

## **Portland, Maine's Front Room Restaurant Capping Off First Year's Instant Success**

**Portland, Maine**(9/14/06) - Portland, ME - "Comfort Food" has successfully been reinvented by a Portland chef, according to food press and daily crowds filling the city's popular Front Room Restaurant. Known for its seasonal, innovative menu; affordable, innovative dishes and drinks; and, its feel as a genuine neighborhood gathering place, Portland residents and visitors are only too willing to wait by the door each night for a table at Chef/Owner Harding Smith's Front Room, already a staple on the New England culinary map.

Filled to capacity nearly every night since its opening last year, Front Room Restaurant continues to garner enthusiastic acclaim from regional and local press, including Down East Magazine, The Portland Press Herald, Portland Magazine, MaineToday.com, and The Portland Forecaster. Additionally, in a nod to the restaurant's nearly instant and very loyal fan base, The Portland Phoenix recognized Front Room as the city's Best New Restaurant of 2006.

Patrons are enjoying Front Room favorites such as Slow-Braised Beef Shortribs, Oven-Roasted Pork Chop with Cheddar Potatoes, and Skillet-Roasted Salmon with Creamed Corn, Bacon and Spinach. Fresh vegetarian options that incorporate locally grown produce - such as the restaurant's flavorful Mushroom Ragu with Cheesy Polenta - also are available. Popular side orders at Front Room include Pan-fried Potato Gnocchi, Parmesan Rissoto, and Skillet Cornbread (Front Room produces all of its breads and desserts in-house).

In an age when so many restaurants sink in their first year, Front Room's success represents something of an anomaly: the restaurant's figures exceeded Smith's projections fourfold since its 2005 opening.

"I think what we've got here is something unique in its simplicity. People want flavorful, innovative dishes that aren't 'over the top,' that they can easily afford, and that they know they can count on as 'surefire' bets," noted Smith, who trained both in Italy and at the CIA, Napa Valley's campus. "Front Room is a good illustration of meeting dining consumers' demands and preferences, plain and simple.

"We were confident in our game plan when we first opened our doors last year, but we honestly had no idea we'd be serving full houses so quickly," he added. "Customers have told us that what's been missing in Portland is an old-time 'neighborhood restaurant,' and that's the space we're filling. You can walk into Front Room any day of the week, and find a construction crew happily filling up next to a table full of business execs. People are enjoying our menu, which we certainly appreciate, but I think that authentic neighborhood dynamic is also part of Front Room's draw."

Smith recently kicked off a new 4 pm - 7 pm happy hour at Front Room which will offer a variety of nightly specials for patrons. Front Room's happy hour already is proving a popular addition to Smith's daily breakfast, lunch and dinner services. Known for its affordably priced wine selection (a mix of classic varietals), most of Front Room's 15 white and 15 red New World wines are available by the glass and carafe. Unique beer choices are offered to patrons as well, including the British "Black Sheep Ale" and Belgian "Duvel Ale".

Front Room Restaurant is located in the heart of Portland's scenic Eastern Promenade neighborhood, steps from the Casco Bay, at 73 Congress Street and the corner of Howard. The restaurant serves brunch daily from 8 am until 2:30 pm, dinner Monday-Saturday from 5 pm until 10 pm, and Sunday dinners from 4 pm until 9 pm. Drinks are served at Front Room's bar nightly until 11 pm.

For more information, please visit [www.thefrontroomrestaurant.com](http://www.thefrontroomrestaurant.com) or call 207/773-3366.

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