

SF

WEEKLY

BEST OF SAN FRANCISCO 2001 SAN FRANCISCO: THE MOVIE

Night Crawler
Silke Tudor tries
to crossover to
the other side
with Sci-Fi
Channel psychic
John Edward

Week in
Boxer, Feinstein,
Pelosi ask Navy
for answers to
nuclear questions
our 'Fallout'
series raised

Stage
Karen McKeivitt
on *Cloud Nine*: a
hilarious, gender-
bending look at
colonial and sexual
oppression

May 29 - 29, 2001

FREE

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Best Sandwich
Peter's Favorite Breakfast Sandwich
Stix Restaurant,
1200 Sixth St. (at Mission Bay),
255-7849

Next to Mission Bay Creek and the golf driving range where San Francisco cops go to meet their snitches, Stix offers one of the most lunch-friendly atmospheres to be found South of Market. The glass walls allow diners to look out on the golfers and green lawns, and Nita, the cashier, always has a friendly word. And the delicious sandwiches, pasta, salads, pizza, and daily specials are worth going a bit out of your way to find this hidden oasis. Even better, Stix serves breakfast. And the best item on the morning menu is Peter's Favorite Breakfast Sandwich (OK, we're duty-bound to mention that it's named in honor of Peter Byrne, *SF Weekly* staff writer and quasi-vegan). It's made from egg whites scrambled with spinach and mushrooms and served inside a tasty, toasted English muffin. It's a very healthy way to start the day. Stix also has the best breakfast oatmeal in town: piping hot and brimming with bananas, walnuts, brown sugar, and raisins.

Best Dog-Friendly Cafe

Atlas Cafe
3049 20th St. (at Alabama), 648-1047
This is one of those finds that is probably best kept secret, but here goes: The Atlas Cafe has an attached patio with an outdoor heater, sheltered by a clear plastic tent. Under the tent are tables at which people sit with, yes, their dogs! Laid-back workers serve up great, cheap food, and there is jazz on weekend nights. Best of all, you can hang out under the tent for hours, drinking hot ginger lemonade and eating smoked trout while sneaking morsels to your dog, and it's all perfectly legal. The downside is that smokers and cellphone blabbermouths sometimes foul the tented air. A well-timed snarl from a sharp-fanged dog, though, is generally enough to make them take their anti-social behavior elsewhere.

Best Tofu

Pyung Chang Tofu House
4701 Telegraph (at 47th Street),
Oakland, (510) 658-9040

If a mild, white bean product is not the first thing that pops into your head when thinking, "What am I in the mood for tonight?" the Tofu House will change that. This Korean-operated restaurant in Oakland has taken tofu to new heights with its specialty, silky tofu soups called "soon." The menu offers nine varieties of soon, which consist of wonderfully spicy meat, seafood, or vegetable soup with a layer of delicious, melt-in-your-mouth tofu on top. Recommendations

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include the beef dumpling soon, or for more adventurous eaters who don't mind the occasional jiggling, unidentifiable ingredient, the mixed seafood. The soup arrives still bubbling vigorously. Each order also comes with at least five appetizers, known as panchan, which might include marinated bean sprouts, spicy pickled bok choy and onions, or seasoned nuts. Rice is served in a sizzling hot stoneware bowl, allowing the rice on the sides of the bowl to become crispy, perfect for peeling and nibbling or dipping into the soup. Including tea, the cost is less than \$10, making this one of the most affordable, spicily delicious low-fat meals in the Bay Area.

Best Irish Coffee

The Albatross
1822 San Pablo (at Hearst), Berkeley,
(510) 843-2473

Chuckling some well whiskey and Nescafé into a glass and spraying Reddi Wip on top does not make an Irish coffee. A good one requires first-rate coffee, high-quality Irish whiskey (such as Jameson's), and fresh cream. While many bars or pubs get one or two of these essentials right, few deliver on all three. The Albatross in Berkeley is one of the few British Isles-styled pubs that make a top-notch Irish coffee by using the right ingredients, mixing them in the right proportions, and including just the right amount of sweetener for a hot, creamy drink. While you're sipping your Irish coffee, you can soak up the ambience of this great pub, which boasts six dart lanes, wooden tables (including several chessboard tabletops), intimate lighting, a fireplace, a popcorn maker, and an assortment of games that are kept behind the bar. The combination of the superb Irish coffee and the pub's comfortable atmosphere makes it well worth a spin across the bay.

