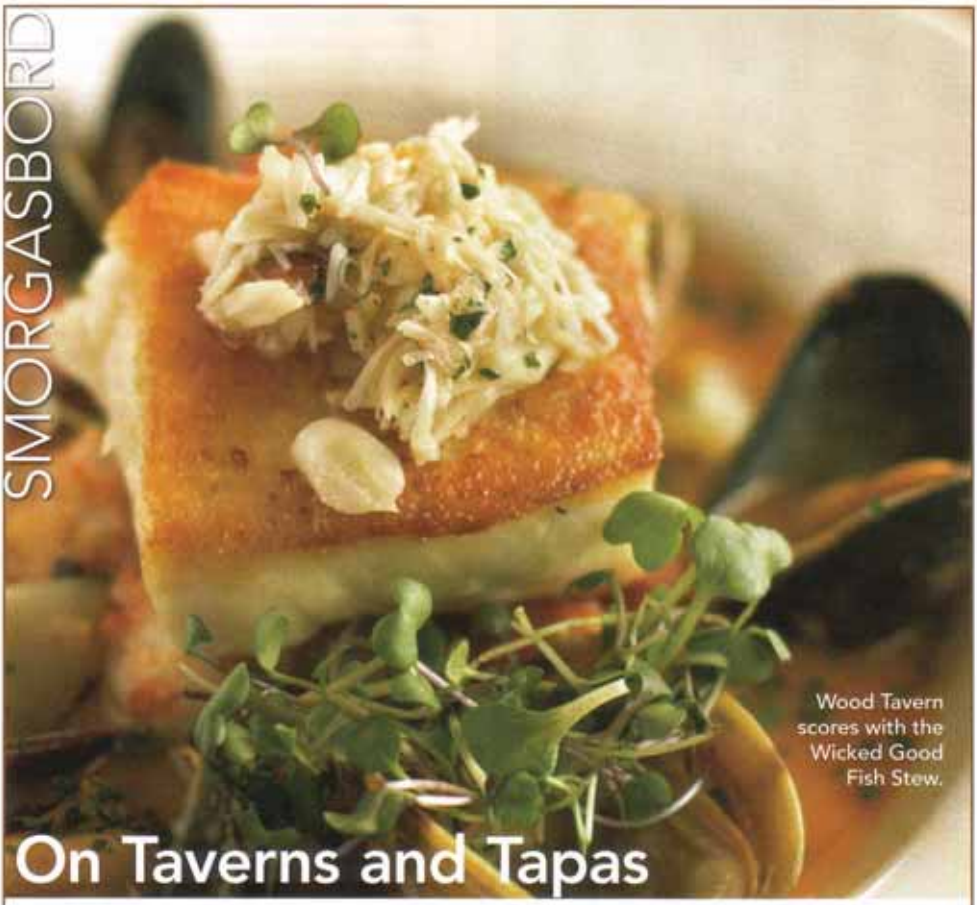
SMORGASBORD



Wood Tavern scores with the Wicked Good Fish Stew.

On Taverns and Tapas

GRASSHOPPER LEAPT FROM THE LIMELIGHT—ONLY TO BE REPLACED BY AN EQUALLY POPULAR NEW VENUE. I visited Wood Tavern on College Avenue at Alcatraz one week after the official opening. The place was buzzing. The waiting list for tables was too lengthy to contemplate. Rebekah Wood, host and co-owner with her husband, Rich, welcomed us and offered us the last two places at the bar—a good spot given its size and the fact that Wood Tavern (note "tavern") offers a selection of about 20 wines by the glass, as well as assorted beers on tap.

The Woods live in Oakland. When they found a suitable location close to home, they sold their San Francisco Italian restaurant, Frascati. Their new Oakland menu has seasonal fare and a good selection from the land and the sea. Venison carpaccio with grilled eggplant, citrus oil and rosemary chips ($11) was an interesting starter combination. The Wicked Good Fish Stew ($22) is a kind of bouillabaisse with sea bass, rock shrimp, mussels and spicy tomato broth. We thought we might try the grilled quail and crispy pork belly ($19) next time.

One of my favorite things on the menu was the last line: "Cell phone use will be cured for 6 weeks, sliced and served with raclette." Isn't it about time we had a ban on cell phones in all the places that ban smoking?

Wood Tavern, 6317 College Ave. Open 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Sunday (lunch only). (510) 654-6607.

—Wanda Hennig