

OUR 14TH ANNUAL GUIDE TO THE CITY'S BEST RESTAURANTS, CLUBS, SHOPPING, ENTERTAINMENT AND MORE

THE IMPROPER BOSTONIAN

GUARANTEED GREAT MEAL, BACK BAY Mistral

223 Columbus Ave., Boston, 617-867-9300,
www.mistralbistro.com

Bostonians love our tried-and-true restaurants: Hamersley's Bistro, the Oak Room, Locke-Ober. Could the chic, imposing Mistral ever join the list? When Mistral first opened in 1997, it seemed like Boston was poised to become a New York manqué. Within one or two years, Whiskey Park opened, as did Radius—where the host was rumored to get a \$2,000-a-month clothing allowance. Eight years later, Mistral still feels chic and contemporary, and the interim has only added luster to the high ceilings, striking decor and superb food by chef Jamie Mammano. On any weeknight, a crowd of long-time regulars eats at the bar, enjoying the food and convivial atmosphere. The ever-evolving menu remains inventive yet friendly, replete with old favorites and punctuated by new additions. Did Mistral make Boston into more of a New York wannabe? Hardly. Instead, Boston made Mistral its own.

WATERING HOLE FOR THE WELL-HEELED Mistral

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To keep up with the latest trends in luxury items and haute couture, you can flip through the current issue of *Elle*, amble through Saks, or head to Mistral for a cocktail. From the outside, the flotilla of Bentleys and Porsche SUVs would suggest you're about to crash one of P. Diddy's private bashes. The gentle clinking of martini and wine glasses serves as a sonic backdrop to the conversations of Boston's smart set. With soaring ceilings and a row of dried cypress trees, the ambience is Provençale moderne. The bar's elegance is echoed in the exquisite simplicity of the French Mediterranean fare prepared by chef-owner Jamie Mammano. But the sophistication isn't stiff or frosty, and even those of us without haircuts that cost as much as a Persian rug can bask in comfort. For not much more than the price of a movie ticket, you can have a thin-crust pizza that's a truly sublime epicurean experience and feel like you're starring in your own Armani ad.

BOSTON'S BEST

JULY 13-AUGUST 2, 2005

\$2.50 OUTSIDE OF METRO BOSTON



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