

In Palm Beach, as in all the world's fashionable places, there always is a white-hot restaurant of the moment. But it takes a real classic to outlive the hoopla, and Ta-Boo has proved itself worthy of that distinction. Established in 1941 and still going strong, this American original is as famous as its Worth Avenue address. Around Palm Beach, it's known as the prime watering hole, where the crowd is as beautiful as the martinis are cold. Come on a Friday night, and you'll know what we mean: The bar is stacked three-deep with patrons waiting for a table-or just the chance to be seen. As someone once said, "if you weren't seen at Ta-boo, you weren't seen in Palm Beach."



People-watching, of course, has been a longstanding tradition at Ta-Boo. Some of the world's most famous faces-Frank Sinatra, John F. Kennedy and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, for starters-have been spotted here. These days, you're likely to see Celine Dion, Michael Caine, Monica Seles, Jessica Lange, Bobby Short or Ray Liotta. But in addition to Ta-Boo's history, what attracts these luminaries, and lesser mortals, is the cozy, convivial atmosphere.

Recently, Ta-Boo was named one of the 10 Best American Bistros by Trend/Wire weekly newsletter, which declared it "a comfy neighborhood place-but wow what a neighborhood!" Among the criteria for the award: a predominantly American menu and wine list; a sense of place; never seeming pretentious; patrons from the neighborhood; and dinner checks for under \$35. "We have customers who eat at Ta-Boo three nights a week as their neighborhood bistro," co-owner Nancy Simmons

says.

The dining areas are designed for intimate conversation. With tropical- floral banquettes, rattan chairs, paddle fans and a baby grand, Ta-Boo looks as if it came straight off the set of "Casablanca."

The dimly lit bar is cozy and romantic, with just a hint of mystery. Rumor has it that it was here that the first Bloody Mary was poured, for no less a patron than Barbara Hutton. The recipe, we're told, has not changed since the 1940s. Although many have come for the ambiance, they have stayed for the food with a menu ranging from chicken salad to prime rib to sea bass, with favorites including the warm steak salad, fresh Dover sole meuniere and crispy duck. "We have a winning combination," Simmons says, "but we continue trying to improve and make what we have even better."