

San Francisco Chronicle

CRITICS' PICKS: Western Addition A GO-TO DINING DESTINATION

Diversity in the 'hood

The runaway success of boisterous, community-oriented Nopa on the corner of Hayes and Divisadero streets has reinvigorated the Western Addition in San Francisco as a go-to dining destination. But the neighborhood's protracted history of ethnic diversity has long made it a diverse area for all kinds of restaurants.

After more than 30 years in Hayes Valley, venerated soul food joint Powell's Place relocated to the Western Addition, where the roots of the African American community can be traced to the jazz scene that thrived on Fillmore in the '30s and '40s. The crispy, juicy fried chicken and miniature pies from the Pie Lady make Powell's a universal draw.

Poleng Lounge on Fulton Street opened in the space that was formerly Storyville, a jazz and hip-hop venue. Although the Asian street food-inspired small plates attract food lovers, the entertainment space in the back -- bedecked with a fully loaded DJ booth -- hosts hip-hop showcases and record-release parties.

Down home, downright good

Poleng Lounge 1751 Fulton St. (at Masonic Avenue), San Francisco; (415) 441-1751. This restaurant/nightclub serves impressively good food, given its clubby atmosphere. Winning bites from the Asian street food-inspired menu include Buddha's Treasures (pan-fried dumplings), coconut curry duo and crispy adobo wings. Fun drinks, too. -- M.B. Lunch, dinner Tues.-Sun.

Rating: THREE STARS