Best Place to Sip Wine Before Dinner

Liberty Cafe
410 Cortland (at Bennington),
695-8777

In a city that has thousands of excellent restaurants, one might wonder why anyone would choose to visit the Liberty Cafe, a restaurant that practically ensures a wait on weekend nights because it is limited to 12 tables and doesn't take reservations. The secret behind Liberty Cafe's popularity may lie down a narrow breezeway that leads to the rear of the restaurant. There you will find a little guest house cheerfully painted white, a cottage that serves as a bakery during the day but on weekend evenings is transformed into a wine bar. Waiting for a table has never been so pleasant, with a selection of fine wines and delicious appetizers that can be

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sampled while you either linger unhurriedly in front of one of the cottage windows or retire to the patio. Whatever your pleasure, you may be surprised to find yourself strangely disappointed when your name is called to dine.

Best Place to Eat Fruit and Cheese on a Sunny Afternoon

Cafe Bastille
22 Belden (near Bush), 986-5673,
www.cafebastille.com

Cafe Bastille is in downtown San Francisco on Belden Place, a surprisingly placid, restaurant-lined alley artfully hidden amid some of the tallest buildings in the city. While the interior décor of Cafe Bastille is intended to imitate a Parisian Metro station, it's the fresh-air seating that makes for the most unique dining experience, which is clearly meant to hearken to the outdoor bistros of Paris. The alleyside location of the cafe allows for outdoor seating that is largely protected from the oft-bitter downtown winds. It's a perfect spot for a romantic afternoon rendezvous. The ambience is accentuated by the largely French waitstaff charmingly dressed in Francophilic black-and-white striped shirts. On a sunny Sunday afternoon, few places in the city offer such a pleasant environment for passing the time, sipping an aperitif, and enjoying a delicious plate of fruit and cheese. *Quelle surprise!*

Best Tom Yum

Yamo Thai Kitchen
3406 18th St. (at Mission), 553-8911

If you live in the Mission, you may have walked past Yamo Thai Kitchen dozens of times without even noticing the place is there. This tiny, family-run spot is about as bare bones as it gets — one counter, nine stools, a whole lot of to-go boxes, and a tom yum (Thai-style hot and sour) soup so potent it can shatter souls with one sip. Owner Nanthana Sorathorn isn't the least bit shy when it comes to using lemongrass and chili paste, and the result is a soup so ferocious it can annihilate colds in a super-piquant flash. It's not a subtle soup, but then, only a few things in this world (say, BASE jumping) will take you closer to the cutting edge of life.

Best Tiramisu

Ristorante Ideale
1309 Grant (at Vallejo), 391-4129

Step into Maurizio Bruschi's Ristorante Ideale and life will seem a little bit better. The décor is warm and soothing, the bread is fresh-baked, and the food — from a flawless saltimbocca to the almost criminally flavorful spaghetti baked in cartoccio — just plain kicks ass. Then comes the crescendo — tiramisu — which trans-

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lates as "carry me up" and will indeed take you higher via a cloud-like blend of bitter chocolate, espresso, mascarpone, and ladyfingers. Plenty of places

serve it, but Maurizio's version is just a bit more seductive than any we've tried. It can stun you to your knees, or send you through the roof, but either way, you will be moved, which is all anyone can ask of dessert.

