant.com \$
Cuisine: Chinese. "Dine-in, take-out, we-deliver" restaurant with strong west-end following. Locals come for the fresh food and for the gracious family that serves it.

LA CABANA

848 Merivale Rd., 613-724-7762 \$

Cuisine: Latin American. A Salvadorian pupuseria with a menu of fast, flavourful, filling food: tamales, pupusas, whole fried platanos, refried beans.

MERIVALE SEAFOOD GRILL

1480 Merivale Rd., 613-723-2476 \$

Cuisine: Seafood. Fish from the adjoining market is plucked off the ice, steamed, grilled, battered, breaded, brochetted — your choice.

MRS. LE

1766 Carling Ave., 613-798-5697 \$

Cuisine: Vietnamese. All the crunch-soft-pungent-fresh of Vietnamese cuisine is here, in a homey space. Lunch specials are popular.

NOKHAM THAI

747 Richmond Rd., 613-724-6620 \$\$

Cuisine: Thai. Pay attention to the house specials at this popular place. Stuffed chicken wings, tilapia in a red curry sauce, delicious mango and shrimp salad.

THEO'S

911 Richmond Rd., 613-728-0909 theosgreektaaverna.com \$\$\$

Cuisine: Greek. Hellenic music, columns, frescos, the works. Terrific things done with eggplant and lamb. Servings are enormous.

Britannia

CEYLONTA

2920 Carling Ave, 613-828-7812 ceylonta.com \$

Cuisine: Sri Lankan/ Indian. A second home for this popular Sri Lankan restaurant, you find the same curry-leaved, coconut-sweetened, tamarind-tanged, chili-fired food of



PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

The Vietnamese and Chinese food at Tom Trinh and An Tran's Fuschian restaurant in Chinatown is fresh, hot and fast.

Sri Lanka here in the west as you do downtown.

LITTLE INDIA CAFE

66 Wylie Ave., 613-828-2696 littleindiacafe.com \$

Cuisine: Indian. Hole in the wall (under renovation) offers Indian cooking from the north and mystic south — silky butter chicken, complex lamb bhuna and admirable vegetarian dishes.

SINGAPORE

69 Kempster Ave., 613-820-4119 \$

Cuisine: Asian. Mostly Malaysian fare, with some Chinese, Indian and Thai influences. Curry puffs are must-eats. So are satays, Singapore noo-

dles, coriander chicken and tamarind shrimp.

TAJ

3009 Carling Ave., 613-726-6955 \$

Cuisine: Indian. Typical north Indian fare that distinguishes itself through the lustiness of its spicing, the long drenching marinades and the expertise with the tandoor.

LINDENHOF

365 Forest St., 613-725-3481 the-linden-hof.com \$\$

Cuisine: European. On the menu, wiener schnitzel, ham hock, sauerbraten, bratwurst, apple fritters. On the plate, lots. On the bill, not much. On the floor, nice people.

CentrepoinTE

BAAN THAI

261 CentrepoinTE Dr., 613-226-7604 \$

Cuisine: Thai. The soups are full-bodied, lip-tingling, sinus-clearing brews, the salads have some attitude, the stir-fries are perked with generous amounts of basil and garlic, and the curries have heat and perfume.

Bells Corners

A TASTE OF JAPAN

3710 Richmond Rd., 613-721-7675 tasteofjapan.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Japanese. In the suburban sprawl, Japanese food that is a cut above. Miso-marinated mackerel, scallops flamed in wine, beef katsu, along with all the raw snacks.

CYRANOS

39 Robertson Rd., 613-721-0510 \$

Cuisine: Mediterranean. A long-running Bells Corners restaurant. Strengths are in homemade breads, pastas and pizzas, fresh seafood and luscious desserts.

LAPOINTE SEAFOOD GRILL

194 Robertson Rd., 613-596-9655 lapointefish.ca \$\$

Cuisine: Seafood. One of a half dozen Lapointes, these are fish cafés attached to fish markets, each with similar menus. Beer-battered fish and chips, grilled swordfish with a lime caper sauce, fresh mussels.

SUKHOTHAI

134 Robertson Rd., Unit 10, 613-829-1010

sukhothairestaurant.ca \$\$
Cuisine: Thai. Service is bright in this dated, dimly lit restaurant set back in a strip mall. Dishes are predictable. Highlights: beef with basil and chili and green curry of chicken.

WEST END STATION BISTRO

3659 Richmond Rd., 613-721-9639 westendstation.ca \$\$\$\$

Cuisine: International. Nicely refurbished Bells Corners restaurant offers a fine dining option in a part of town in need of it. Good soup, mussels, crème brûlée.

Anne DesBrisay is the author of Capital Dining: A Guide for Dining Out in Canada's Capital. Check out her website at www.capitaldining.ca.