undercooked, felt a little naked with only peppers and light vegetables next to it. Luckily, the bread basket was good, and the butter heavenly. If you must have fish, choose the fish soup: a blond bouillabaisse, offered as an appetizer and a main course. An excellent, hearty bowl of clams, mussels, halibut and snapper, it's best as a main, and especially nice now, just as the weather is turning chilly.

Finally I tried the duck confit, offered for the first time that weekend. There's work to be done on the duck. Either the bird itself is too tough, or the preparation wasn't right. Duck is a difficult dish to pull off. If it's cooked in too much fat, it can be greasy and overbearing. Too dry, it's a total failure. This one was too dry, but it's likely the chef can get it right with more time.

In any case, be sure to eat dessert. The first time I ate at Canelé, they'd run out of the peach cobbler, so I made sure to order it on my next visit. There's no hyperbole here: it's the best peach cobbler – or peach *anything* – I've ever tasted. If they've run out, go for the flourless chocolate cake with toffee.

Finally, I want Canelé's wine-by-the-glass list to be better. The small imperfections on some of the plates I can overlook, especially with the gutsy reliance on freshness. But the meats are just begging for a bold wine pairing, and all the reds fell short.

Canelé just celebrated its first anniversary, and I can only guess that with each seasonal cycle, the menu will become more sure-footed, and perhaps even great. In the meantime, definitely order a salad, stick to the red meat and don't skip dessert, and you've got the perfect place to linger over three delicious courses with friends. Maybe bring your own bottle of wine, or two.

Appetizers, $6-$12; mains, $10-$24; dessert, $6. NA

THE HOT CORNER
Sunset Blvd. & Lemoyne St.

Echo Park has been a creative hub ever since Charlie Chaplin filmed his silent movies there. Thanks to a new influx of innovators and restored pride in the community, the historic neighborhood is resurgent, and Sunset & Lemoyne is the epicenter.

Since 2004, Masa of Echo Park has become a favorite neighborhood restaurant due to an eclectic menu, home-style vintage decor and warm hospitality from its two sets of owners/couples: Rhonda Reynolds and Rob Rowe, and Tom Keeney and Julia Jackson. Locals converge on Masa for morning pastries, panini, chorizo-studded meatloaf, Chicago-style pizza and croissant bread pudding. A long-time Echo Park resident, Reynolds calls her home a "small city within a bigger city" that swells with "a sense of history."

The intersection's future is about bulge, too. Phil Hartman plans to open the first non-New York outpost of his Two Boots pizza chain, next to edgy nightclub The Echo. "I was never interested in doing a branch in Los Angeles," Hartman said, iuntil I was introduced to Echo Park. It seems like a great mix of the old East Village and Corona, Queens; really tight-knit and interesting." As these two boots represent Italy and Louisiana, expect Cajun toppings such as tasso ham, andouille sausage, crawfish and BBQ shrimp.

Spaceland's venerable Mitchell Frank has turned The Echo into a live music destination since its December 2001 opening. Beck, irascible Mississippi bluesman T-Model Ford, and the late Elliott Smith have all played the club. Below it, The Echoplex is a cavernous annex that has drawn such indie giants as M.I.A. and Of Montreal. "I know there's a lot of change going on," said Hartman, who also serves as President of the Echo Park Chamber of Commerce. "And I hope it's going to be change that doesn't compromise the uniqueness. Hopefully in five to ten years, Echo Park is just as quaint."

–Joshua Lurie

The Echo
1822 W. Sunset Blvd.,
Echo Park, 213-413-8200

The Echoplex
1154 Glendale Blvd.,
Echo Park, 213-413-8200

Masa of Echo Park
1800 W. Sunset Blvd.,
Echo Park, 213-989-1558