

**FROM** : Salma Abdelnour  
**SUBJECT** : Kansas City, Missouri



A quick two-day trip to Kansas City seemed reasonable—until I discovered how many great new places have opened. If I lived there, I'd be a regular at **Aesthetica** (1817 Wyandotte St.; 816-421-5455), a new design shop with wickedly well-chosen odds and ends like Bella Cucina condiments and blown-glass bowls and vases by Infinity. As I stood reading mock diary entries about a love affair that are scribbled on the wall, the clerk asked, "Do you want to have some fun?" Of course I did. So he put on a CD called *Femmes de Paris* and played "These Boots are Made for Walking" in French. Nearby, the new **Hammerpress** (1919 Wyandotte St.; 816-421-1929) stocks retro-cool stationery (above) with slogans like "Strangers Need Coffee." I barely had

time to drop my shopping bags in my minimalist suite at the Art Deco **Hotel Phillips**, built in the 1930s and recently renovated (from \$120; 106 W. 12th St.; 800-433-1426), before I was off again.

But I did more than just shop; I ate extremely well too, and not just barbecue. **Bluestem** (900 Westport Rd.; 816-561-1101), created by Colby Garrelts and his wife, Megan, the pastry chef (both formerly of Tru in Chicago) is an intimate 14-table restaurant that could hold its own in any city. The chestnut soup with farro, Brie and lardons sounded dicey, but it was delicious: chestnut puree with artisanal Brie (not the bland supermarket kind), and chewy bacon bits. At **Fervere** bakery (1702 Summit St.; 816-842-7272), Fred Spompinato (right) makes some of the best ciabatta and olive-rosemary bread I've ever tasted. And I even found glamorous-looking chocolates in a shop at the back of **High Cotton** furniture shop (118 Southwest

Blvd.; 816-842-1300). Former pastry chef Christopher Elbow started selling candies—like a dark-chocolate dome infused with fresh mint—there last year.

I couldn't leave Kansas City without eating barbecue. "Burnt ends," or charred brisket bits, are a KC specialty, and the ones at five-year-old **Fiorella's Jack Stack** are fabulous: juicy, smoky and topped with a tangy tomato-based sauce (101 W. 22nd St.; 816-472-7427). I learned a restaurant doesn't have to be old to serve killer barbecue.