Best Local Cookbook

Savoring San Francisco

If you've ever wondered how Betelnut got the fire into its emerald fire noodles (no longer on the menu, unfortunately, and sorely missed), or can't stop thinking about the salmon paillards you had at Globe, Aqua's miso-marinated sea bass, or Fringale's Roquefort ravioli, have we got a cookbook for you. Local authors Carolyn Miller and Sharon Smith have put together a splendid collection of recipes from some of the city's finer restaurants, revealing the secrets behind Osaka Grill's Chilean sea bass with cilantro-ginger-soy sauce, Zarzuela's gazpacho, House of Nanking's Nanking chicken, and many, many others. Of course, this is restaurant food, and not all of us are willing to stun and gut live crabs for our cioppino. But the beauty of this cookbook is that, if such is the case, you can pop down to Rose Pistola and have a professional do it for you.

Best Martini

Maxfield's
Palace Hotel, Market & New Montgomery, 512-1111

It's said that the martini was invented 140 years ago by Professor Jerry Thomas, bartender at the Occidental Hotel on Montgomery Street. *The Savoy Cocktail Book* called Thomas "the greatest bartender of the past," although contemporary accounts indicate that his martini was made up of half gin and half sweet vermouth, an appalling thing to contemplate. The real deal — the elusive, almost vaporous transcendence we have evolved enough to appreciate — is shaken and proffered with admirable artistry at Maxfield's, a couple of blocks south of the cocktail's presumed birthplace. It's a chillingly cold elixir, this martini, barely kissed with vermouth, juniper edge softened through a rhythmic intermarriage with ice. (Yes, juniper. A martini is made with gin, not vodka or tequila or Bosco, because only the therapeutic properties of this aromatic base can cushion the soul and lighten the heart with such liquid equanimity.) Maxfield's itself is a time-honored San Francisco classic (45 years ago *Esquire* named it one of the seven greatest bars in the world) renowned for the original Maxfield Parrish mural behind the bar and the surrounding opulence of the Palace Hotel. ☉



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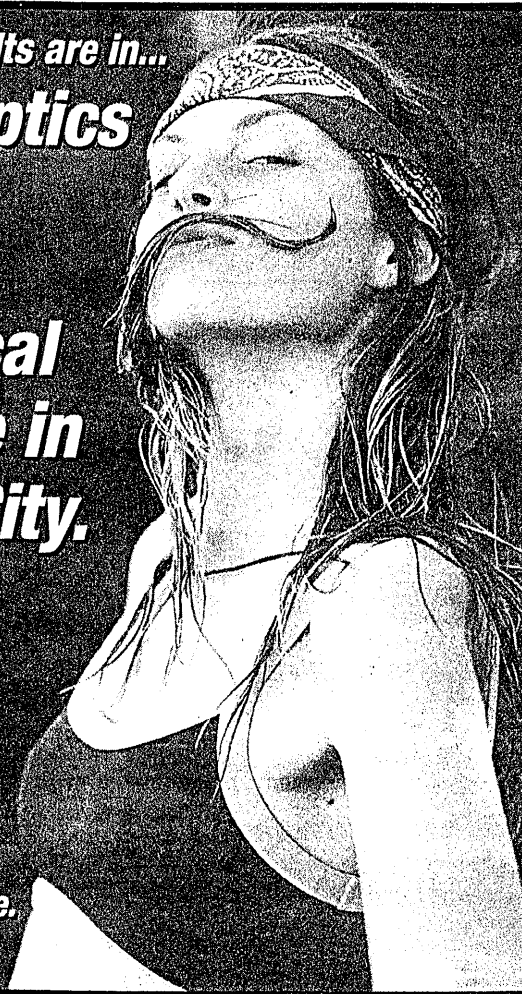


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N O W S H O W I N G

SHOPPING AND SERVICES

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more than two visits — they generally have your car ready by the time you reach the counter. Another thing: Don't let the Rent-a-Wreck name throw you. Though the Pendergasts' rates are generally the cheapest in town, the cars are clean, moderately used Fords, impeccably maintained.

tion to the society newsletter, *Mycena News*. Meetings are held every third Tuesday from September through May at the Randall Museum; for more information visit www.mssf.org.

