

# Denver's Top 10 (New) Restaurants!

# 5280

Ben Nighthorse  
Campbell  
for Governor?  
By Peter Boyles

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DENVER'S 10 BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

## zengo

1610 LITTLE RAVEN ST. // 720-904-0965

answer to sashimi), hot appetizers, and Asian-style dim sum. Entrées are scaled for sharing, too, and continue the mix-and-match theme with dishes like Colorado rack of lamb with hoisin-adobo sauce and teriyaki opakapaka with soba noodles and mojo sauce. It's a lot to take in and nearly impossible to appreciate fully without the help of a hungry friend or two.

According to Sandoval, the team's creative process is pretty straightforward. "I'll make a Latin dish and Troy Asian-izes it, then he'll show me an Asian dish and I'll change it up with some Latin touches." It sounds simple enough, but the delicacies that result are anything but.

Zengo's cuisine is rivaled only by its decor in sensory drama. Created by award-winning international designer Jeffrey Beers, the space fairly pulses with a hypnotic rhythm of colors, textures, and shapes. The ultra-chic eatery feel eons away from typical Denver dining, and according to Sandoval that's no accident. "I've found that Denver customers are very receptive to new experiences, so I thought they would embrace a restaurant with a high-style, New York feeling...It's something different for this city."

Sandoval is confident he's hit on a winning concept, and he plans to duplicate Zengo in Washington, New York, and Las Vegas. The jet-setting restaurateur already heads up multiple ventures in New York and San Francisco, just opened a restaurant in Las Vegas in April, and is opening two more restaurants next year: one in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in March 2005, and one in Washington (another Zengo, June 2005). Maintaining quality across such far-flung operations can't be easy, but Sandoval attributes his success to a fundamental faith in personalities and passion. "It's all about the people I have working with me," explains the chef. "In order to excel in this business, you really have to love what you do. When I see that passion, then I know I've found someone I want to work with."

It's a simple philosophy that clearly works wonders. Call it teamwork, call it collaboration – call it the power of a little give-and-take.

BY ELIZABETH ELLIS

**I**f you don't know what zengo means yet, you're going to love finding out. It means empanadas stuffed with Thai chicken and mango-curry salsa, or won ton tacos replete with charred tuna, sushi rice, and pickled ginger. It means bold, fiery decor that pairs Asian-inspired geometrics with alluring, Latin curves. Above all, it means a dynamic partnership between Tamayo's Richard Sandoval, whose modern Mexican cuisine has earned international acclaim, and Asian expert Troy Guard, whose culinary passion has led him around the globe and into such hot spots as New York City's Tao.

Loosely translated as "give-and-take," the Japanese concept of zengo permeates every aspect of the namesake eatery, which blends Latin and Asian influences to produce a cuisine all its own. "The term zengo describes the way [Sandoval and I] work together," explains corporate chef Guard. "We each bring a different style and background to the food, and we give a little and take a little to bring out the best final result."

The give-and-take that begins in the kitchen continues in the dining room, where a tapas-style menu encourages sharing. The vast selection of starters includes ceviches, sushi rolls, tiraditos (Latin America's