

# Gourmet

May 2009

By Charles Kelsey

## Restaurants Now: Bina Osteria, Anvil Bar & Refuge, Tavares, Sora Lella



***This week's roundup includes one fine osteria in Boston and classic cocktails in Houston, plus an ambitious young chef reanimates a legendary Lisbon restaurant, and a Roman holiday comes to Manhattan.***

Photograph of Bina Osteria (left) by Heath Robbins Photography and of Anvil Bar & Refuge (right) by Scott Frances

Boston: Bina Osteria

The smarty-pants Italophile would say [Bina's](#) sophisticated food and flash make it a *ristorante*, not an *osteria* (literally, a bar or tavern), and *il bastardo* would be right. Never mind the language, though: This downtown newcomer serves some of Boston's most

exceptional food. Veteran restaurateurs, siblings Babak Bina and Azita Bina-Seibel, infuse Bina's grand, mostly white, angular dining room with an osteria's casual hospitality, but it's the food of chef Brian Konefal (an [Eleven Madison Park](#) and [L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon NYC](#) alum) that warms up the elegantly modern setting. Pastas—like the gnocchi (squid, clams, chorizo chips, and Meyer lemon confit) and an interpretation of [spaghetti carbonara](#) (served with a slow-cooked egg, housemade pancetta, pecorino foam, and chitarra-cut fresh pasta)—are refined and skillfully composed. And, while quail roasted on a bed of smoldering hay and herbs might sound gimmicky, it is, in fact, rustic and damn good.

***Bina Osteria*** 581 Washington St., Boston, MA (617-956-0888; [binaboston.com](http://binaboston.com))



## **Boston Players April 20, 2009**



### **Azita Bina-Seibel and Babak Bina, co-owners of BiNA Osteria/Alimentari, Bin 26 Enoteca, and Lala Rokh On Beacon Hill**

Gleaming, slick, spare, and fabulous, the new BiNA Osteria/Alimentari that adorns its corner in the Ladder District is a major force in the transformation of two blocks of semi-wasteland into a foodie's destination. This brother and sister duo could have packed it in, sitting pretty with two successful spots on Charles Street, Bin 26 Enoteca and Lala Rokh. But the idea of creating the perfect Milan-sleek restaurant and food shop, with artisanal cheeses, house-made charcuterie, gemlike pastries, and boutique wines, was catnip for

these cool cats. The new sister restaurant is an unapologetic outpost of edgy Adria-inspired fine dining. The duet of ventures may seem risky in this penny-pinching era, but in this case, the extra pennies spent were well worth the flawless results: at BiNA, even the fresh fruit has been stroked to a high polish. Like Fauchon in Paris or Peck in Milan, Boston now has its own cool downtown groceria for locals to brag about.



## **BiNA osteria puts on the Ritz**

**By Mat Schaffer**  
**March 6, 2009**

### **BiNA osteria: A-**

BiNA osteria, a luxury Italian restaurant, opened in November - just as the economy tanked.

Babak Bina and Azita Bina-Seibel, the brother-and-sister team behind Lala Rokh and Bin 26 Enoteca, had been planning an upscale Italian eatery for several years. The sort of urbane dining scene you'd find in Manhattan or Milan. With a wine shop-cum-gourmet market, BiNA alimentari, next door.

The duo scored a prime location across from the Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common. They hired hip designers Office dA (Mantra, Bin 26, BanQ) to do interiors. And they tapped a talented young chef who worked in New York at Eleven Madison Park and L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon to man the stove.

Undoubtedly their business plan did not include a global monetary meltdown, but the Binas remain defiantly optimistic. At BiNA osteria, hard times are barred at the door.

Entrees are equally delectable.

There's crunchy-skinned, melt-in-your-mouth suckling pig confit (\$33) with saffron-scented applesauce and glazed turnips. And bistecca al Solare (\$34) - sirloin steak and braised beef cheeks served with braised radicchio, Anson Mills polenta and a reduction of the Binas' own 2006 Bin 26 Enoteca "Solare" Rosso di Umbria, a mostly sangiovese and merlot blend....

