

COZY UP AT DAVID'S 388 ★ DR. MARY DOWD HELPS FIGHT ADDICTION ★ CULTURE CLUB-PORTLAND ENGAGES KIDS

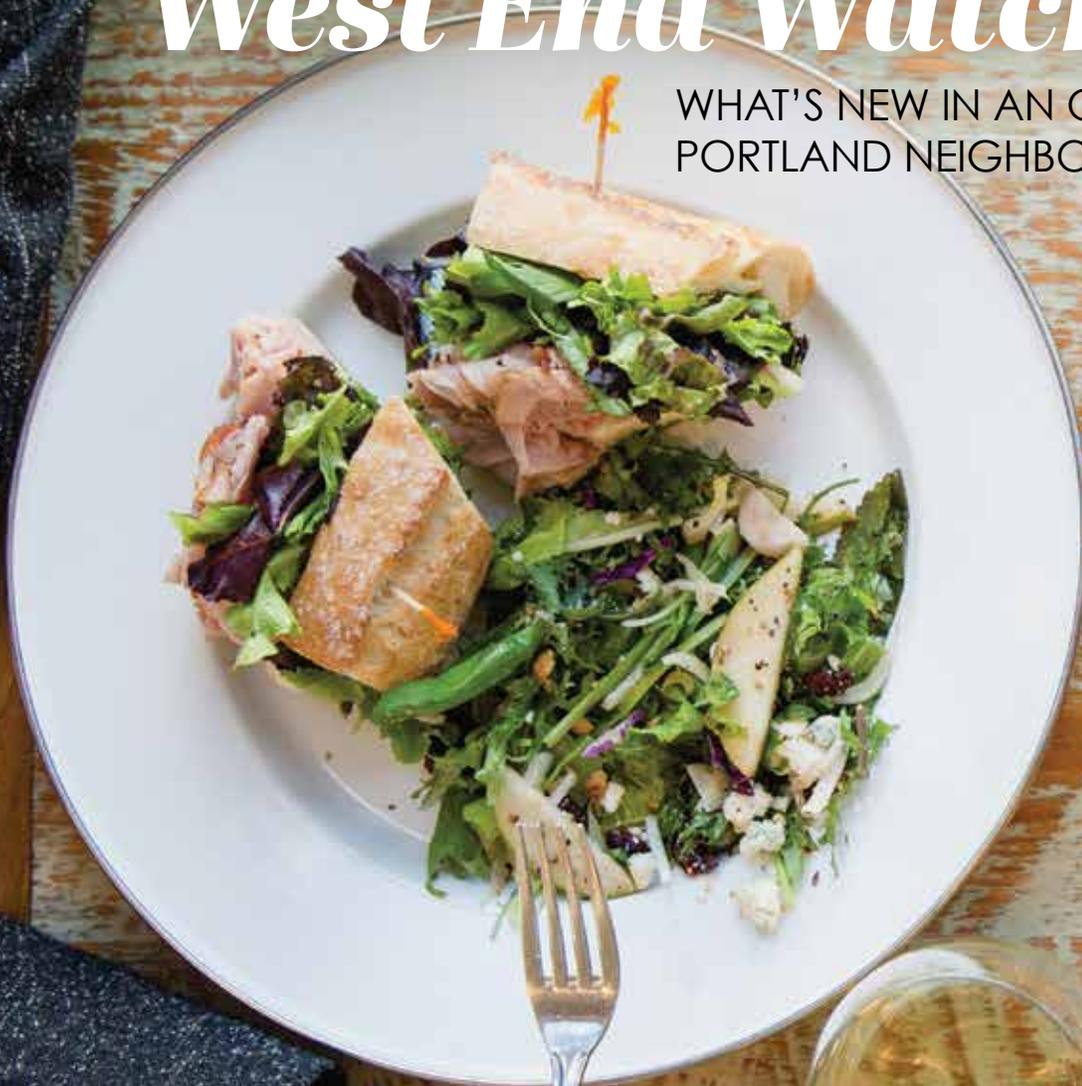
OLD PORT

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West End Watch

WHAT'S NEW IN AN OLD
PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD



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KITCHEN

with a View

HOME COOKING IN A PORTLAND HIGH-RISE WITH
FOOD BLOGGER AND REALTOR JOHN GOLDEN

BY DEBRA SPARK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY MYRIAM BABIN





The terrace of John Golden's apartment in Back Bay Tower offers an expansive view of the city, lush plantings, furniture from IKEA, and two grills—one charcoal and one gas. Golden uses both grills for his frequent dinner parties.



Last summer when the hydrangeas were dressed in their best colors for the final days of summer, John Golden, a real estate broker and food writer with careers in Maine and New York, held a party in his tenth-floor apartment. This was at Back Bay Tower, a 16-story building in Bayside, where Golden rented a three-bedroom apartment with a great room and galley kitchen. Before that he owned a Georgian colonial in the West End, and before that a pied-à-terre on Chandlers Wharf. But for most of the past six years—before he moved to the West End in December—Back Bay Tower was where Golden lived and entertained, enjoying his terrace, which wrapped around the building's corner and offered wonderful views of Portland. In fact, it was the outdoor space, more than anything, that Golden prized, both for itself and for being, in his mind, a singular find. “Here we are on a peninsula with water on three sides, and no one can see it unless they go to the top of a parking garage,” Golden says. Well, not quite, but his point is that Portland real estate should take better advantage of the views. “I’m a New Yorker at heart,” he shrugs. “I like to honk my horn, and I like tall buildings.”

