



“one of the hottest dining spots in town”

ENTERTAINMENT | ENLIGHTENED TRAVELER

Eat smart

Best upscale meal: The menu at **Rioja** (303-440-2282; www.riojadriver.com) changes with the seasons, which is one of the reasons why the Mediterranean-

inspired outpost of top Denver chef and Wolfgang Puck protégé Jennifer Jasinski is one of the hottest dining spots in town. A gem in the Larimer Square historic district, its copper-topped bar and hand-blown glass

fixtures provide eye candy. Feather-light homemade pasta, specialty salads, and a fig gorgonzola pizza with zucchini chips delight the palate.

Best bites: A few minutes west of downtown, **Duo** (303-477-

4141; www.duodinner.com) serves upscale meals in comfortable surroundings. Try the grilled bread appetizer with whatever seasonal spread (such as burrata) Chef John Rosening has dreamed up. **Best room for**

deserts like the pita-chia sangria, a frozen concoction made with egg whites and cream, as well as zucchini pasta chips.

Best postcheer dining: Fine dining drives at longtime local chef Kevin Taylor's digs (303-440-1012; www.kevintaylor.net/us/restaurant) at the gorgeously renovated Ellie Caulkins Opera House. Noted chefs from around the country scramble to get flavorful and tender Colorado lamb on their menus; sample it Taylor-style, char-broiled with braised lentils, fennel, and a black olive jus.

Best food finds: Just a short walk east of the landmark Brown Palace Hotel, **Marezyk Fine Foods** (303-694-0499; www.marezykfinerfoods.com) is Denver's favorite stop for gourmet ingredients—from A-A-grade dried Italian porcini mushrooms to organic Spanish olives. It also has some of the best cakes in the city. In the summer, pick up juicy peaches from Colorado's Western Slope, or come on Friday nights for grilled burgers made from organically raised meat.

Duo (top left) often operates along in Denver's Highland neighborhood. It's easy to dine al fresco at Rioja (top right, bottom left and right) on one of the city's 300 days of fair weather.