

FOOD & WINE

best restaurant dishes
of 2008



Rigatoni Carbonara

SPQR, SAN FRANCISCO

Growing up, my favorite dish was the spaghetti carbonara at Trattoria da Alfredo in New York—James Beard ate there, too, though I had no idea who he was then. Later, I got Alfredo's cookbook, saw how obscenely rich the dish was and promptly stopped eating it. Then, a few months ago, I went to SPQR, the tiny Italian spot co-owned by Nate Appleman of A16. SPQR offers a choice of spaghetti or rigatoni for its classic pastas ("Old, old restaurants in Rome let you choose," Appleman says), and I was curious to try a short, fat noodle with carbonara. The wonderfully chewy handmade pasta, tossed with porky guanciale, eggs (1½ per serving) and plenty of black pepper and grated pecorino, made me wish SPQR were just blocks from where I live, like Alfredo was. But it's better for my diet that it isn't (1911 Fillmore St.; 415-771-7779). —Kate Krader