Golden was working at Sotheby's (showing high-end real estate to well-heeled clients in the Hamptons, Manhattan, and Palm Beach), and vacationing on Islesboro and the Maine coast when he started investigating Portland. This was in 2001, just as the food scene was getting hot. At the time, he'd done particularly well in the real estate market—working for the “big deal money bags,” he jokes—and decided to abandon his hectic life for Portland. Once in Maine full-time, he went back to the food writing that had predated his years in real estate, when he'd edited for *Cuisine* and freelanced for magazines like *Gourmet* and newspapers such as the *New York Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Daily News*, among others. “I didn't sugarcoat anything,” Golden says of his early writing in a column called “Food for Thought” for the *Portland Press Herald's* online edition. He currently blogs about food at thegoldendish.com.

Golden doesn't just like writing about food; he likes preparing it, especially for friends. Brenda Garrard, CEO of the marketing communications firm GarrardPartners, was a guest at last summer's dinner. “John is a consummate host,” she says. “He has a very keen appreciation for setting the mood, getting the details right, but the real star of his show is the food. He is a terrific cook, always insisting on interesting and heritage recipes and the very best ingredients.”



This page, clockwise from top left: Still life with a sack of flour from Boonville Flour and Feed Mill in North Carolina. Golden orders southern flour online because he prefers it for baking. A work on vellum by Jorge Pardo. Pot racks store cookware in the small kitchen. **Opposite page, from left:** Golden, writer Pat Taub; retired realtor Michael Zimmerman; attorney David Pierson, Eaton Peabody; Jeffrey Cappellieri, managing principal, Villa Europe; and Susan Axelrod, managing editor, *Old Port* magazine.

Golden recounts a story about a dinner he once made for then-New York City Mayor Ed Koch, former Miss America and (soon to become scandalous) New York City Commissioner Bess Myerson, and other New York City officials. The menu included beef tenderloin with a *grand veneur* sauce that took several days to make, potato gratin, mousseline of peas, almond tart with cottage cheese, and a vintage Burgundy. The guests clapped after the meal. Golden nicknamed his effort the State Dinner, and for special occasions, he does the whole thing all over again.

Last summer, the guest list and foodstuffs were more down-home, with a Southern menu and Portland friends enjoying the terrace. The lower-latitude cuisine does not, Golden admits, make sense for a native New Yorker transplanted to Maine, who still returns to New York for real estate deals, given his ongoing employment with New York's Douglas Elliman Real Estate. (He also recently joined the Portland firm Compass Commercial Brokers.)

Golden is not quite sure how he got into Southern cooking. Perhaps because he's always liked baking and comfort food? He sees a



similarity between the Southern climes and Maine simply because of the availability of local products, even though the growing season is longer in the South. (For baking, he buys from North Carolina's Boonville Flour and Feed Mill, as he finds the southern flour softer and better for baking than Northern wheat.) A typical Southern menu for Golden includes ribs, cole slaw, potato salad, biscuits, and a "big outrageous cake, like a blackberry jam cake with sorghum frosting." Last summer, it was a chess pie, which Golden describes as a custard pie with a high proportion of sugar because, in the days before refrigeration, sugar was a good preservative.

Beyond food, last summer's visitors to Golden's Bayside apartment had the pleasure of viewing his art collection. Even before he moved to Maine, Golden was buying Maine artists and New England impressionists. When he moved into his apartment, he pared down his collection, but was still able to hang many favorite pieces, including a cityscape featuring a Portland façade by Thomas Connelly, a painting of a male nude and dog by Alicia Czechowski, a semi-sculptural piece by Noriko Sakanishi, and a Carl Sprinchorn gouache, also of a nude.

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— John Golden

Other artists in his collection include Jen Blackstone, Joshua Ferry, and Ross Bleckner, as well as New England impressionists like William Partridge Burpee, Gertrude Fiske, and Charles Woodbury.

As with the art, so with the apartment’s furniture. It has been consolidated from former dwellings—an upholstered headboard in the master bedroom was picked by a designer for Golden’s Chandlers Wharf condo, and wing chairs covered in fabric throws are from East Hampton. The living room’s Baker sofas have been recovered five times, most recently with a black-and-white leopard print. Two other items that Golden has “been lugging around forever:” a black Italian table that serves as his kitchen/dining table and a black lacquered sideboard with marble top, which he uses as a bar.

All the good food knowledge has been carried from place to place, too, and augmented with area finds. Great bread? Kerry Hanney’s Night Moves Bread and Pie, sold at South Portland’s Farm Stand, among other places. Best place

for meat? Bisson’s Meat Market in Topsham. Favorite farmer’s market? Many, Brunswick’s among them. To learn more, you can always read Golden’s blog. Or try to wrangle a dinner invitation, wherever Golden next sets up his kitchen. ★

Opposite page: A piece by Portland electronics artist Galen Richmond hangs over the bar. To the right of the window is a piece by Portland artist Noriko Sakanishi; to the left is a piece Golden bought at a MECA auction. The red lamp is by San Francisco designer Pablo Pardo. **This page:** Golden rolls out a pie crust in the apartment’s galley kitchen. In the foreground are photos of his mother and cookbooks from his large collection.



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