


...recent openings

Appealing Patios



Departure

525 SW Morrison Street, 15th Floor, Portland, OR
503-802-5370, departureportland.com

 There's not a better bird's-nest view of downtown Portland overlooking Pioneer Square than the panoramic scene on the outdoor patio at the ultra-posh restaurant and bar, Departure.

Atop the Nines hotel, seven floors above Urban Farmer, the modern steakhouse that fills the midsection on the 8th floor, in the historic Macy's (formerly Meier & Frank) Building, Departure roosts on the topmost 15th floor—and a swanky South Beach-meets-space age penthouse crib it is, indeed.

Step off the elevator and a landing strip of purple neon guides you through a dark enclave, then up a slight ramp. The effect is that of embarking the Millennium Falcon, or entering a nightclub... It depends on your generation, yet all are welcome aboard.

Departure's main dining area sparkles with gleaming white lacquer surfaces cybernetically fused to polished teak floors and accents. Cabin appointments include long and low booths and captain's chairs encircling the centerpiece bar. Here and on the lower outdoor decks is where the jet set lounges, and there's glitz galore on the eye-straining menus as well.

The cuisine is the creation of Chef Bryan Emperor, who polished his resume with stints at restaurants in Japan and China, New York's renowned Nobu, plus service beside two top chefs, Jean-Georges Vongerichten and Gray Kunz.

The menu is well-stocked with beautifully presented pan-Asian-inspired small plates. Items are divided into six categories, from *zensai* (appetizers) through *gohan no mono* (rice selections), plus desserts. Among the standouts are *tori no tatsuta age*, frenched chicken wing drumettes marinated in sweet vinegar; *harami goma tare*, skewers of succulent Wagyu skirt steak glazed with black sesame sauce; and Kobe meatballs filled with foie gras and served with tonkatsu dipping sauce—it doesn't get much richer than this!

The drinks menu is (inter)stellar as well. Signature cocktails are Asian reinterpretations of classics, such as the deliciously stiff A.E. Doyle (named after the Portland architect who helped design the original landmark building)—a combination of shochu and Yamazaki (Japanese single malt whiskey) with orange bitters—in a riff on the Manhattan.

Northwest wines, such as whites from A to Z and Foris, and local beers, from Oakshire and Deschutes, are some of the gems on an international list that also includes a fine selection of sakes.

So, bring your bling, but prepare to be outshone by the radiant rocks off in the distance when mounts Hood and St. Helens shimmer at sunset.

Open Tuesday–Thursday from 4pm–midnight, Friday–Saturday till 2am.

—Peter Szymczak