

FOOD // RESTAURANTS

Go to this new Bay Area restaurant for a devastating cake

By **MacKenzie Chung Fegan**, Restaurant Critic
May 31, 2025

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Amara, a new Mediterranean restaurant in Belmont, serves a salty-sweet masterpiece of a pistachio opera cake.
MacKenzie Chung Fegan/S.F. Chronicle

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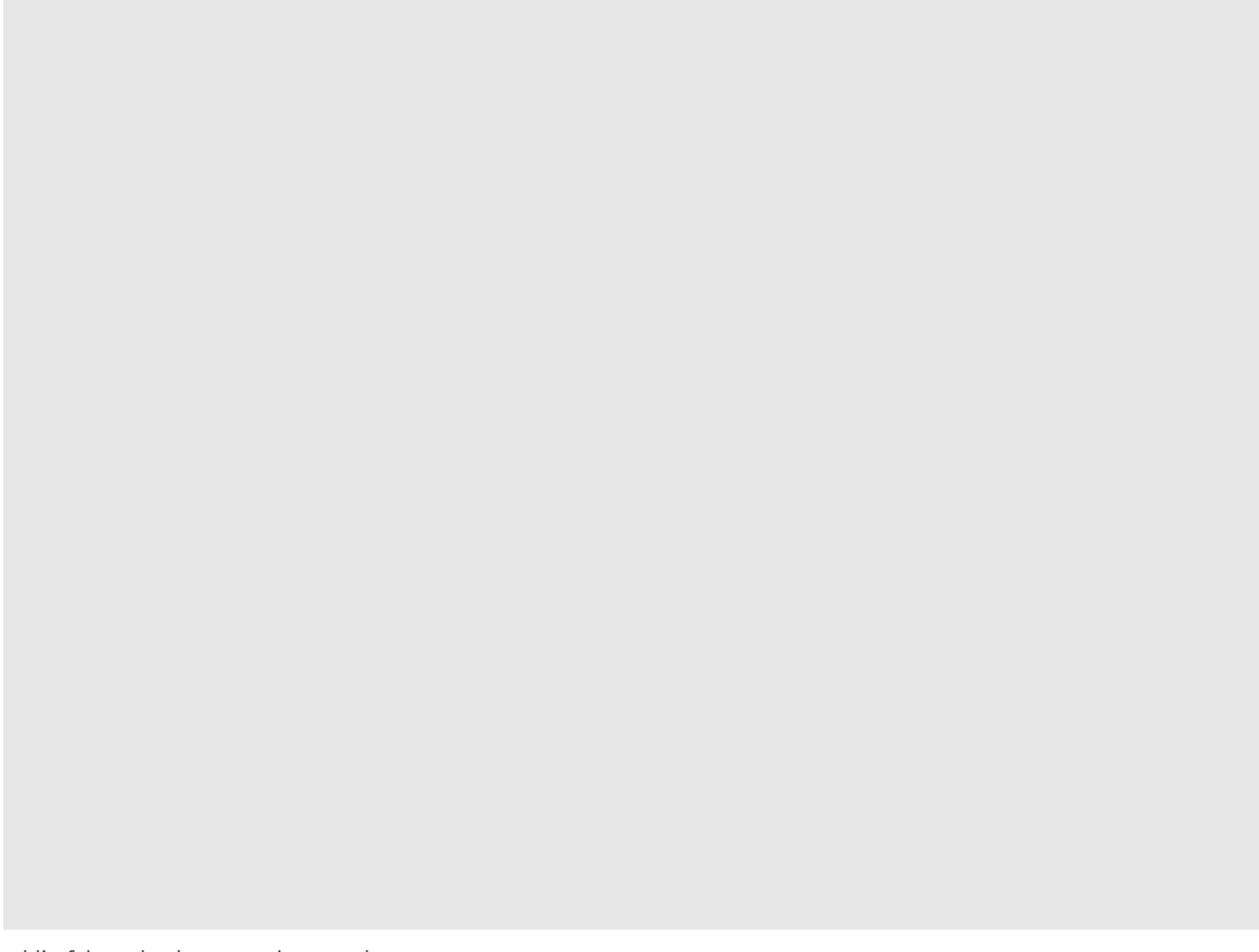
Full Episode

Each week, critic MacKenzie Chung Fegan shares some of her favorite recent bites, the dishes and snacks and baked goods that didn't find their way into a full review. Want the list a few days earlier? Sign up for her free newsletter, *Bite Curious*.