...Chicken Marsala (\$29) is unlike any you've ever eaten - moist, mushroom duxelles-stuffed chicken atop Marsala-seasoned cipollini onion puree with a garnish of crisp

chicken skin. Lobster (\$31) is wrapped in strips of cured pork fat, seared tender and plated with lentil puree, carrots and fried sage leaves. It's amazing.

Beverage director Andy Cartin oversees the extensive wine list. A beety 2006 Panzanello Chianti Classico (\$45) is great with the pig and beef. A banana-intense '07 Vesevo Sannio Falanghina (\$34) is fab with the chicken and lobster.

The wait staff is white-glove attentive minus the gloves. The industrial-chic decor - giant windows, dropped geometric ceiling, terrazzo bar and museum-quality artwork - is ultracool.

...At BiNA osteria, sophisticated food, pampering service and fashionable ambiance are designed to help you forget worldly woes.

*581 Washington St. (Downtown Crossing). 617-956-0888; binaboston.com*

## **A European flair**



(BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF)

By [Luke O'Neil](#)

Globe Correspondent / April 3, 2009

Much like the construction of a memorable cocktail, the interior design of a bar is only as good as the raw materials you have to work with. At Bina Osteria, the newish Italian restaurant in Downtown Crossing, they've done their best in that regard, transforming a peculiarly shaped space into a high concept design that almost resembles an art gallery with its stark white walls and free flowing geometry. The long, thin room is broken up awkwardly by thick support columns, but they've used that would-be hindrance to good effect, bracketing smaller spaces within the whole. We set up shop in relatively secluded seats at the u-shaped terrazzo bar.

When it comes to the cocktails, the Bina folks hew to a unique European aesthetic.

"We get a lot of questions on the cocktail list because it's not the type of stuff people are used to," said bartender Heather Brulte. "But we get people to try new things."

One thing we'd never tried was Becherovka, a Czech herbal bitters with strong cinnamon and anise flavors. It formed the base of the Kost (Becherovka, lemon, Tabasco, simple syrup, \$10; below right). The cinnamon and Tabasco cut with citrus is an eye opening flavor combination, and it hits you with its varied spice at both its start and finish.

The beer list veers outside the norm as well, with on-tap offerings like the Belgian Delirium Tremens (\$10) and Kasteel Donker (\$11).

More familiar ingredients can be found in the Caprese, (pepper-infused vodka, tomato water, balsamic, basil, \$10, but they're put to creative use. It's a peppery salad in a glass that comes with a learning curve. "I can't finish that drink," said our drinking companion, "but I respect it."

Although its base spirit is rye, the Paddy Wagon (Rittenhouse rye, Mandarine Napoleon, clove, lemon, simple syrup, \$10) is a lot more user friendly. The Mandarine comes in where most bars would use a liqueur like triple sec, and it provides a more natural orange flavor. "It makes our cosmos better, too," said Brulte.

Amaro is another of their favored bases, as in Thé Freddo (Nonino Amaro, Aperol, ginger, \$10). An homage to the infamous late night beverage in nearby Chinatown, it means "cold tea." This one's almond heavy and bittersweet. Like most of the others on the list, it's best appreciated slowly.

Don't miss the Grappa Fizz (Acqua di Cedro, egg white, lemon, \$11). Expertly shaken to a beautiful foam, it's like a lemon ice with a touch of vanilla and nut. "This can be made so wrong," said the bartender. Not this time.

**Bina Osteria**, 581 Washington St., Boston. 617-956-0888. [www.binaboston.com](http://www.binaboston.com)■

## **BOSTON MAGAZINE, MARCH 2009**

### **MENUOLOGY: THANK YOU FOR SMOKING**

Tea leaves, rice, hay...chefs will set almost anything on fire in the name of flavor.

BY AMY TRAVERSO



A DISTINCT BURNING SENSATION: Hot quail at Bina Osteria. Photo by Betsy Halsey.

