

**While Nashville's dining** landscape is forever expanding with quality and choice, the size of the average eatery just might be shrinking - and what a lovely contraction it is. In fact, one of the most delicious silver linings of the recent economic turmoil might be that entrepreneurs started to think smaller. From Thai food to vegan fare, restaurateurs are building dining rooms and menus of such manageable proportions that they can polish every facet to make it shine.

Surely no new establishment has generated more enthusiastic buzz than **Silly Goose** in East Nashville (1888 Eastland Ave., 915-0757), which barely seats 20 people in its sunny mural-adorned room with an open kitchen. With just a handful of sandwiches, salads, and couscous medleys on the menu, Silly Goose relies on quality rather than quantity, and the

colorful meals brimming with local ingredients and whimsy (beet ice cream, anyone?) are more than enough to turn Roderick Bailey's tiny restaurant into the next big thing.

Three years of laborious carpentry went into **The Smiling Elephant** (2213 8th Ave. S., 891-4488) in the cottage above an auto-repair shop on Eighth Avenue. Owner Sam Kopsumbut hand-carved the gorgeous wooden detailing and brought in a noodle cart from Thailand to serve as the centerpiece of the intimate room. The same level of detail and authenticity goes into the menu of family recipes - which includes a front-runner for best pad Thai in town.

Across the street at **Fiddle-**

gluten-free and vegan-friendly - has filled the twee bungalow with so many grateful diners that owners Lindsay Beckner and Tasha Ross brought in picnic tables for the front yard.

A front yard is all there is at **I Dream of Weenie** (1106 Woodland St., 226-2622). The mustard-yellow VW bus, beached near Five Points in East Nashville, doles out a string of wieners to a dogged clientele that lunches on the lawn in front of Art & Invention Gallery. Stay tuned for Slow Food Dog Days, when the sausages and toppings are all made locally.

If you prefer dinner (or lunch) and a show, head to **Porta Via** (21 White Bridge Road #104, 356-0001), where picture windows into the kitchen give a view of bustling cooks tossing and twirling crusts in the air. Each thin pie cooks for only a few minutes in the infernally hot brick oven, but that doesn't mean you won't have to wait for your meal. Food as good as Porta Via's draws a crowd, and there's a predictable queue at the lunch and dinner rush hours. Rest assured it's worth the wait. Good things come in small packages.

**CARRINGTON FOX**



SMALL IS  
BEAUTIFUL

#### **Cakes**

(2206 8th Ave.

S., 457-2127), the

roster of sandwiches, salads

and pastries - many of which are