Best Place to Spice Up Your Kitchen
Kamei Household Wares
606 Clement (at Seventh Avenue), 666-3688
Stocked to the eaves, Kamei Household Wares is the store to go to when you're looking to add color, grace, and a little bit of kitsch to your kitchen. The shop's narrow aisles are packed with gorgeous but inexpensive Japanese ceramic rice and soup bowls decorated with exquisite cherry blossom patterns, simple stripes, or solid colors. Kamei also carries rice makers of all makes and models, clay pots, gigantic woks, steamers, and traditional Japanese tea sets. But the best part about wandering through the cramped store is discovering the kitchen gadgets you didn't even know you needed: crocodile-shaped hot water bottles, turtle-shaped chopstick holders, tuna can strainers, pink pig ceramic spoon caddies, and other treasures.

Best Place to Repair Your Exhaust System
Ron's Berkeley Muffler
6432 Shattuck (at 65th Street), Oakland, (510) 655-6833
There's nothing more alarming than the sound of your muffler clanking to the street behind you while you're driving down the road. Even if your muffler's or exhaust system's issues are a little less dire, a visit to family-owned Ron's Berkeley Muffler (now in Oakland) will reassure you that a few honest mechanics really do still exist. While you watch, the owner happily looks up the needed items in a fat book full of part numbers and prices, assuring a reliable estimate. The mechanic will put your car up on the platform so you can see the problem for yourself. If you're desperate, Ron's will often fix your car by the next day. They'll even mail you a postcard shortly after your repair job, saying they enjoyed "talking with you the other day." With such great, personalized service, good work, and honest prices, it's a shame they don't work on engines too.

Best Way to Get a Free Tree
Friends of the Urban Forest
Presidio of San Francisco, Building 1007, PO Box 29456, San Francisco, CA 94129-0456, 561-6890, www.fuf.net
Despite the profound impact this non-profit organization has had on the appearance of our fair city, few people know of the services it provides. Friends of the Urban Forest, founded in 1981, is "committed to the belief that trees are a critical element of a livable urban environment." The group's mission is simply to plant trees throughout San Francisco. Working with other community groups and city government, FUF has planted over 33,000 street trees here, accounting for almost a third of all of S.F.'s street trees. Friends of the Urban Forest will plant trees along the street (though not in back yards) in any neighborhood where at least 35 trees are requested, which encourages neighbors to plan together. Trees are free to the homeowners who make the request, with a nominal \$25 fee charged for a maintenance visit 12 to 18 months after planting. Friends of the Urban Forest also holds free tree tours and educational seminars. Who ever said nothing is free? ●

Best Mushroom Source
Mycological Society of San Francisco
759-0495
When that grilled portobello appetizer no longer satisfies your 'shroomistic cravings, call in the experts at the MSSF. Founded in 1950, it's the largest amateur mycological association in North America. Members go on field trips in search of feral fungi, prepare monthly meals heavy on the wild mushrooms, attend study groups and cultivation classes, and in general indulge their passion for the marvelous mushroom at every opportunity. Fungus Fairs have been held once or twice a year since 1971, and the society's extensive library includes Louise and William Freedman's *Wild About Mushrooms: The Cookbook of the Mycological Society of San Francisco*, featuring recipes for chanterelle puffs, jellied blewit soup, pickled matsutakes, and morel bisque. Membership is \$25 (\$20 for students and seniors) and includes a subscrip-



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Best African Reggae Club

Oasis
135 12th St. (between Oak and Madison), Oakland, (510) 763-0404
Catering to a 30s-and-over crowd, this Oakland bar/dance club is not for you die-hard club kids. But if you enjoy a Caribbean beat and dance hall music to wind and grind your booty to, this is the place. Aside from a smoking DJ, Oasis offers live music and a huge patio for dancing under the stars. It's a hot, Afro-Caribbean jam that makes everyone welcome: You're sure to dance away your troubles in this extremely diverse crowd of music lovers. So go getcha groove on, and don't hurt nobody!

