

Haute Plates

Great food, great price

After a merry-go-round of eateries at 575 Warburton Avenue, Hastings finally has a keeper. **Juniper** (914-478-2542; juniperhastings.com) may look barebones, but it'll slay you with culinary muscle. Chef/owner Alex Sze, all of 27, is a powerhouse of skill and experience, having trained with masters like Michel Richard at D.C.'s Citronelle and Alain Ducasse at Manhattan's Adour.

So expect haute quality, but at plebe prices. "I wanted to do something casual," Sze explains. Well, prices surely are casual, with no item more than \$10 on the lunch menu, but the actual eating part skews toward the fine. Yes, there's mac 'n' cheese, but Sze's is lush with English cheddar, Parmigiano, and Fontina. I devoured a pulled-pork sandwich that could rival Durham's best, partnered with a tangy slaw and the freshest market greens, all for a hefty eight bucks. Impressive—until I returned for dinner.

My three-course meal: appetizer of butternut-squash soup laced with sour cream and celery leaves; entrée of pan-roasted salmon atop lentils in a creamy pool of onion soubise, and dessert of house-baked passionfruit tart, were all beautifully plated and perfectly cooked—for around \$30. For now, dinner reservations are suggested. If Sze keeps this up, they're going to be coveted.

Lunch Tues to Fri, dinner Thurs to Sat, brunch Sat and Sun.

// DWP

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