The morning after eating at **Amara**, a Mediterranean restaurant from the owners of **Rasa** that opened earlier this year, I messaged my colleague and fellow person-with-a-sweet-tooth Elena Kadvany. "There's a dessert you should know about," I Slacked. The dessert in question is Amara's praline pistachio opera cake, a nutty, chocolatey, salty layered confection that checks all my boxes. I loved the textural contrasts of the tahini pistachio and chocolate caramel mousses with the crunchy feuilletine and candied nuts. I would drive down to Belmont and make a light, pistachio-heavy dinner of Amara's green hummus (so hued because of ramps and herbs, in addition to pistachios) and that opera cake.

Amara. 1015 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont. amararestaurants.com

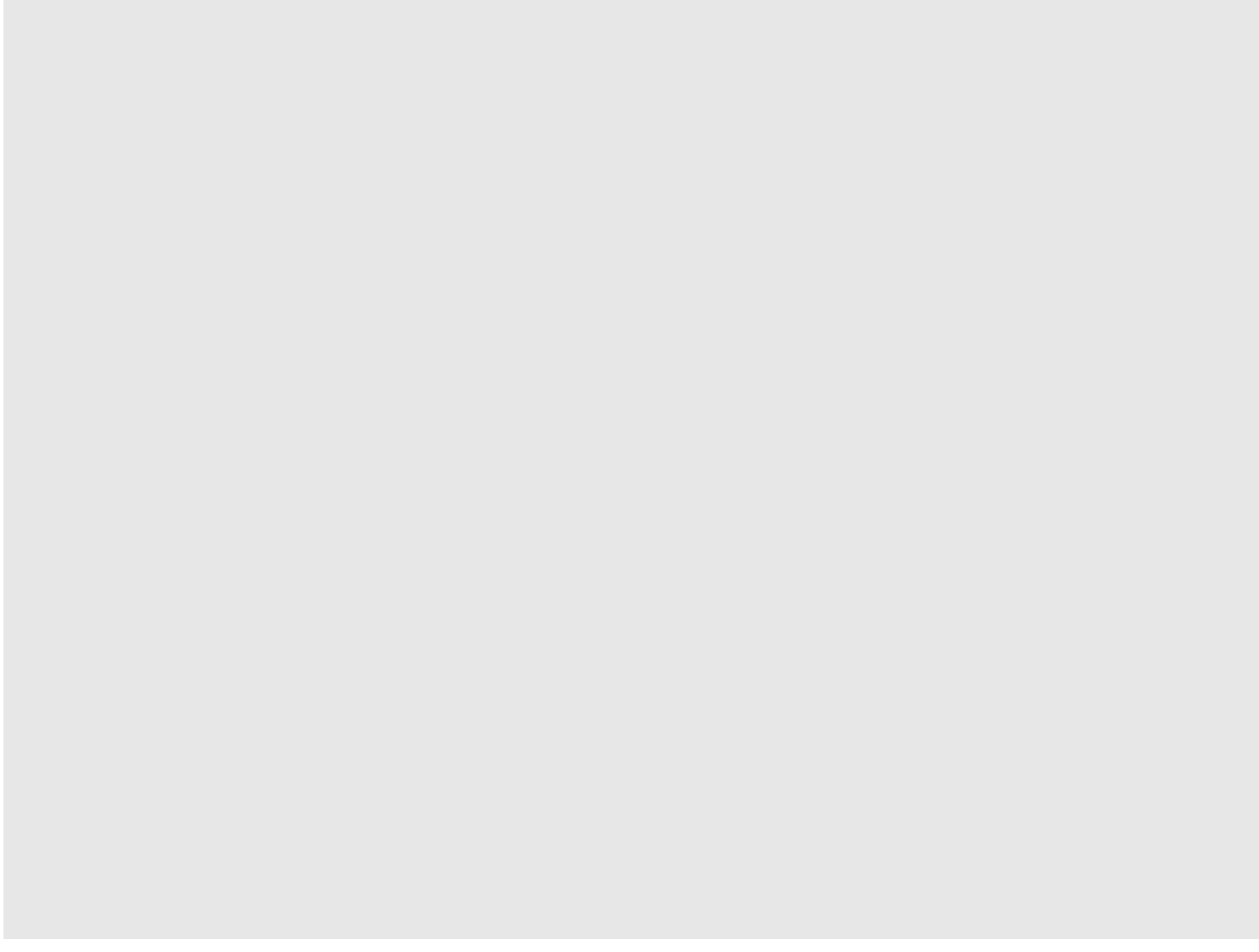
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A blissful overlap between cherry and pea season.
MacKenzie Chung Fegan/S.F. Chronicle

