Taste

Seattle Art Museum 1300 First Avenue, Seattle, WA, 206-903-5291, www.tastesam.com Taste's mega-modern dining room has lots of stark stainless steel, green/gray walls, and brown laminate chairs. Its menu is tender local, organic, seasonal, artisanal and sustainable, hailing from the region's farms, fishing boats, and fancy purveyors. What a combo! Everything here, from the ceiling to the victuals, looks as if someone took great care in choosing and making it.

That pays off in happy diners. Museum-goers, local lunchers, and hungry business folk sit and read, laugh and talk in their '60s-style office chairs while awaiting their meals.

The tastes here are myriad. The omelet with free-range chicken eggs, Washington asparagus, fontina, and goat cheese sits pretty on the plate. Olive relish and mint coyly escort a loin of lamb. Deconstructed blueberry buckle is, true to its name, unassembled and reinterpreted as a triangle of cake with a streusel crumble, accompanied by a spoon loaded with cooked blueberries and an eensy pot of lemon cream topped with a (scandalous for Seattle) thyme meringue "cigarette."

The 63-label wine list consists entirely of Northwest vintages, classified by flavor nuances such as "caramel and honey," "crisp," and "herbs and earth." The restaurant has commissioned the house wines, Masterpiece Red and Masterpiece White, from Townshend Cellar in Colbert, WA. Special "Flights and Bites" menus offer nibbles off the menu with quaffs from the cellar. Lunch and dinner Tuesday–Sunday. *—Alicia Comstock Arter*

COURTESY TASTE

Stacked heirloom tomatoes at Taste.

LANA HAMILTON PHOTO

Udon nabeyaki at Biwa.

Biwa

215 SE 9th Avenue, Portland, OR, 503-239-8830 www.biwarestaurant.com Portland has plenty of sushi spots, but the simpler, everyday foods popular in Japan—namely ramen, udon, and yakimono (grilled foods)—have been sorely underrepresented until this spring, when Gabe Rosen, formerly of Viande Meats and Sausage, opened Biwa in Southeast Portland.

Biwa's small and minimally designed space, in the same building as Simpatica Catering and Dining Hall, is now the go-to spot for steaming bowls of supple noodles in expertly crafted broths ranging from rich and porcine to a more subtle seafood stock greened with scallions and daikon.

After spending time in Japan, Rosen has the subtleties of silky housemade ramen and thick yet pliable udon down. But although his made-fresh-daily noodles are what get most people through the door, Rosen wields his expert knife and seasoning skills, sharpened by years at Viande, at the grill.

Stand-out yakimono options include deliciously tender pork belly, miso-grilled scallops, air-dried whole sand dab, and marinated hanger steak. Fire-kissed vegetarian options include juicy shiitakes and kicking, but not screaming hot, shishito peppers.

Biwa's izakaya (small plates) are full-flavored, salty treats that go well with drinks. Try the bracing kimchi studded with diced hazelnuts and walnuts, housemade pork gyoza with paper-thin skins, or crisp, golden Korean vegetable griddle cakes. Beverages range from beer and wine to several types of saké, served chilled and poured until overflowing from cup to saucer. Lunch weekdays, dinner Monday–Saturday. *—Liz Crain*