



FOOD SCIENCE

Though USC's most famous for football and film school, its barely-off-campus gastropub, **The Lab**, pays homage to science. You can only hope for a good-looking lab partner at the large, shiny silver communal-seating lab table, while perusing menus tucked neatly on clipboards and sipping on beverages in beakers. Sure, it's all about sleek-geek ambience, but the food's served up non-science-experiment style, leaning toward good, ol' fashioned comfort fare. The gooey goodness of brie mac and cheese and pita with three styles of hummus (chipotle, black bean and regular) all earn a big red "A;" beer gets high marks, too, with more than 20 craft taps and home-team favorites like *Trojan Blonde*. 3500 Figueroa St., Los Angeles, thelab.usc.edu

DENVER BITES

In town for the Great American Beer Fest? Get a solid base for the beer at these four awesome eateries.

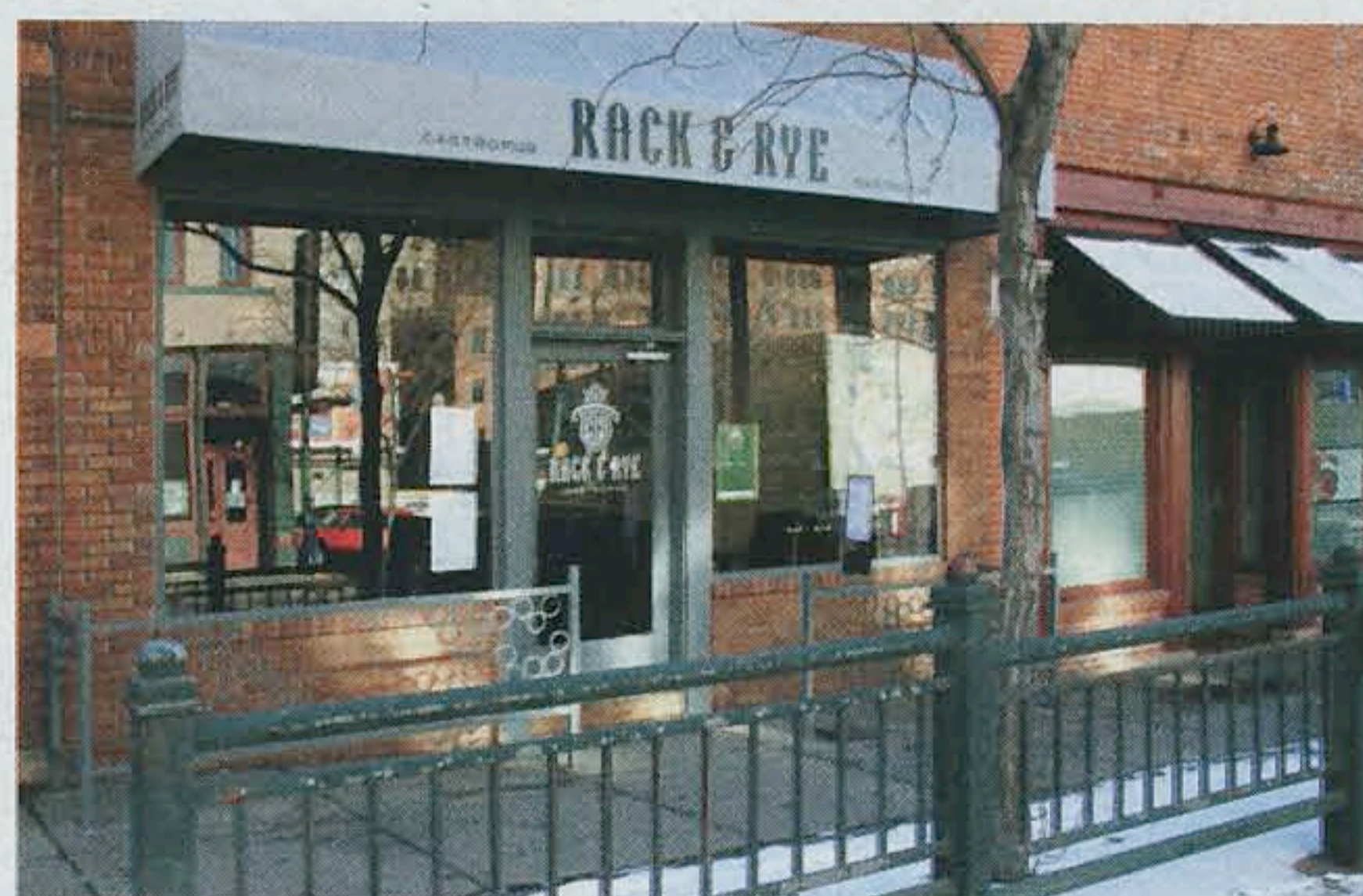
BREAKFAST: Arguably the best breakfast in Denver, a meal at **Lucile's Creole Café** begins with New Orleans-style egg dishes like the Gulf shrimp, grits and spinach Eggs Sardou and ends with beignets spread with house-made strawberry-rhubarb jam. 275 S. Logan St., luciles.com

