

Al Fresco Dining

Do it while you can, in and around Cambridge.



COURTESY OF STELLINA

SMACK IN THE center of Watertown Square is an established Italian restaurant called **Stellina** (www.stellinarestaurant.com; 617-924-9475). The interior boasts an appealing, wood-paneled, Arts and Crafts meets the *Orient Express* décor. The mirrored bar area has a relaxed feel, great service, and mismatched café lamps that cozy up the tables for two. (Eating in the bar area is welcomed.) The signature warm tomato salad with basil and crostini with goat cheese (\$13) is irresistible, as are the smoked prosciutto thin-crust pizza (\$11) and beet ravioli antipasto (\$8). Traditional entrees, like chicken marsala (\$21) and linguini and meatballs (\$17), commingle with the more daring, lusty boar ragu (\$18).

One more reason to dine at Stellina in the warmer months lies just outside the back door: a spacious brick patio with lovely plantings. A wooden fence, soft-

Above: Request a spot on Stellina's Italian-style back terrace.

ened by a fragrant grape arbor to one side, and the gurgling fountain at center stage luckily obscure the adjacent municipal parking lot. (For purely aesthetic reasons, you may want to enter the restaurant from the front, on the Main Street side.)

In Somerville's Teele Square (a 10-minute walk from Davis Square), **Sabur** (www.saburrestaurant.com; 617-776-7890) delights with multicultural Mediterranean cuisine. Claiming influences from Italy and France to the Balkans and North Africa, the restaurant makes it almost impossible to leave without trying something new. Favorites include the "hand-stretched burek" appetizer (\$8)—beef, potato, and onion wrapped in a pastry shell—and the vegetable tagine entrée (\$16), with couscous, sultana raisins, dates, almonds, and cinnamon. Even the more familiar dishes are never plain—a yogurt-thyme-honey sauce accompanies the grilled chicken skewers (\$8), and zucchini and feta fritters (\$8) come with *ajvar*, a Macedonian relish of bell

peppers and eggplant made with paprika, chili pepper, and garlic. (Too complicated? Try the slow-roasted lamb, \$22.50, served au jus with vegetables, and nothing more.) In good weather, the patio is the place to savor a glass of beer or wine from southern Europe: try red and white varietals from Macedonia. The restaurant is nice on rainy days, too. In the main room, admire the open brick oven from your perch at a table handcrafted of hefty and luminous Bosnian copper; in the lounge, couches overflowing with pillows invite you to recline while enjoying cocktails and tapas.

In Harvard Square, **Om Restaurant**, **The Red House**, and **Charlie's Beer Garden** offer popular outdoor dining rooms and a stunningly diverse range of food—all within a block. Inside, Om (www.omrestaurant.com; 617-576-2800) affords some secluded tables in clean, crisp, modern environs that match its exceptionally innovative Asian menu. Try the spinach salad with parsnip noodles, raisins, and goat cheese (\$10) or the seared sesame tuna and scallops with green tea noodles and rosemary oil (\$27). Outside, the street-level patios at both Om and The Red House are abuzz with chattering diners and clinking silverware but otherwise deliciously quiet, because cars are not allowed on Winthrop Street.

Fresh seafood is also served at The Red House (www.redhouse.com; 617-576-0605), but in American bistro-style dishes, along with grilled meats, and the singular hoisin marinated duck breast with Bing cherry and rhubarb compote (\$14.50 or \$22.50, depending on portion size).

Meanwhile, Charlie's has let some fresh air into its traditional smoky, greasy mix of burgers and fries, thanks to a surprisingly cheerful urban garden. The music is not too loud, seating is generous—and 16 intriguing beers await you on tap.

~N.P.B. and E.G.