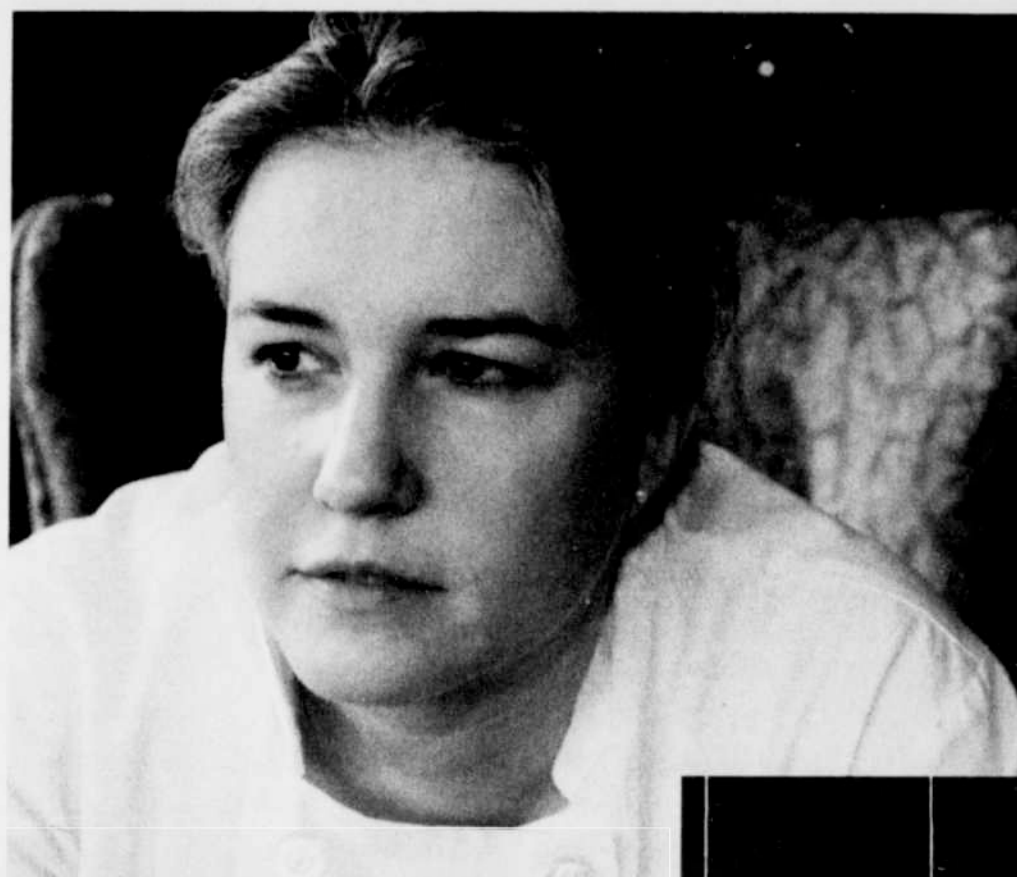




Clockwise from top left: Sarah Schafer, Gregory Gourdet, Robert Reynolds.

Boston native returned home for three years before heading to New York, Gramercy Tavern and work with Colicchio (also of *Top Chef* fame). Within six months, she was promoted to sous chef—the first female to do so in the prestigious Danny Meyer organization.

Eventually her talents brought her to the West Coast, where she worked in San Francisco before opening up Irving Street Kitchen last May. The move wasn't a strictly professional one; Schafer has family in the area.

"I heard you have healing rain here," quips Schafer. "No, really I have visited my brother and his family here many times and always wanted to live here."

When asked if it's more difficult to be a woman or an out gay person in the kitchen, the get-to-the-point chef says, "Being a woman, of course. No one in the kitchen really cares if you're gay—and if they do they are not worth working for or with."

