

FOOD+DRINK Trends



PASS BY ON: Sharing the wealth during a Sunday supper at the Metropolitan Club.

Platter Up!

On the heels of the shared-plates craze, Hub restaurants put a twist on the old-fashioned Sunday family dinner. **By A. R. Shafer**

On a recent Sunday night at the North End's **Marco**, sippy cups and bottles of red wine littered a large table as three generations of the Nortz family passed heaping platters of pasta and rack of lamb. They'd come for the restaurant's weekly family-style dinner, a just-like-Nonna-used-to-make feast designed to give harried urban

clans a chance to enjoy a traditional Sunday meal, without the cooking or clean up. "My husband works, I work," says Maria Nortz, holding 18-month-old Ryan on her hip. "This kind of dinner is a huge relief."

It's also good business. Restaurants often struggle to fill seats on Sunday evenings, but many are now finding that

family-friendly diners attract regulars. That's what chef Will Gibson of **Garden at the Cellar** in Cambridge hopes will happen with his Sunday Small Plates, a menu of made-to-share dishes like honey-glazed short ribs and tomato soup with grilled cheese bites. The Back Bay's **Vlora** has begun offering a Sunday lineup of signature Mediterranean dishes, served in single or shared portions, while the **Metropolitan Club** in Chestnut Hill sets monthly themes for its prix fixe Sunday Supper series (recent menus explored the foods of Portugal and New England). And **Vela** in Wellesley hosts Sunday Pasta Nights: Adults pick three courses from a limited menu, while kids get pasta and ice cream for just \$8.

Of course, at all of these spots, diners can skip the communal platters and order individual dishes off the menu. But sharing is half the fun. The other: going to bed without washing the dishes.

Garden at the Cellar, 991 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, 617-230-5980, gardenatthecellar.com; **Marco**, 253 Hanover St., Boston, 617-742-1276, marcoboston.com; **the Metropolitan Club**, 1210 Boylston St., Chestnut Hill, 617-731-0600, metclubandbar.com; **Vela**, 312 Washington St., Wellesley Hills, 781-235-4449, velawellesley.com; **Vlora**, 545 Boylston St., Boston, 617-638-9699, vloraboston.com.