Best Video Store for the Camp/Cult Connoisseur

Video Control
2096 Market (near Church), 621-1426
If you're that one person in the office who understands why Ms. Divine wants "cha-cha pumps" or who looks around for Kathleen Turner in panic every time you see someone wearing white shoes after Labor Day, then, boy, is Video Control for you. If you've spent hours traipsing the city in search of those hard-to-find classics like *FrankenHookers*, *Orgy of the Dead*, or *The Valley of the Dolls*, look no further: Video Control has them. The store may seem small, but besides its unmatched collection of cult classics, it also carries the latest mainstream releases and (for those who have to wait for the kiddies to fall asleep) a kick-ass children's selection. OK, VC did have one problem — on a recent visit, it didn't have a single copy of *The Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. However, it did have the sequel, if that counts.

Best Big Easy Contact

Zydeco/Cajun Dance
285-6285, <http://ddesimone.home.mindspring.com>
Listen, *cher*, do you love the Big Easy style? Does the sound of Cajun music make you want to kick up your heels? Promoter Dana DeSimone offers phone and online listings of the Bay Area's major zydeco and Cajun live music, dances, dance lessons, radio programs, online broadcasts, and related happenings. Indeed, he also books the bands at Alameda's Eagle Hall, where 150 to 200 people typically gather to dance every Friday night away. Lessons start at 8 p.m. and are included in the cover charge, which runs between \$10 and \$13. Music kicks off at 9 p.m. An added plus: Since the bar is upstairs, you can bring the

kids. Big Easy club and calendar listings can also be found on www.slip.net/~arubinst/bay_area_clubs.htm and www.geocities.com/sfcajun.

Best Place to Boogie With Celts

An Bodhran
668 Haight (at Pierce), 431-4724, www.anbodhran.com
In a city rife with Irish watering holes, it's exciting to find one that stands apart from the rest, like An Bodhran (pronounced Bah-ron). This bar, named after a traditional Irish drum, is unique in its energy and the diversity of its patrons, to say nothing of its weekend nights that feature pumping techno music not commonly found in Irish bars. While the décor is markedly authentic, with its smoke-stained walls, low ceiling, and subdued lighting, the clientele includes a disparate crowd comprised of not only Irish expats but equal numbers of Americans, Brits, and even the odd Scot, happily commingling under one roof. On weekends, the dynamic in the room and on the dance floor is something of a 21st-century *caeli*, a modern version of the almost chaotic, frenzied dance practiced in Ireland for millennia. If a quiet evening out is more to your liking, stop by during the week for two nights of live traditional Irish music, a quiet pint, or a shot of the elusive Irish whiskey Tullamore Dew.

Best Place to See a Movie and Drink Beer

The Parkway Theater
1834 Park (at 18th Street near Lake Merritt), Oakland, (510) 814-2400, www.picturepubpizza.com
After visiting the Parkway Theater for the first time, one wonders why nobody else is doing anything like this in the Bay Area. Well, the fact is, the Parkway is doing what the proprietors call "picture, pub, and pizza" with such excellence that it's just as well. The concept is simple: Watch a movie in comfortable chairs, eat some pizza, and drink good beer on tap (or wine by the glass), with nothing to clean up afterward! They show second-run movies that generally tend to the more palatable end of Hollywood and beyond, including Academy Award-nominated films and British comedies. Entrance and a seat at one of the comfortable couches or tables and chairs is a mere \$5, and a pitcher of one of the nine beers and ciders on tap is an affordable \$9. Beware the 21-and-over age restriction after 4 p.m. (except on Monday, which is "Baby Brigade" night, specifically intended for house-bound parents to bring along their infants).

