

RESTAURANTS For some, 2007 will forever be the year of wide stances in public bathrooms, but for foodies, other moments stand out

Best Dishes of 2007

Just about everything in the wine bar at Heartland

I entertain visiting restaurant critics and super-power foodies pretty often over the course of a year, and I've noticed two things: One, they always want to go to 112 Eatery. (Which I ate at four or five times this year, and, frankly, I find it less than it was when it opened. Am I just poisoned by opening memories? It's not like there's anything wrong with it, it's just that all year I find the place superior but never spectacular. Maybe I'm just ordering wrong. I don't know. It's probably me, not them.) And two, I always want to show off the wine bar at Heartland, which I find nothing short of spectacular, and spectacularly reliable. One unforgettable bunch of appetizers featured a house-made duck breast prosciutto that had a salty, gossamer-berry intensity; a hedgehog-mushroom wild rice soup that tasted like everything I love about shade-saturated Minnesota wild lands, focused to a laser-like intensity and shot through with cream; and smoked lamb ribs so meaty, so big-flavored, so intense and pleasurable I wanted to pound my fist on the wine-bar counter in satisfaction with just how show-offable the great foods of the upper Midwest really are. *Heartland Restaurant, 1806 St. Clair Ave., St. Paul, 651.699.3536; www.heartlandrestaurant.com.*