FOLLOW YOUR GUT
EAT and SLEEP
at SIX CULINARY HOT SPOTS

Plus
PUPPIES at CITY HALL
ROBOTS REACH DOWNTOWN
A BUILDING BOOM in the SOUTH END

POP VIXEN
RACHEL PLATTEN
MAKES WAVES

MAY 9-22, 2018

METRO BOSTON'S SANDY GUIDE to ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURE and GOURMET GETAWAYS
Eat, Stay—LOVE!

Inns across New England are upping their culinary game with new chefs, renovated dining rooms and a fresh set of cooking classes. We take a look at a half-dozen—one in each New England state—that really stand out.

By The Improper Staff
HOTEL SALEM
209 Essex St., Salem, Massachusetts
(978-451-4950) thehotelsalem.com

When the rooftop bar opens at the Hotel Salem this June, chef Justin Perdue pictures his guests savoring oysters and some frosé while they drink in sweeping views of Salem Harbor.

As the only rooftop bar in Salem, the Roof will soon join Counter as the second eatery at the 44-room boutique hotel, which opened in November and is owned by the Amesbury-based Lark Hotels. Built in 1895 on the city’s pedestrian mall, the stately building is the former home of Newmark’s department store, and its past as a high-end clothing store inspires the retro, midcentury modern vibe of the airy communal spaces and the accommodations—from budget-friendly micro-rooms to luxe suites—with towering ceilings, warm wood and jewel-toned accents.

Since joining Lark Hotels as the group chef in 2016, Perdue has helmed the direction of hotel menus across New England. The modern American dinner fare at Counter also winks to the building’s history with spins on dishes found in counter-service restaurants in the department stores of decades past. The duck confit on sourdough served with potato leek soup is meant as an upscale version of the classic soup-and-sandwich combo.

The warmer months led to the menu’s first major refresh since the January opening with a transition to lighter plates and shareable items. Perdue is also rolling out a pie menu featuring a riff on baked Alaska, served in an individual pie shell. “We’re thinking about doing a strawberry ice cream with lemon curd,” Perdue says. “And then with the bruleed marshmallow, I think especially for the summer it’s gonna be off the hook.”

While the Counter boasts a luxe retro renaissance, up at the Roof, the party will be all about the present, with an unfussy open space. “It’s a fun, playful place where people can hang out and have some oysters,” Perdue says of the Roof, where the casual menu will showcase small plates like ceviche and tacos alongside frozen margaritas, Salem’s first cocktail draft system and the aforementioned (and addictive) frosé—elder leaf and lavender is the kickoff flavor.

Alongside tempting tacos, Perdue is excited to showcase his guacamole, which he perfected while working at Topolobampo in Chicago with maestro of Mexican cuisine Rick Bayless. Guests can choose between pork belly or fried shrimp, or opt for the classic version with tomato, cilantro and a touch of sour cream. “It’s got lime and cumin and just all those bright flavors that work in the summer, especially with a tall boy,” Perdue says.

As for what to pair with that frosé, he recommends the snapper ceviche with passion fruit vinegar, candied ginger and smoked almonds. That duo is worth the ferry trip from Boston alone.