



'FUNKY': Scallops at Cuchi Cuchi

## MEAL TICKET | SMALL PLATES

Large portions are as American as baseball and Big Macs. But lately, the popularity of Spanish tapas has inspired chefs of all culinary stripes to downsize their dishes. Here are some top restaurants that specialize in small plates.

**LOS ANGELES A.O.C.** 8022 West Third Street (between Robertson and La Brea); 323-653-6359. "Bacchus wouldn't know where to begin" at this Third Street hit with a "wonderful" wine bar and "inventive" French/Med-accented "Californian tapas" affording "drama in every bite."

FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE	COST
26	23	24	\$46

**SAN FRANCISCO ISA** 3324 Steiner Street (between Chestnut and Lombard Streets); 415-567-9588. "Up-and-coming" "wonder chef" Luke Sung's "parade" of "French tapas" in the Marina "allows you to create your own tasting menu" "where each dish is better than the last."

FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE	COST
26	18	20	\$42

**CHICAGO AVEC** 615 W. Randolph Street (Jefferson Street); 312-377-2002. "Sexy and sophisticated people" say Koren Grieveson's "merry-go-round of Med" small plates "blows the competition away" at this "stark" West Loop wunderkind that serves "lovely big pours" of "unusual" wines.

FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE	COST
26	19	23	\$37

**WASHINGTON, D.C. PALENA** 3529 Connecticut Avenue NW (Porter Street); 202-537-9250. At their "refined" Cleveland Park venue, Frank Ruta's New American dishes "awaken taste buds you didn't even know existed," while Ann Amernick's "fabulous" desserts are legendary.

FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE	COST
25	23	22	\$60

**BOSTON CUCHI CUCHI** 795 Main Street, Cambridge; 617-864-2929. This "festive," "funky" place near Central Square, which looks "like a favorite grandmother's attic," "transforms" the concept of tapas with an eclectic variety of "delicious" "small plates" from around the world.

FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE	COST
20	24	21	\$33

**ZAGAT SURVEY**

Food, Décor and Service are rated on a scale of 0 to 30. The Cost column reflects the estimated average price of dinner, including one drink and tip. Reviews are based on public-opinion surveys, with text based on direct quotes from, or fair paraphrasings of, participants' comments. For more information see zagat.com.