



Esquire's Best New Restaurants 2011

Our annual list, now in its 27th year, featuring the Restaurant of the Year, the Hall of Fame, a hostess we love, and much more

By John Mariani

Towne Stove and Spirits

Boston



Two of the most important ingredients in any great restaurant are a passion for the project and attention to detail. Lifelong Bostonian Lydia Shire, chef at Towne, has plenty of both. Here are a few things she loves about her new place: the grand staircase. "It was one of the owners' ideas to add mirrors. Showing off people walking upstairs is just wonderful." The uniforms. "I hate anything that matches." The bar. "A good bar is at the top of a list for a big restaurant. We have three. The street bar in front is the happening place — everyone is young. The second, past the elevators, is locals who want to eat dinner and watch the baseball game. Upstairs is the quiet little boutique bar. We have regulars who will only go upstairs." The photos. "I used to hang out in what's known as the Combat Zone — between Boylston and the theaters. It's kind of seedy, where the hookers worked. The photos were taken in the late sixties and early seventies, on Lagrange Street. It's a side of Boston that's increasingly difficult to find because we've all become holier-than-thou." The lobster popover. "Years ago I came across a green can of Lyle's Golden Syrup. It was better than maple syrup. I made popovers that morning and put the syrup in with butter, and for the opening party for Towne, it occurred to me to put some sherry or booze in them — with lobster." The plates. "They're English: vitrified china and very strong. You'd have to work hard to get them to break."

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