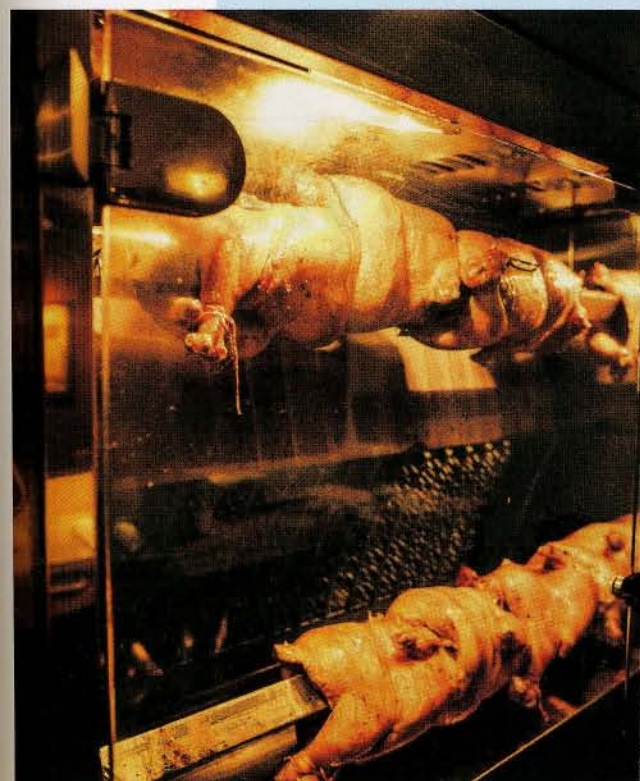


FOOD
AWARD
WINNER

The Cooperage: Primal

UPDATED COMFORT FOOD DELIVERS DEEP SATISFACTION.

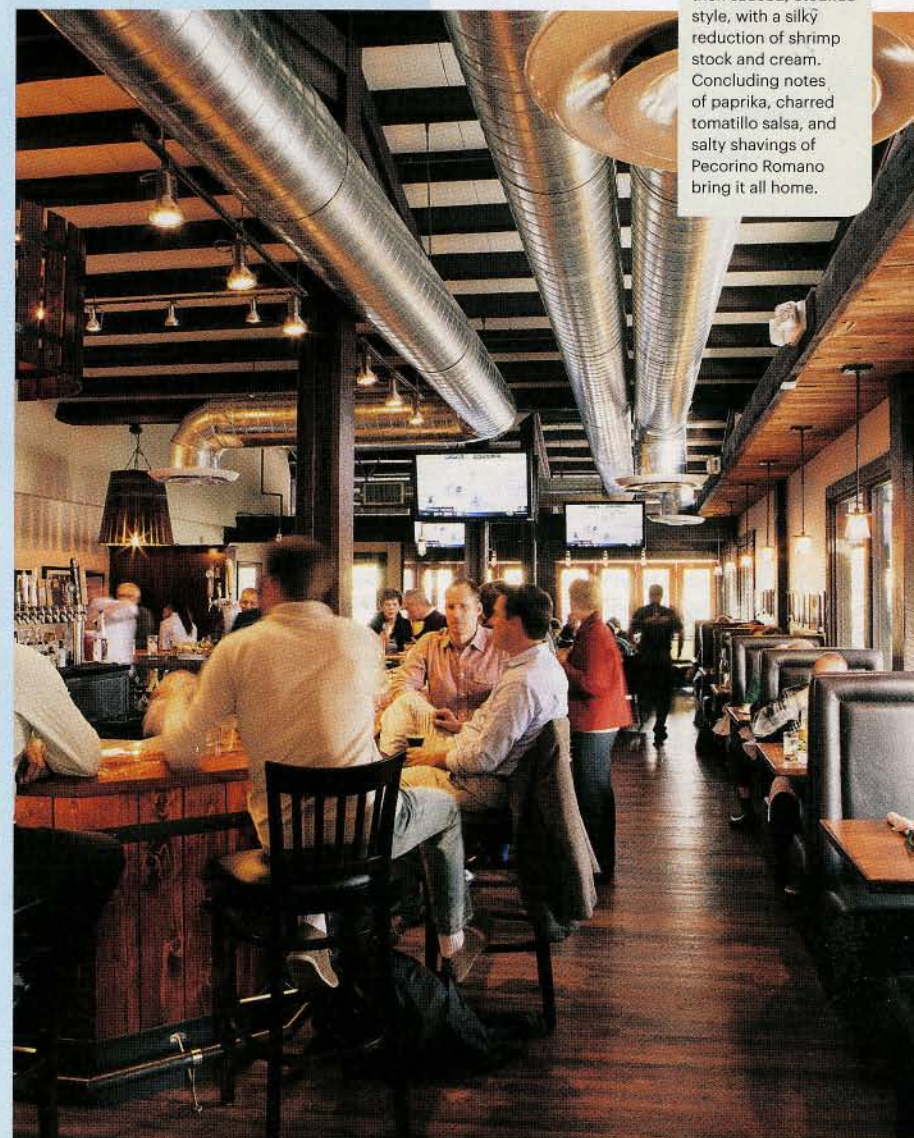




TOP PLATE

Shrimp and Grits

The smoky undertones of chef Erik Hopfinger's rich shrimp and stone-ground grits deliver deep—almost primal—satisfaction. The wild jumbo shrimp are seared on the grill, finished in the pan with Cajun aromatics, and plunged into Southern grits bound with a trio of American cheddars, including a smoky white. The dish is then sauced, étouffée style, with a silky reduction of shrimp stock and cream. Concluding notes of paprika, charred tomatillo salsa, and salty shavings of Pecorino Romano bring it all home.



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pub boardroom (an ode to Petar's, the restaurant that occupied this space for decades).

The Cooperage's onstage rotisserie—an ancient/avant-garde way of cooking—captures the elemental approach to food that's being defined by the Bay Area's best new restaurants. Hopfinger's menu celebrates American classics with style—shrimp Louis, short rib pot roast, pineapple upside-down cake, and the county's best take on brussels sprouts: a warm bacon and poached-egg salad.

Like Chow in La Fiesta Square across the street, The Cooperage has the disarming air of a community gathering place but with an urban edge that keeps it sharp. 32 Lafayette Cir., Lafayette, (925) 298-5915, thecooperage.lafayette.com.

If there's any one local restaurant with major-league cred, it's The Cooperage American Grille.

Executive chef and partner Erik Hopfinger has launched 15 restaurants from San Francisco to New York City, punctuated by an appearance on *Top Chef*. Owner Andrew McCormick's dad developed scores of McCormick and Schmick's seafood restaurants in California and more than 20 other states. And general manager Michael Iglesias has earned his chops at top-tier Bay Area restaurants—most recently at Michael Chiarello's Coqueta in San Francisco.

Heavy hitters aside, The Cooperage is flat out gorgeous. Architect Jim Maxwell's concept is rustic yet upscale-convivial, with five distinct dining areas, including a split patio and retro-

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