

Although they apparently had a designer, the couple seems to have spared every expense in the decor, which is basically a big brown wall of Peg-Board on concrete. No matter. The place is friendly, full of vitality, and everyone sits and waits to see what the next rolling dim-sum cart will carry. It is very hard to go wrong with anything from those carts. Unlike San Francisco's Chinatown, where servers just wheel past you and toss the plates on your table, amiable waiters at State Bird describe everything, and you may feel free to pass up what doesn't appeal to you, which, I guarantee, will not be much. 1529 Fillmore Street; 415-795-1272; [statebirdsf.com](http://statebirdsf.com)



The rolling cart of wondrous delights at State Bird Provisions.

2

BUT THE BIG, SPLASHY RESTAURANT

# IS NOT DEAD

There has been much hullabaloo recently about diners' alleged distaste for the kind of meal that's eaten in a soaring, stylish, grown-up room with a maître d' and maybe a little neon. You know—fun. Turns out that meal is still very much in demand.



At Campo, every corner buzzes.

CAMPO

RENO, NEVADA

At few places is the evolution of Italian food in America more apparent than at Campo. Chef-owner Mark Estee and chef Arturo Moscoso have absorbed and translated all the lessons of both Italian-American and regional *cucina italiana* with a personal commitment to

making everything in-house, from the pizzas, all charred and bubbly, to the fresh and aged salumi. They're doing whole-hog cooking—two whole hogs a week, in fact, from which come sausages, salamis, forcemeats, headcheese, pâtés, terrines, and all manner of charcuterie.

Though Reno is hardly a crucible of modern Italian food, Estee believed the locals and visitors were ready for Campo. "The simple pizza-pasta formula is well proven here, but what I saw in Reno was that Whole Foods was always packed, and when I did cooking demos there, it was wall-to-wall people," he says. "I thought it was time to get away from the red sauce and do a more rustic style. I've been blown away by the reception. We sell a ton of off-the-beaten-path dishes, although the headcheese isn't moving too well." Baby steps. It'll get there. 50 North Sierra Street; 775-737-9555; [camporeno.com](http://camporeno.com)

THE OBITUARY

EXCEPT THIS ONE

BEN BENSON'S  
1982–2012

**B**en Benson's steakhouse wasn't the first place I unintentionally got drunk during lunch at the bar, but it was the best place to unintentionally get drunk during lunch at the bar, and now it doesn't exist anymore. My friend Craig would call me up, always spontaneously, and tell me he was at Ben's and, well, what was I supposed to do? He always had the same corner of the bar; he was always drinking Absolut and tonics; he was always funny and smart; the food was always exactly what it was intended to be (Mariani called it "the best American food in the U.S. of A." in this very magazine); the bartenders came to know and tolerate me; and, importantly, it was just about the last major steakhouse that wasn't part of a chain. There was one Ben's and only one.

So in part, I'll remember and mourn it for that. But the other part is that when the world became too much with me and I needed somewhere to escape for an hour, I'd make the ten-minute walk to Ben's and the bartender would bring me my usual: chopped steak, medium-well, with a side of house-made potato chips. Once it arrived, I'd pour a sizable pool of Ben's steak sauce on the plate and dig in. It was charred. My friend Tom would get the barley soup on the occasions I let him join me. I don't think Tom knows that Ben's is no more. He's gonna be sad.

Fk. It was good. Now it's gone.

—DAVID GRANGER

THINGS A MAN SHOULD  
NEVER SAY IN A RESTAURANT

"Can you turn the music down?" • "I'll have what she's having." • "Do you have donkey sauce?" • "It's" ➤



# ELECTION 2012

# Esquire

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AND THE  
ESQUIRE/YAHOO! POLL

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& BENJAMIN ALSUP ON  
TOM WOLFE, PG. 40

SCAN THIS!  
WATCH MILA COME  
TO LIFE.



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20 BEST NEW  
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2 SECRET RECIPES

21 THINGS  
YOU SHOULD  
NEVER SAY WHILE  
EATING

AND 1 DEAD STEAKHOUSE...

