

Waterfront

American contemporary

Aura

Seaport Hotel, 1 Seaport Lane (385 4300). South Station T. Open 6.30am-2.30pm, 5.30-10.30pm daily. Main courses \$11-\$29. Credit AmEx, MC, V. Map p307 H5.

It's unusual that a young, talented chef like Ed Doyle should find himself in such an obscure location as this. Maybe Doyle has got the foresight to see beyond the Big Dig that surrounds his restaurant. Certainly he seems to thrive on the resources and built-in audience of a booming hotel backing him. Tasty, playful, strictly pure and seasonally fresh items – and death-defying desserts – make his menu worth the cab fare. If this place were in a trendier location, it would be the talk of the town. As it is, few locals seem to have even heard of it.

Seafood

The Barking Crab

88 Sleeper Street, at Northern Avenue (426 2722). South Station T. Open 11.30am-9pm daily. Main courses \$9-\$24. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V. Map p308 H5.

Find your java joy

Even though Boston is well known as a mecca for students and bohemian types, it does seem to lack a particularly strong coffee culture. This is not to say that quality, independent coffeehouses do not exist; they do. You just have to hunt around a bit to find them. Bostonians themselves usually attribute this shortage to the Starbucks siege they've endured for the past few years. There are dozens of the ubiquitous green-and-white shops, with their large, cushy chairs. On Newbury Street alone there are three, all of which serve the usual pastries, bagels and, for the most part, high quality caffeine substances that the chain is famous for. Starbucks obviously fills a need in the coffee community, but in Boston and Cambridge it's not known for being a great place to meet a friend, or to kick back and do some studying. And don't even think about lighting a cigarette in one.

For all of those purposes, there are several indie coffee options centrally located in Back Bay. One is the famous **Trident Café** (see p128), where you can relax over coffee, tea or a vegetarian meal among an eclectic and

Without being outright wacky, the Barking Crab is its own kind of fun. Especially in the summertime, when this is an outdoor lobster tent providing bench seating, beer in plastic cups, lobster in a paper basket and steamer clams in a bucket. In winter, the food moves indoors to a marine-themed room with a fireplace. This is not the city's best or most reliable seafood restaurant, but it remains a perennial favourite with both tourists and a large contingent of locals.

Allston/Brighton

Asian

Rangoli

129 Brighton Avenue, at Harvard Avenue, Allston (562 0200). Harvard Avenue T. Open 11.30am-3pm Mon-Fri; 5-10.30pm Mon-Thurs, Sat, Sun; 5-11.30pm Fri. Main courses \$10-\$11. Credit AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, V.

While most of Boston's Indian restaurants serve North Indian staples such as chicken tikka masala and tandoori dishes, Rangoli – a pleasant but unassuming storefront on busy Brighton Avenue – was the first to make a speciality of South Indian food. Others have followed, but Rangoli is still a bargain and a treat, with foot-long *dosai* (fried chickpea-flour pancakes) wrapped around potatoes and chicken.

literary crowd. Trident offers an impressive selection of hard-to-find art, literary and design magazines, as well as a full-service book store.

The **Other Side Café** (407 Newbury Street, at Massachusetts Avenue; 536 9477), on Newbury across from Tower Records is a popular hangout for artsy and musician types. There are several couches on the first floor, and table service on the ground floor. The OSC is veggie-friendly, and in addition to potent coffee, they offer an impressive selection of smoothies with add-ins like bee pollen and ginkgo biloba. At night it becomes a bar as well, so you can segue smoothly from coffee or carrot juice to beer, if you so choose.

For a more straight-up coffee experience, try **Torrefazione Italia Coffee** (see p131) on lower Newbury. Here you'll find strong Italian coffee and espresso, as well as pastries, sandwiches and an array of sodas. It's also a prime spot to sit solo, read the paper and watch people strut by on Newbury.

If people watching is your main focus, though, head over to **Café Graffiti** (see p137)

Latin

Tasca

1216 Commonwealth Avenue, at Washington Street, Brighton (730 8002). Washington Street T. Open 5-11pm Mon-Thur; 5pm-midnight Fri, Sat; 4-11pm Sun. Tapas \$1-\$5.95. Credit AmEx, Disc, MC, V.

What happens when an Irishman opens a tapas bar? You get a friendly, convivial Spanish-looking restaurant serving a slightly blander version of the salty and piquant tapas available downtown. The dishes are a dollar or two cheaper than other tapas bars, and the free valet parking is a convenience.

Brookline

American traditional

Washington Square Tavern

714 Washington Street, at Beacon Street, Brookline (232 8989). Washington Square T. Open 5.30-10pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 5.30-11pm Fri, Sat; 11.30am-2.30pm Sun. Main courses \$10-\$16. Credit MC, V.

Twinkling Christmas lights, bookshelves, groovy tunes and an avant-garde menu that fuses new American cuisine with French and Asian influences attract a flood of food adventurers to this hip and sparkling little jewel in the middle of nowhere.



Zaftigs

335 Harvard Street, at Babcock Street, Brookline (975 0075). Coolidge Corner T. Open 8am-10pm daily. Main courses \$9.95-\$12.95. Credit AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, V.

Maybe the most popular breakfast spot in Brookline, if not the whole Boston area, Zaftigs updates the Jewish deli for a 1990s, slightly more calorie-conscious crowd. There's a huge menu and a 45-minute wait for a table on Saturday or Sunday mornings. Book if you can (in advance at weekends).

Jamaica Plain

American contemporary

Perdix

597 Centre Street, at Pond Street, Jamaica Plain (524 5995). Green Street T. Open 5.30-10pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 5.30-10.30pm Fri, Sat. Main courses \$14-\$20. Credit AmEx, MC, V.

It's not a bistro, brasserie or a bodega; it's just a cool little place (10 tables) with great food. The lovechild of a local husband and wife team, Perdix is the epitome of a neighbourhood restaurant. The service is personal and comfortable. The wine list – all available by the bottle or the glass – hosts a number of surprises. And the accessible menu ranges on any

in the North End. This is the traditional meeting spot for animated North End natives. The atmosphere here harkens back to an earlier age. It's decorated with mementoes from Italy, and smokers can enjoy a cigarette, a cappuccino and an Italian liquor all at the same time. As a bonus, it's open till 1am.

Over in Cambridge and Somerville, there's less of an urban feel to the coffee shops, but what they lack in flash, they make up for in true coffee clout. The **1369 Coffee House** (see p153), is a lovely spot to sit and sip high-grade caffeine while trying home-made pastries, bagels and a small selection of sandwiches. Down the street on Prospect Avenue, **Carberry's Bakery and Coffeehouse** (see p154) is a popular meeting spot for Central Square residents. Local writers and students while away the hours gazing out Carberry's floor-to-ceiling windows, or munching on one of its Scandinavian pastries. They also have hearty home-made soups in the wintertime, and they offer gourmet, made-to-order sandwiches year-round.