

# explore LI

## 2012's top 20 RESTAURANTS

OUR CRITICS RANK THEIR FAVORITES

### FINEDINING

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The last time two restaurants earned four stars during 12 months in Newsday, the Berlin Wall came down, Harry met Sally and a gallon of gas was 97 cents.

So, 2012 stands out for diners across Long Island, and not just for Monsoon in Babylon and Topping Rose House in Bridgehampton. The Plaza Café in Southampton was upgraded to 3½ stars. And a record nine restaurants earned three stars, including an overdue one to 24-year-old celeb-magnet Nick & Toni's in East Hampton under chef Joseph Realmuto.

In this year of so many challenges, economic and otherwise, you could count on finding a stellar meal.

Here are my Top 10 new or remade kitchens.

#### 1. Monsoon

**FOOD** ★★★★★  
48 Deer Park Ave.  
Babylon  
631-587-4400  
monsoony.com

**COST** \$\$-\$\$\$\$

**WHY** For its electric, pan-Asian reverie, set in a dramatically remade bank building.

Monsoon reinvigorated dining in Babylon. It's the latest showcase from the Bohlsen Restaurant Group, which also operates Prime in Huntington, H2O in Smithtown, and both Tellers Chophouse and Verace in Islip. The chef is Michael

#### ON THE COVER

Salmon rolls at J. Michaels Tuscan Steakhouse in Northport



PHOTO BY DOUG YOUNG

Kung pao monkfish at Monsoon

Wilson, a Bohlsen veteran. And the style is as vivid as the food. Recommended: dumplings, steamed buns, kung pao monkfish, curry crab, shaking beef, chocolate torte, cheese-cake and the best Beijing duck in Nassau and Suffolk.

#### HOW WE RATE THEM

★★★★★ Exceptional   ★★★★★ Excellent   ★★★ Very good   ★ Good   none Poor