



Seattle's rising star

Ethan Stowell's How to Cook a Wolf is drawing packs of diners—and national acclaim

BY JESS THOMSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS M. BARWICK

WHEN CHEF Ethan Stowell opened swank, serene Union downtown in 2003, Seattle fell for his unpretentious, upscale Italian-inspired cuisine. Barely more than a year ago, Ethan uncorked trendy Tivolàta, with a menu full of tender homemade pastas—the city swooned, and the country took notice.

Now, the 2008 James Beard nominee's latest restaurant, How to Cook a Wolf, has Seattle's foodies huffing and puffing their way up Queen Anne Hill to line up in the late afternoon for one of the already-too-tiny restaurant's 28 seats.

Despite its insta-success, How to Cook a Wolf manages to retain the homey neighborhood feel that

Ethan intended when he opened it in late November. Well, except for the fact that locals are crossing town and folks are flying in from everywhere from New York to San Francisco for chef de cuisine Ryan Weed's dreamy haute snack food: stunning, simple bites like beef carpaccio with spicy olive oil, shaved parmigiano-reggiano cheese, and fat anchovies, or roasted fingerling potatoes topped with a fried duck egg.

Inevitably, the launch of Ethan's third (and counting?) restaurant has ignited chatter about his apparent role change from stovetop chef to owner of what some are calling a blossoming restaurant empire.

But the "e" word makes Ethan cringe. "The way

LEFT Dad—màître d' Kent Stowell (left), wife—wine director Angela Stowell, and chef—co-owner Ethan Stowell. **TOP RIGHT** Eight of the 28 seats at How to Cook a Wolf are at the bar. **BOTTOM RIGHT** Seared sea scallops with artichoke purée and taggiasca olives.

Travel | Good taste

I see it, I have three very different restaurants,” he says, brushing aside comparisons to Seattle celeb chef Tom Douglas, whose successful restaurants, cookbooks, and food products make him a front man for the local culinary scene. “I’m happy,” says Ethan. “For now.”

Family matters

Unlike Ethan’s other two restaurants, How to Cook a Wolf is a family project.

“I wasn’t looking to open another restaurant,” swears the 34-year-old chef. But last summer, two years after his parents, Kent Stowell and Francia Russell, retired as co-artistic directors of the Pacific Northwest Ballet, Francia rang the youngest of her three sons.

“She said, ‘Your dad needs a hobby,’” recalls Ethan, who attributes his love for cooking and his relaxed, seasonal cooking style to his father. (Despite the ballet’s hectic performance schedules, Kent cooked the family dinner nearly every night.) Two days later, they found a small space and named it for M.F.K. Fisher’s book *How to Cook a Wolf* because Francia has always been a huge fan of the famed food writer.

With Kent at the door and Ethan’s wife, Angela Stowell, directing the wine list, How to Cook a Wolf achieves the casual atmosphere of a mom-and-pop trattoria despite its minimalist, dapper decor. “Angela is the friendliest person in the entire world, and my dad wants to talk to everyone,” Ethan says. “There’s this family chemistry that makes people feel at home.”

Except, adds Kent, “I’m always starving. It’s tough to work while all that lovely food passes by.”



LEFT Sous chef Jason Stoneburner pinches ravioli filled with chicken livers. **BOTTOM ROW** Trofie pasta with parsley-walnut pesto and pecorino-toscana cheese; the decor at How to Cook a Wolf is as simple and tasteful as the dishes.



Dine Stowell-style

All three of Ethan Stowell’s Seattle restaurants show an Italian influence, but each has a taste of its own

| RESTAURANT | BEST FOR | ON THE MENU | THE LOOK | WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW | FROM A LOCAL'S MOUTH |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| How to Cook a Wolf \$\$; closed Tue–Wed; 2208 Queen Anne Ave. N.; 206/838-8090 | Grabbing a casual bite after catching the sunset from the Space Needle | Small plates like <i>tairagai</i> (clam) crudo with chiles and lime (\$16), seared sea scallops (\$14), and beef carpaccio (\$13) | Blond spruce planks form a curved ceiling that echoes the shape of a wine barrel | Wolf has a small staff of six, which is probably why the servers know customers by name | “Looks like Queen Anne has its new favorite restaurant.” |
| Tavolàta \$\$; 2323 Second Ave.; 206/838-8008 | Dinner after a show; late-night toasting, pickups, and people-watching | Asparagus with fried duck egg (\$14), bucatini with pork jowl (\$15), whole grilled branzino (\$29) | Industrial-sleek with a stunning 26-foot-long blackened-steel chandelier | The wood for the communal table that gives Tavolàta its name comes from nearby Vashon Island | “Does it smell like doughnuts in here?” asks a woman, walking by a couple sharing a bowl of hot <i>zeppole</i> . |
| Union \$\$; 1400 First Ave.; 206/838-8000 | Dinner before the symphony at downtown Seattle’s Benaroya Hall | Risotto with crispy pig’s ear (\$14), geoduck (\$15), veal sweetbreads (\$16), fava-bean soup (\$12), ocean trout (\$15) | Bright, oversize paintings by Seattle artist Adde Russell | This year Union began to emphasize smaller portions, so diners can taste three or four courses | “Wait, did we get the bar menu? I thought this place was more expensive.” ■ |