

CHECK OUT
OUR RESTAURANT
LISTINGS
ON PAGE ↓

165

**SINGLED
OUT**

**CHRIS
NUGENT**

Quick. Name the only chef east of Michigan Avenue who rates more than three stars and isn't named Tramonto. We'll give you a clue: He's at Les Nomades (222 E. Ontario St.; 312-649-9010). Still don't know? It's Chris Nugent, 35, who has been quietly cooking up a French storm for nearly five years at the hallowed Streeterville spot and doesn't care if you don't know his name. He's more interested in pleasing his dedicated clientele. "We have regular customers that come twice or even three times a week, and we make a different five-course menu for them every time," says Nugent, a native of upstate New York. "That's our secret." As for Nugent, he can't remain a secret much longer. —JEFF RUBY



DISH
TIPS, NEWS,
UPDATES
— AND —
OPINIONS

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POUR When you hear the words "Waipara" and "Otago," do thoughts of vibrant pinots noirs pop into your head? They should. New Zealand is becoming known for sophisticated pinots at snatch-them-up prices. A good place to start: the widely available 2007 Brancott South Island (\$14), a blend from the key pinot vineyard areas of South Island—Marlborough, Waipara, and central Otago. Delicate with velvety soft cherry and red berry flavors, it redefines Kiwi polish. —DENNIS RAY WHEATON

**THE
HOT
LIST**

BY PENNY POLLACK
& JEFF RUBY

**10
PLACES**

EVERYONE'S
TALKING ABOUT
AND DINING
AT IN JUNE

IN ORDER OF HEAT

SUNDA The devil is in the details at this hot Asian lair—and in the already-famous "Devil's Basket" of soft-shell crabs. 110 W. Illinois St.; 312-644-0500

BRANCH 27 Used to be a library, but no one at this raucous West Town pub-grub scene knows how to whisper. 1371 W. Chicago Ave.; 312-850-2700

TAXIM Authentic Greek food has brought Wicker Park to its knees—without a smidge of flaming cheese. 1558 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 773-252-1558

FRED'S AT BARNEYS Barney must love Fred: The wait for lunch is so long, there's nothing to do but shop. 15 E. Oak St.; 312-596-1111

ABIGAIL'S With a hip bistro to call its own, Highland Park just fired the shot heard round the North Shore. 493 Roger Williams, Highland Park; 847-849-1009

TAPAS VALENCIA Like martinis and Converse All-Stars, tapas never seem to go out of style. 1530 S. State St.; 312-842-4444

TOCCO An ultramodern Neapolitan spot like this lives or dies by its pizza. Tocco lives. And it lives well. 1266 N. Milwaukee Ave.; 773-687-8895

CAFÉ BELLA An Ambria alum tries his hand at casual modern fare and the world flocks to Logan Square. 3311 W. Fullerton Ave.; 773-292-5040

THE PUBLICAN Already the darling of carnivores, hipsters, and the James Beard Foundation. What worlds are left to conquer? 837 W. Fulton Market; 312-733-9555

THE GROCERY BISTRO The ungodly noise at this West Loop madhouse can't mute the flavors of GB's smart American dishes. 804 W. Washington Blvd.; 312-850-9291