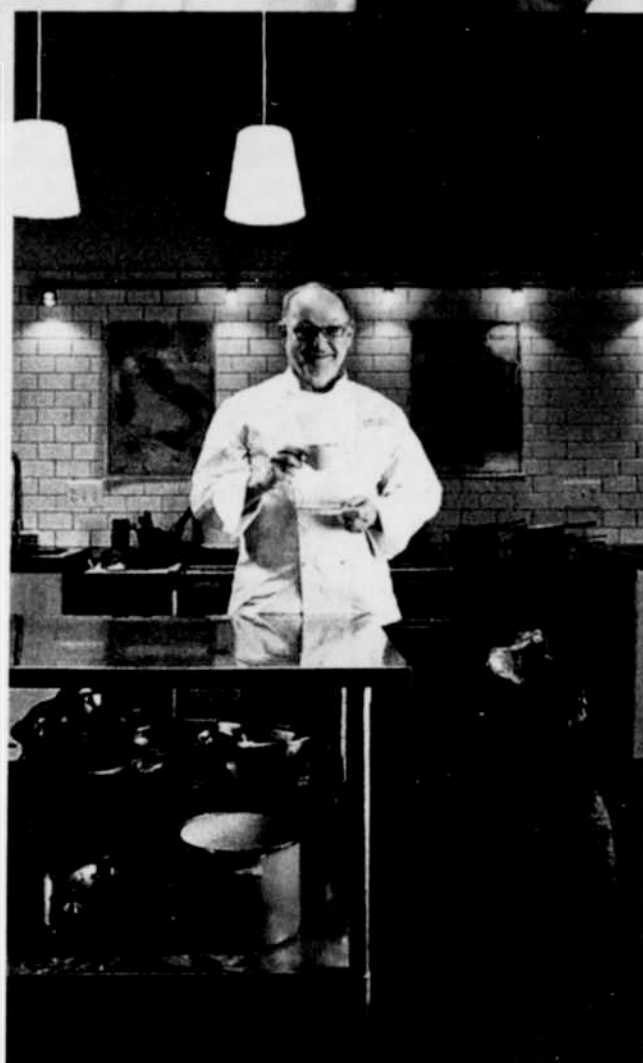
That no-nonsense approach blends well with Irving Street's style—that with Schafer's help is building a loyal following, thanks to her classical French technique as filtered through an American regional menu, with a slight Southern twang. And when she's not in the kitchen at work, Schafer can often be found in the kitchen at home. "The other day I made brioche and prune-stuffed quail for my girlfriend. We enjoyed it with a delicious Vouvray," says Schafer.

"But I do have moments when I love a little Louis Prima and a good Bolognese."

Irving Street Kitchen, 701 NW 13th St., 503-343-9440, irvingstreetkitchen.com. Dinner served Mon.-Thurs., 5:30-10 p.m., Fri.-Sat. until 11 p.m., Sun., 5-9:30 p.m.; weekend brunch served Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Gregory Gourdet

Prior to pursuing a culinary career, Gregory Gourdet was a dreadlocked vegetarian dishwasher in a Missoula, Mont. deli—as well as a pre-med student who wound up earning a degree in French. Those aren't exactly the qualifications one might expect of a native



"Everyone cooks honestly here. You have to admire that. I also believe everyone in the scene supports each other. That is really important in a small community like ours."

-GREGORY GOURDET

New Yorker who would then go on to hone his culinary skills in celebrity chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's famed Big Apple restaurant dynasty—but Gourdet has always been a bit of a trailblazer.

The trail would lead Gourdet to Oregon in 2008, when he helped open the Urban Farmer restaurant in the Nines Hotel before serving as executive chef for Saucebox. Not long ago he returned to the top of The Nines, literally, as Departure restaurant's chef de cuisine.

When he's not in the kitchen Gourdet, 35, is something of a workout fiend. You'll find him at the gym both day and middle of the night. So what makes Gourdet run?

"I am a party animal," he says. "I have always been. I spent all my nights [for a decade] in New York running around, out and about and clubbing. It was fun as hell but caught up with me and took a toll. I decided I wanted to change a lot of things about me a couple years ago and refocused all that energy into healthy

and positive things."

Gourdet credits Portland for the lifestyle change. "I was an overweight smoker with the wrong priorities a few years back," he explains. "Today I am a marathoner, part-time vegan and yogi. ... I've run six marathons since being here. I have run an ultra-marathon ... I think it's pretty fierce to say I'm an ultra runner. I've always been one to push myself to the limits. I think it's just an edge I got growing up in the city."

That edge serves him well at the high-flying Departure, known as much for its futuristic ambiance as it is for its cuisine. Gourdet brings to the table his love of Asian cooking mixed with Northwest flavors. "Departure is an amazing place to work," he says. "It is nice to be able to offer Portlanders something a little different ... and fun. I strive really hard to make delicious, interesting and healthy food [and] the views from our rooftop decks are unbelievable any time of day. It only makes you appreciate Portland that much more to see how beautiful the city is."

As for Portland's larger cuisine scene? "I had mixed feelings about the cuisine here in the beginning," says Gourdet, who explains that a lot of restaurants "kind of tasted the same" to him. But, he's quick to add, "The resources here are outstanding. ... I have been fortunate enough to befriend a lot of people in the Portland food scene and I have so much respect for everything that they do. ... Everyone cooks honestly here. You have to admire that. I also believe everyone in the scene supports each other. That is really important in a small community like ours."

Departure, 525 SW Morrison St., 503-802-5370, departureportland.com. Dinner served Tues.-Thurs., 4 p.m.-midnight, Fri.-Sat. until 2 a.m.

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