The liminal zone around Memorial Day is one of my favorite times of the year to eat. Summer fruits and veg are tiptoeing their way out of the wings while spring produce is on stage, belting out its swan song. Case in point: the halibut crudo recently on the menu at **Nopa**. Yes there are the season's first cherries, roughly smashed and perked up with finely minced shallots, but there are also peas. It's a colorful composition, very Abstract Expressionist, with the fish, cherries and pea pistou sprinkled with poppy seeds and drizzled with herb oil.

Nopa. 560 Divisadero St., San Francisco. nopa.sf.com



Fried softshell crab served with corn and ramps.
MacKenzie Chung Fegan/S.F. Chronicle

Delfina served me another blisteringly good spring-summer mashup in the form of a fried soft shell crab dish, smoky with chile oil. There was also a puddle of what the menu described as "granturfo" aioli — a term that I am now finding to be unGooglable (perhaps a typo for "granturco"), but which our lovely server described as the Italian version of huitlacoche. On the side? The first corn I've had this season tangled together with the cultiest of spring cult vegetables, ramps.

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Delfina. 3621 18th St., San Francisco. delfina.sf.com

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MacKenzie Chung Fegan

RESTAURANT CRITIC

MacKenzie Chung Fegan became the San Francisco Chronicle's Restaurant Critic in 2024. Her reviews cover everything from hot new restaurants to Bay Area classics. Previously, Fegan was a senior editor at Bon Appétit, and her writing on the intersection of food, drinks, culture and politics has appeared in GQ, Playboy, Vice, Paper and Wine Enthusiast. Her profile of chef Brandon Jew appears in the 2021 edition of "The Best American Food Writing."

As a critic, she tries to experience restaurants like a typical diner, making reservations under different names. She doesn't accept free meals. The Chronicle pays for all of her research.

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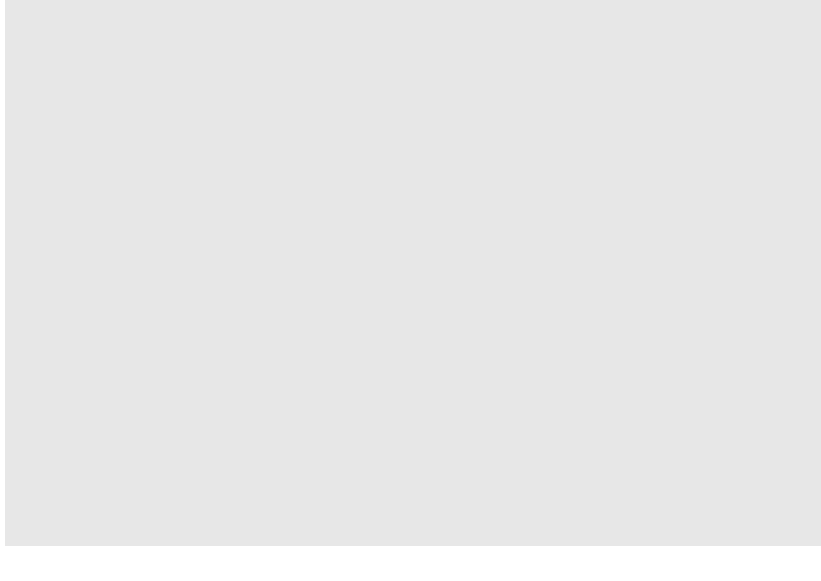
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