



QUICK BITE

# At Mooncusser, fish house meets treehouse

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KAYANA SZYMCHAK FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**Mooncusser Fish House**

By [Devra First](#) | GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 18, 2017

**Where to** Mooncusser Fish House, which sounds like a shingled seaside shack but is really an upscale seafood restaurant in a triangular building on the edge of Back Bay.

**What for** Mooncusser comes from the people behind Concord restaurant 80 Thoreau. (Owner Ian Calhoun spent his summers as a kid on Mooncusser Lane in East Dennis.) Fans of chef Carolyn Johnson's food and maître d' Vincent Vela's hospitality can now find those things in Boston as well.

**The scene** A journey upward: The third-floor dining room can be reached by stairs or elevator. (The first-floor Moon Bar, offering a more casual menu, is now also open.) It's spare, clean, angular: vanilla walls, black chairs, gray banquettes, celadon dishes. Candles flicker on white-clothed tables; servers bring bread with butter in a tiny dish, then crumb the tables after. There's a small bar at the back, and windows offer a view of the streetscape below. A woman with a French accent emerges from the elevator, flushed from her bike ride and brimming with enthusiasm for the new place. Two friends arrive chicly. There's an after-work gathering of co-workers, a silver-haired twosome comfortably gossiping, two brothers reuniting for a meal. A man sticks his spoon in his companion's chowder for a taste, then smiles with pleasure.

**What you're eating** The menu showcases local, seasonal seafood: striped bass crudo with pickled rhubarb, seared gnocchi with uni, stuffed skate with lobster, chard, and baby carrots, monkfish with caviar, kohlrabi, and tarragon bourride. (There are a few dishes for those who don't eat seafood, as well, plus a five-course tasting menu.) Downstairs, the Moon Bar menu might bring smoked bluefish fattoush, scallop ravioli, or softshell crab BLTs. For dessert: sea salt caramel macarons, frozen lemon pie, house-made sorbets, and more.

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**Care for a drink?** Mooncusser focuses on beer and wine that pair well with seafood — a rich Roussanne here, a spicy gamay there.

**Overheard** Talk of mortality, flavor vs. texture, and fishing. “I don’t want anybody digging graves! You can turn me into fertilizer,” a man chortles to his companion. Someone complains about a difficult client to his friend. “There are more people who don’t know what they want than people who can express it,” she agrees, nodding. A new arrival greets the staff with smiles: “Good? Excited? Me too.” “He was a Republican frat boy at MIT,” someone says, and everyone at the table breaks out laughing. A tall man folds himself into a banquette, shaking his head: “A cab was going to take us on a little tour of Boston. I said whoa whoa whoa *whoa!*”

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