

On the Road

TASTES

Soul food's new groove

» It's typically bargain-priced and superrich, but soul food is dished up with plenty of love. Now enterprising chefs are taking it uptown. "I make sure people can enjoy this cuisine and be healthy," says Glenn "Gator" Thompson, chef at **Gator's Neo-Soul Café** in San Mateo, Calif., (650-685-8100, www.gatorsneosoul.com). Some 27 seasonings, including curry, go into his oven-roasted catfish.

At San Francisco's **1300 on Fillmore** (415-771-7100, www.1300fillmore.com), David Lawrence lists foie gras on the menu next to pork belly and pairs truffled mashed potatoes with fried chicken. Across town, **Brenda's French Soul Food** (415-345-8100, [\[food.com\]\(http://food.com\)\) serves ethereal biscuits with house-made jam, plus New Orleans favorites such as po'boys, gumbo, and beignets with fillings of crawfish, apples, or chocolate. Close by, **FarmerBrown** \(415-409-3276, \[www.farmerbrownsf.com\]\(http://www.farmerbrownsf.com\)\) has menu items from homey \(fried chicken with macaroni and cheese\) to hip \(watermelon margaritas\).](http://www.frenchsoul</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Oakland's **Sweetie Pie and Poppy's Southern Cuisine** (510-547-9743) serves classic soul, but the vegetables are crisp and pork free. Not far away, French-trained Tanya Holland, author of *New Soul Cooking*, has just opened **Brown Sugar Kitchen** (510-839-7685, www.brownsugarkitchen.com).

Although **Table 260 Restaurant**



"We're going to make you feel like company," Gator Thompson says.

in Elk Grove (916-683-3260, www.table260.com) offers such fusion fare as garlic-roasted crab, partner Shalawn Garcia-Smith claims patrons drive from Modesto just for the grits. "We attract a diverse crowd," she says. —GAYLE KECK