

is a 7-inch-tall cylinder of alternating layers of ahi tuna sashimi, avocado, Dungeness crab, and roasted yellow peppers. Plays of textures and colors among the different levels of the dish further enhance an already top-notch entrée.

## Most Creative Menu Best Chef

**Diva at the Met, Michael Noble**  
Metropolitan Hotel  
645 Howe Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
604-602-7788

It's Friday evening at Diva and the crowd is happy. A pristine white plate displays seared Alaskan scallops atop



Diva Chef Michael Noble.

mole risotto; another plate showcases an Asian braised lamb shank nestled into shiitake mushroom potato purée. A waiter deftly pours a glass of Venturi Schulze Terra Cotta wine, and a table of Prada-clad businessmen have a bite before catching their flight back to New York. At the far end of Diva's dining room, a brigade of crisp, white-uniformed chefs is a blur of activity in the open kitchen. One of these chefs is Michael Noble. Not content to sit back with the paperwork like other executive chefs, Noble is also quick to give credit for this poll's honor to his team. He is accessible and popular, often going out among the tables to chat with patrons, getting crucial feedback. He is the face that is attached to the food. On

creativity, he says, "We don't try to create a new cuisine. I think it's all been done before by someone, somewhere, somehow. But what we do is take good traditional techniques, add some local ingredients, and make a play off of one of those traditional ideas to make it jazz. I think that's good creativity." With a crack team of cooks in the kitchen and a chef who's a staunch supporter of flavor over fashion, it's easy to see why our readers voted Michael Noble favorite British Columbia chef. Some items to try: Black Thai Rice-Crusted Halibut Cheeks with bok choy, peanuts, and Panang curry; and Seared Duck Breast, Peppered Pear, and Taleggio Tart with a balsamic apple reduction.

## Best Café/Bistro Best Decor Best Live Music

**O'Doul's Restaurant & Bar**  
1300 Robson Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
800-663-5491

After a hard day shopping on Robson Street, duck into the city's newest and hottest bistro-cum-jazz bar and be dazzled by the lofty interior design and the down-to-earth menu. Forget trendy diets, soggy pastas, and prissy nouveau cuisine—you go to O'Doul's Restaurant & Bar for the excitement. Tuck into the whopping 16-ounce certified Angus rib eye steak streaked with white marbling while your gaze drifts upward to the antique, billboard-size map lapping the



O'Doul's General Manager John Nicholson.

domed ceiling. Meditate on the cool tones of the best jazz musicians in British Columbia. Or catch the next super-diva singing Puccini as she strolls past the Honduras mahogany bar while you order up a frothy beer from one of the 12 local microbrews on tap. Café life has never been so good. Standouts on the menu: Pan-fried Fanny Bay oysters with spicy lemon butter, and the veal T-bone.

## Best Bakery

**Ecco Il Pane**  
2563 West Broadway  
Vancouver, British Columbia  
604-873-6888

Thanks to Christopher Brown and Pamela Gaudreault, Vancouverites can now indulge their passion for hand-crafted, wood-baked Italian breads. An idea that sprang from a shout heard by Brown when he was in Italy, announcing the



Ecco Il Pane's "total bread experience."

arrival of the bread delivery (the name means "Here is the bread!"), Ecco il Pane has experienced unparalleled devotion among city bakery addicts. Why? Let us count the reasons: the 15-ton wood-fired oven; the delicious aromas emanating from it each day; and the use of only the finest, unbleached, untreated flour ▶