

2008 DINING GUIDE

# PHOENIX

## 75 Best Restaurants

Mouth-watering meals from around the Valley



Organic tofu and tempeh tower, Center Bistro and Wine Bar.

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the more money you throw at it, the better – that's another one. I guess neighborhood gems are the wave of the future. Restaurant design will always be a little bit of everything, but right now it's kind of simple and pared down.

**PM: Give me an example.**

**JT:** Pizzeria Bianco. It's about the purity of the food, which becomes the purity of the place as well.

**PM: Do you have a fondness for certain materials?**

**JT:** I have moments of being drawn to certain things, but there's always a wood involved to keep warmth. I like contemporary, clean spaces but I think they need warmth to attract people and make them feel comfortable. Wood brings that out.

**PM: Do clients come to you with a vision? How much input comes from them and how much do they leave up to you?**

**JT:** It varies with the client. Our most successful projects are when the client does have some kind of vision, even if it's a vision for the food. We can develop the underlying concept if we have some kind of vision from the client. If I can get words out of my client, we can translate those words into what they mean to us. That usually helps. But sometimes the client just says, "Go for it."

**PM: Do restaurant designers handle the lighting and acoustics?**

**JT:** There are lighting designers and acoustical consultants we can hire, but for the most part, we have done our own lighting and acoustics. A lot of times, with a lot of restaurants we're doing, people like that kind of loud atmosphere. Like Olive & Ivy, it's loud, but that's Sam [Fox's]...

**PM: Signature.**

**JT:** Yeah, it kind of is. We did put in drapes and some soft things that absorb sound, but it's not like Houston's, which is a very different atmosphere.

**PM: I'm kind of sick of the noise, but I don't know that anybody's saying, "Hey, let's make this place loud." Is it just that they're attracted to hard surfaces?**

**JT:** I think that's part of it. And then, there's not really much you can do unless you have carpet on the floor, acoustical tile on the ceiling and bumper panels on the walls, which isn't giving you the look you're going for when you want natural materials. So it's going to be loud. So yeah, it's due to the materials we're using.

**PM: And does it have anything to do with designers doing things on a larger scale these days? Look at Olive & Ivy. It's big with high ceilings.**

**JT:** Well, we love that volume. There's something to be said about walking into a space when it's big, like Olive & Ivy, and it does have those high ceilings so it has this really grand feeling to it. And then with the really high, long drapes, this becomes more of a dramatic space.

**PM: Are you drawn to certain colors, or does the client drive color choice? Are certain colors in style at any given time?**

**JT:** Colors do go in and out of style. If you want to give the restaurant a trendy feel and make it more current, there are certain colors that may be more appropriate. But I think with a timeless approach, color could be trendy but it doesn't have to be. It depends on how it's all used together.

**PM: Right. Certain colors could make you look at a place and say, "Hey, this looks like 10 years ago."**

**JT:** That's true, and I'm trying not to go for that. I want it to feel timeless. You could walk into Tarbell's, which has been there for over 10 years, and it doesn't feel trendy, but it doesn't necessarily feel like it's been there 10 years either. We ended up re-upholstering everything this year in the same fabrics we used 10 years ago. We talked about changing it, and we said, "Why?" In this case, given the simplicity of what Tarbell's is about, he said, "Judi, I'm not changing a thing," which was fun and pretty rare.

**PM: But if you think about that restaurant, Tarbell is going for American Classic, so that works to not change. What influences the restaurant environment more than anything else?**

**JT:** Lighting is important, but again, it does depend on what you want to achieve in the space. I think it's always nice to be able to see your food. I mean, if there's no light on the table and you can't read the menu, that's an issue. We try to light up the tables appropriately but it doesn't always happen (sometimes for budget reasons) but we try hard to make that a priority. I also aim to create an underlying comfort that may come with the design as a whole and no one could ever really put a finger on. But my goal would be that people would walk in and immediately have a good feeling.

**PM: Can you predict what restaurants might be like 10 years from now?**

**JT:** I think that whole idea of "green" is going to influence our design in restaurants. We'll take a green approach to things – using fewer materials, keeping things simple.

