

# A Roundup of the Year's Culinary Standouts

Dinner out in New Jersey has never been so interesting: You can get river eel, branzino and sashimi, lotus stem, borscht and porcini risotto — and you can get a rare steak, too.

To serve you in your pursuit of a memorable meal, exotic or otherwise, we have compiled summaries of published restaurant reviews that our critics, Karla Cook and David Corcoran, rated excellent, very good and good in 2004.

To read the complete reviews of these featured restaurants — and all others included in the database — go to [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and in the search field, type relevant terms or the reviewer's name in quotes.

If you have questions, comments or recommendations, send an e-mail message to Ms. Cook or Mr. Corcoran at [njdine@nytimes.com](mailto:njdine@nytimes.com).

*Compiled by Karla Cook*

## EXCELLENT

**CUCHARAMAMA** 233 Clinton Street, Hoboken; (201) 420-1700. Maricel Presilla's brilliant South American restaurant is powered by undeservedly obscure ingredients. A gifted and instinctive chef, Ms. Presilla is relentless in her pursuit of flavor — whether it is quiquiña, an herb, Peruvian peppers, aged cornmeal, or the smoke from a wood-fired oven that dominates the dining room. A necessary destination for anyone who cares about food. Dishes to order include potatoes in cream sauce, calamari, shrimp kebab, tamales, fish of the day, short ribs, roasted leg of pork, shrimp stew in pepper sauce and all the desserts. Beautifully balanced wine list with unusual choices from South America and Spain. Main dishes, \$12 to



Chris Maynard for The New York Times

Cucharamama, a South American restaurant in Hoboken, is powered by undeservedly obscure ingredients like aged cornmeal, Peruvian peppers and an herb called quiquiña.