



CUISINE

October 13, 2004

The nature of the “best”

A tough job, but someone has to eat it

Terry Kirts

"Best Of" issues provide a once-a-year opportunity for restaurant critics to throw caution to the wind or to wax philosophic about the nature of the job. To be a critic on a weekly basis, to pass judgment on one restaurant's cold waffles or another's foie gras, requires more than a little audacity. To declare one restaurant the “best,” even in some small category like pizza or Chinese, is a hazardous enterprise, one that cannot avoid excluding some of the most innovative and lively local eateries.

Best New Culinary District: 52nd & College



In my first year reviewing restaurants for NUVO, I have enjoyed some truly transcendent meals, unearthed some surprising gastronomic gems and suffered through some ho-hum, lackluster suppers at joints that just weren't trying hard enough. But mostly I have eaten well, both at some of Indy's most interesting international institutions and places serving up traditional American burgers and steaks. The experience has been humbling, to say the least, but has proven to me that our small city is fairly limitless in the kinds and qualities of food it can put before hungry diners. Here, then, are a few “bests,”

gleaned from my year of observing a truly vibrant culinary metropolis.

Best New Culinary District: 52nd & College

In just over a few months, a row of darkened storefronts quickly came alive, turning a somewhat sedate block into a thriving borough of eateries. Led by Rob 'n' Jay's Chippy, fish and chips mecca and ground zero for soccer fans, the block includes Oasis, serving Greek and Middle Eastern specialties, and **Taste Café and Marketplace**, filling the gourmet gap left by Atlas with epicurean products and a brunch menu that rivals any in town. Their scones alone would convince any skeptics. All that next door to Indy's beloved Red Key, where you can still get a beer and a braunschweiger sandwich for a song. Just don't rock back on your chair. If anyone wondered if Indy could support another neighborhood, just check out the bustling sidewalks at lunchtime.