**PM: Name a local restaurant – not designed by you – that you love for its design.**

**JT:** Houston's. It's a comfortable space with low lighting. I love to sit in my own little cozy booth and regroup from a busy day.

## Catherine M. Hayes, Hayes Architecture/Interiors, Inc.

**H**AYES GREW UP BLOCKS AWAY from Frank Lloyd Wright's home and studio in the River Forest/Oak Park neighborhood, west of downtown Chicago, which is where her interest in architecture began. She studied architecture at the University of Illinois-Champaign, spending her last 18 months of school at L'Ecole des Beaux Art in Paris. After working for a number of prominent firms in Chicago, she moved to Phoenix in 1986 and opened her own firm. Now, she works with clients on new residences, retail shops and hotel/resort projects around the country. Here in Phoenix, her firm has designed La Grande Orange Grocery, Chelsea's Kitchen, Delux and The Foodbar. She is currently working on Delux2Go and the Estate House, both in Scottsdale.

**PM: Describe your style. Is there something recognizable about it?**

**CH:** There are 10 full-time design people in our studio and, usually, two interns from architecture and interior design schools. My desire has been to attract talented design people to collaborate with and then seek out clients who appreciate the creative process. I think our recognizable style is full-throttle diversity. For us, it's about bringing totally new ideas to each project, not about having a recognizable style.

**PM: What other designers/architects/artists have influenced your work?**

**CH:** I couldn't escape Wright or any of the great Chicago architects since their designs were all around me. I love the masters - Le Corbusier, Van der Rohe, Aulente and Eames as well as contemporary architects and designers such as Piano, Rockwell, Cutler, Hadid, Tham, Liagre, Hempel and Wolf.

**PM: Describe a few different trends, past or present, in restaurant design.**

**CH:** This year alone I've been to Australia, Italy, Germany and England, as well as big cities around the U.S. Everywhere we go, it seems eating out has as much to do with entertainment as with food. The caution, however, is to not have the design of the space overpower the culinary creation coming from the kitchen but rather to complement and enhance it. Another obvious international trend is creating different seating experiences.... They're exploring new ways to create environments, delivering quality food quickly so the customer's time can be spent with friends or maybe on their laptop, not dealing with wait staff. We are exploring these concepts in Delux2Go and Foodbar.

**PM: Are there certain materials you love to work with?**

**CH:** We're on the eco-green train, learning about new materials and rethinking how to use existing materials. I'm attracted to organic materials and textures juxtaposed with shiny glass and metals with super-now design. Foodbar is a result of this: quintessential old-European bistro-patterned floor meets Zen-like wood walls lit by cutting-edge light fixtures.

**PM: Do you handle the lighting and acoustics? If so, how important are those elements to the dining experience?**

**CH:** We develop the design for all the building systems then work with professional consultants to tweak the designs. People often think we fail at acoustics, and sometimes we do. But sometimes it's intentional brand identity - to allow the bustle and laughter and music to be part of the atmosphere of the room. To me, there's nothing worse than a dining room that's too quiet. Lighting we are animals about. We think lighting is key to the success of any space, and we stay current with new designs and technologies.

**PM: But noisy restaurants can be hard to take. Will we ever have quiet restaurants again?**

**CH:** We've designed the Estate House, our newest restaurant, to replicate what you might have heard in a 1940s supper club. And we've employed many methods to get that: the shape of the room, a new acoustic ceiling, lots of draperies and fabric banquettes.

**PM: Who chooses the color scheme, you or the client?**

**CH:** In most cases, the design team chooses the color palette, but we gauge the client's reactions during our presentation. Delux began as an orange/yellow scheme and ended up shades of blue. But I always encourage the team to show restraint. Absorbing a few selected colors is more enjoyable than being over-stimulated.

**PM: What materials are in style right now?**

**CH:** The sky's the limit - resins, plastics, jewelry and LED lighting on fabrics. Holograms animate the facades of buildings and the urban spaces in between.

Catherine Hayes at Foodbar in Scottsdale