LUNCH: An arm of Boulder's Mountain Sun Pub, **Vine Street Pub** hosts the brewery's full lineup of incredible crafts like Isadore Java Porter in a cozy room swirling with colorful murals, hippie types and live music. A Southwestern-slanted menu of quesadillas, sandwiches and burgers rounds out the suds. 1700 Vine St., mountainsunpub.com

DINNER: Inside a converted auto-body garage **Steuben's** cool crowd sips local brews and root beer floats alongside belly-filling regional American fare like Memphis-style ribs, jumbo lobster rolls and perfectly crispy, gravy-slathered fried chicken. Watch for the Steuben's truck, the

eatery's cash-only mobile kitchen posted at a different spot around town each day. 523 E. 17th Ave., steubens.com

LATE-NIGHT: One of our favorite gastropub debuts of 2009 sits just blocks from the fest. **Rack & Rye** puts an Eastern spin on pub fare with a menu of inspired small bites (think Korean barbecue sliders and peanut butter and jelly won tons) and Asian-spiked beer and cocktail lists. 1320 15th St., rackandrye.com



Best in Show

In San Francisco, there's a new dog in town, and it's got killer pedigree. **Show Dogs**, a gourmet sausage joint in the city's Tenderloin District, is the brainchild of the first couple of Bay Area sustainable cuisine, Gayle Pirie and John Clark. The pair cut their teeth at Chez Panisse and Café Zuni before taking the helm at the acclaimed Cal-Mediterranean restaurant Foreign Cinema. Now, the two profess their love of meticulously sourced, local ingredients at their newest venture with a rotating menu of 10 sausages, ranging from an organic *boudin blanc* to a classic corn dog, all topped with house-made condiments like apple-ginger chutney and pasilla barbecue sauce.

But when it came to creating a beverage program for the haute hot dog house, the two oenophiles—Foreign Cinema boasts a wine list 265 bottles deep—went in a different direction, honing a beer menu of 10 drafts and 6 bottles that focuses on local breweries.

"You gotta have beer and a dog," Pirie puts simply. "People need a swallow of beer; that little hint of alcoholic digestif. So we take the bounty of the area and showcase it."

Show Dogs' menu suggests pairings for each of the franks, pairing the briny pickled Louisiana hot link with 21st Amendment Watermelon Wheat Ale ("It's got a sparkling clarity [that] really quenches your thirst," Pirie says) and the bold wild boar sausage with a malty amber ale from the nearby solar-powered Anderson Valley Brewing.

All of the eatery's drafts are available in four-ounce sizes, allowing for experimentation. "We don't adhere to strict rules," says Pirie. "We're not snobs. It's all very playful and arbitrary." —Katie Robbins