As the city health commission angles to root out smoking in every arena of our lives, the dining industry seems to be headed in precisely the opposite direction. Just about everywhere you look, local chefs are tinkering with the flavorizing power of smoke, and virtually any fuel is fair game... **Bina Osteria roasts a whole quail in a bed of hay for a burst of grassiness (and what may very well be, overall, the best dish in town right now)...**

## The Boston Globe

### DINING OUT

By [Devra First](#)

★ ★ ★ ☆ 3.0 Stars

February 4, 2009

## Bold flavors reign at Bina Osteria

“Chef Brian Konefal's nuovo Italian food just keeps getting better as the meal progresses. Pasta dishes are stunning, from the dreamiest carbonara to the fluffiest baby gnocchi. Crispy suckling pig confit is a minimalist preparation with maximum flavor: a little square of pork heaven, a few turnip segments, a comet of apple puree. It's rustic, it's refined. A dish of lobster wrapped in lardo, or cured lard, is uncannily good.”

“Dessert, prepared by pastry chef (and Konefal's wife) Paola Fioravanti, can be as interesting as the savory courses...”

“The wine list is expectedly full of gems - expectedly because Bina's owners are Babak Bina and sister Azita Bina-Seibel, who also own Lala Rokh and the wine-centric Bin 26 Enoteca. The list begins with a mission statement: They promise delicious Old World wines that evoke terroir, and that's what they deliver.....”

“The room matches the food with its modern feeling: bright, white, and open. A lounge area.... Some find Bina's decor stark, others think it feels like Milan...”

**The**  
**IMPROPER BOSTONIAN**

BOSTON. WHAT'S HAPPENING. WHAT'S HOT. EVERY TWO WEEKS

Dining J. Charles Mokriski  
February 18, 2009

“Babak Bina and his sister Azita Bina-Seibel have once again expanded their culinary mark on Boston.”

“Executive chef Brian Konefal focuses primarily on producing classics that highlight fresh, wellchosen ingredients.”

“Bina’s expansive dining room provides a striking, inviting environment...”

“the enthusiasim radiated by Babak ... is almost contagious.”

**The Boston Globe**  
magazine

January 2009

Best of the New: Restaurants

“If it looks like you're in Europe, it tastes like you're in heaven. Bina Osteria is the new venture of brother and sister Babak Bina and Azita Bina-Seibel, of Lala Rokh and Bin 26. (Next door is their European grocery, Bina Alimentari.) The bright and modern space in the Ritz-Carlton residences features a menu filled with sophisticated indulgences, such as lobster wrapped in *lardo* and crispy suckling pig confit.”

**THE BOSTON  
PHOENIX**

Opulence: enjoy it while you can

By **ROBERT NADEAU** | January 21, 2009

 3.0 Stars

“...we should lift our glasses once more to toast the pleasures of avant-dining, and Bina Osteria might just be the perfect place to do so....”

“...Service is always good ... the décor here — which features a terrazzo floor that extends to the top of the bar — can be as avant-garde as the food...”

T.V. Diner With Billy Costa  
December 2008

**Destinations: BiNA osteria and BiNA alimentari**

“(TV Diner: Boston, MA) - Their success' include Lala Rokh and Bin 26 Enoteca on Boston's Beacon Hill, but Babak and Azita Bina haven't stopped there. “

“We took a sneak peak at their newest ventures, BiNA osteria and BiNA alimentari, two unique culinary concepts under the same roof-located in Boston's quickly growing Downtown Crossing neighborhood!”

<http://www.necn.com/tvdiner/Destinations/Destinations-BiNA-osteria-and/1229190216.html>



December 18, 2009

“...When we sampled the menu, every morsel was exquisite (albeit expensive), perhaps even some of the best cooking going on in the city right now, courtesy of (super-young) chef Brian Konefal, who did time at Atelier de Joel Robuchon and Eleven Madison Park, two of Manhattan's finest restaurants. The quail was possibly the best-tasting we've ever eaten—salty, tender, with a subtle smoke from the hay roasting..”

### **Thrillist Boston**

**NOVEMBER 18, 2008**

“Whether you're vaguely Asian, two-thirds Hungarian or WASPy to the bone, yo, there is one universal truth: Italian food is awesome. ...”