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Best Combination Lesbian Bar, Pool Hall, and Beer Garden

The Wild Side West
424 Cortland (at Wool), 547-3099
The Wild Side West is not your run-of-the-mill lesbian bar. Proprietresses Nancy White and Pat Ramseyer have created a homey watering hole that draws clientele as eclectic as the bar's décor. The walls are adorned with paintings of nudes and a charmingly bizarre collection of knickknacks and memorabilia. A pool table bedecked in smooth, red felt lies in the center of the room, and with the low-key atmosphere in the bar, it practically guarantees a stress-free pool-shooting experience. As if all that weren't enough, behind the building lies the bar's *pièce de résistance*, an exquisitely unusual beer garden with one of the greatest collections of found objects ever assembled. The combination of fragrant citrus and jasmine bushes, porch swings, garden furniture, statues, bird feeders, and other assorted (please don't call it) junk makes for a spot where one could sit with a whiskey and contemplate the meaning of life for hours on end. Just don't forget to refill your glass when it's empty.

Best Bicycle Bar

Zeitgeist
199 Valencia (at Duboce), 255-7505, www.sonic.net/~wwplnts/zeitgeist/
Zeitgeist has long been known as a "biker bar," attracting a variety of motorcycle enthusiasts and other leather-sporting patrons. It should be emphasized, therefore, that Zeitgeist is an equal-opportunity biker bar, welcoming operators of the non-motorized variety with equally open arms. An enormous custom-built bicycle rack with room for dozens of cycles adorns the beer garden behind the bar. That allows bicyclists to enjoy a frosty pint in the garden on a warm day within eyeshot of their precious steeds. With over 25 beers and ciders on tap, you might need to sit a spell, so it's good to know your two-wheeled friend will be right where you left it when you're ready to go.

Best Dive Bar

RJ's Sports Bar
701 Geary (at Leavenworth), 440-8827
The God knows we have our choice of local dive bars, but we have yet to find one that can hold a candle to RJ's Sports Bar. Where else can you watch your favorite sporting event, relax in the overly comfy leather sofas and chairs,

and be doted on by two of the sweetest bartenders in town? We stumbled on this place early one Sunday morning during a football game, and the alluring smell of the barbecue enticed us in for a quick drink. Four hours later we had to be rolled out of the place. Plate after plate of chicken, potato salad, and all the fixin's were delivered at no cost to complement our cocktails. The only time we had to emerge from our pleather throne was to use the immaculate restrooms.

Best New Neighborhood Bar

Charlie's
1838 Union (between Octavia and Laguna), 474-3773
Charlie's is a lot of things: It's a great place to dine. It's a great place to have a drink. It's a great place to see and be seen. It's a great place to — *ahem* — make a new friend. In short, it's the best thing to happen to Union Street in a long time. Charlie's central Union Street location brings together a healthy demographic of twenty- and thirtysomethings from the surrounding neighborhoods — those who crave a little sophistication, minus the pretense. Its hip and happening bar scene has brought South of Market cool to little ol' Cow Hollow, without the residue of beer scum on the floor. The décor is as sleek as the crowd (outdoor seating with heat lamps, zinc-topped tables and bar, ergonomic chairs, flat-screen TVs, deco-inspired light sconces), creating a warm, funky ambience. Unlike at the Blue Light or *eeek!*, the Bus Stop, a woman who patronizes Charlie's can rest assured she will not be pounced on by that 30-year-old dot-com geek reliving his Phi Delt days. Rather, she'll most likely encounter a man here who is decent enough to clearly introduce himself, and even more decent to offer a trip up to the sometimes insanely crowded bar. And it's a heterogeneous mix: The happy-hour suits linger on to mingle quite effortlessly with the late-night fashionistas. After the kitchen closes, the lights dim and house music is cranked up even louder — inspiring the most timid to let loose. Who can ignore the mighty power of pheromones? Or good wine? And let's not underestimate the impact of the many mirrors, which offer both inconspicuous glances and good chi. Try, if you can, to swing by Charlie's during the week. With the weekend comes the inevitable trickling of the bridge-

and-tunnel crowd (including more silicon than the valley), which, if you've already knocked a few back, actually makes for great entertainment value. ☺

