

54 G BY MIKE ISABELLA

2201 14TH ST., NW; 202-234-5015

Chef/owner Mike Isabella recently launched an all-day menu at his sandwich shop/Italian restaurant, so dinner might be a hearty chicken-Parm sub and lunch an elegant plate of sunchoke ravioli. He also added a snug bar and pine booths to the industrial space, now more fit for lingering. As much as we love the sandwiches, we're even more excited by the big plates: a rave-worthy fritto misto with crisp calamari and shrimp, pastas including peppery carbonara, and delicate potato gnocchi with spicy lamb puttanesca. Bucking the thin-crust pizza trend are pillowy foccaccia flatbreads, generously sauced with bright marinara and mozzarella. **Inexpensive.**

ALSO GREAT: ARANCINI WITH ROMESCO; BABY-GOAT SANDWICH; MEATBALLS WITH GARLIC BREAD; JERSEY MAC BREAKFAST SANDWICH; NUTELLA COOKIES.

55

IRON GATE

1734 N ST., NW; 202-524-5202

It's undeniably romantic to dine under the stars on the patio of this Greek-Italian eatery, covered by wisteria in summer, warmed by fire pits in winter. Chef Anthony Chittum serves an à la carte menu here and in the atmospheric bar, where you'll find an array of share plates such as lemony shaved cabbage and peanuts, fried *halloumi* cheese, and hearth-roasted meats. A cozy carriage house hosts prix fixe dinners, four- and six-course menus that are worth the splurge; generous "tastes" might include mushroom risotto with fried rosemary or venison loin. Anywhere you choose, drinks are exceptional—from the prodigious Mediterranean wine list to rare beers and cocktails with Greek spirits such as *tsipouro*, a grappa-like digestif. **Expensive to very expensive.**

ALSO GREAT: OCTOPUS WITH GREEN OLIVES; POTATOES WITH PAPRIKA AIOLI; MEATBALL WITH FRIED EGG; GREEK SUNDÆ WITH MASTIC ICE CREAM AND ALMONDS.

TRENDS WE'RE SICK OF



SHISHITO PEPPERS



DISHES THAT COME "AS THEY'RE READY"



CACIO E PEPE



LOCAL BEER FOR THE SAKE OF LOCAL BEER



SQUID INK

56

GHIBELLINA

1610 14TH ST., NW; 202-803-2389

Some of the hottest barstools in town can be found on late afternoons at this darkly lit, brick-walled pizzeria—until 6:30, the excellent thin-crust pies are \$10, and locals start jockeying for a spot as early as 3 on weekends. No matter when you go, the pies are some of the area's best in the overcrowded Neapolitan genre. Shareable rounds are sliced with scissors at the table and judiciously topped with things like shaved fennel, salami, and tomato confit. The kitchen also excels with bright salads and antipasti plus a killer chicken cooked under a brick. **Moderate.**

ALSO GREAT: ARUGULA-AND-AVOCADO SALAD; FARRO-AND-ROOT-VEGETABLE SALAD; SAUSAGE-AND-PROVOLONE PIZZA; BUCATINI WITH CLAMS; GNOCCHI.

57 SER

1110 N. GLEBE RD., ARLINGTON; 703-746-9822

It's a sign of the dining times in Washington that you can head to Ballston and find a Spanish feast fit for adventurers: prized *pata negra* ham or briny gooseneck barnacles, scallops roasted on the half shell and house-made Albariño vermouth. Co-owners Josu Zubikarai—who opened DC's Taberna del Alabardero—and Javier Candon share the pleasures of their native Spain beyond ubiquitous tapas, though communal dining remains the wisest tactic. Some of the best dishes are made for a crowd, such as crackly-skinned suckling pig carved tableside and classic paella with braised rabbit, duck, artichokes, and saffron-infused *bomba* rice—crunchy bottom and all. **Expensive.**

ALSO GREAT: CRAB COCKTAIL WITH SALSA ROSA; REVUELTO (MUSHROOMS WITH SHAVED FOIE GRAS AND EGG); STEAK TARTARE; GRANDMA'S VEGETABLE STEW; GOXUA DESSERT (LAYERED SPONGE CAKE, CUSTARD, BERRIES).