



## AMUSE BOUCHE

## Culinary Ascent

THE NORTHERNMOST ITALIAN PROVINCE OF South Tyrol has always been a fêted playground among Europe's clued-up and well-off outdoorsy set. Endowed with rugged peaks and lush, vineyard-covered valleys, this outdoor Xanadu sees Moncler-clad visitors raising après-ski flutes in the winter and hikers peregrinating uphill and down dale in the summer.

But this uniquely bilingual region of the Dolomites, bordered by Austria to the north and Switzerland to the west, is now adding first-rate haute cuisine to its lofty natural draws. Eleven of South Tyrol's restaurants boast Michelin stars—and the five that follow here are newbies that received their prestigious first accolades in 2007 (retaining them for 2008). While that honor usually equates to an abrupt hike in prices and attitudes, at these countrified eateries you can still expect to encounter friendly polyglot service and inventive, locally sourced fare.

■ **Anna Stuben**, [www.annastuben.com](http://www.annastuben.com). This traditional Tyrolean eatery has just four tables at which guests indulge in the Mediterranean-inspired creations of noted local chef Armin Mairhofer. His fuss-free specialties include starters like homemade *pici* noodles served with summer truffle and *fossa* cheese and main courses such as lamb with coffee-encrusted tuna. For dessert, the creole tonka chocolate roll with chilled cream of cedar wood, tobacco and rum is an original take on decadence.