

OBSERVER GUIDE TO RESTAURANTS & PARTY PLANNING



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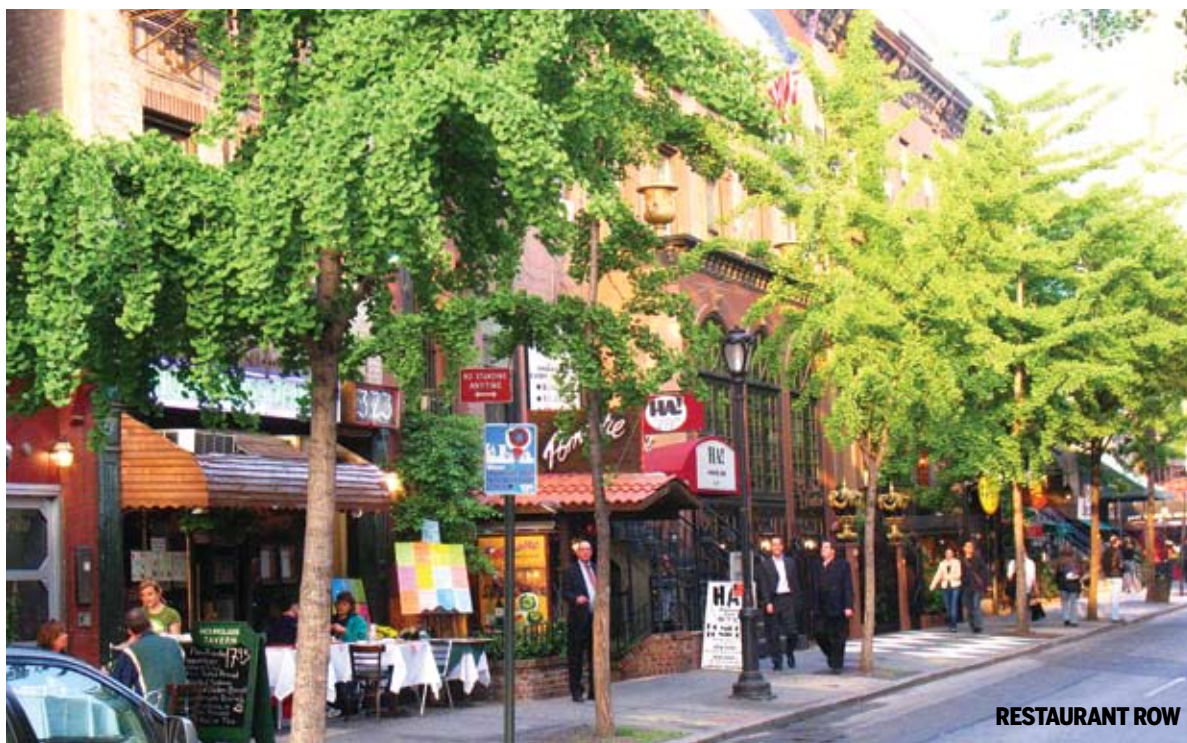
With some of the finest food and the greatest chefs and party spaces in the world, the New York restaurant scene is still alive and thriving.

BY JILLIAN BLUME

New York, according to *Food & Wine's* Go List 2009, is considered one of the world's best food cities. With some of the best chefs on the planet working at restaurants in our city, there's never a shortage of great food to explore. You'll find just about every world cuisine represented here and every type of restaurant, from haute couture elegance to over-the-top drama.

Prices range from the modest to the extravagant. New York is home to some of the priciest dishes, like the world's most expensive dessert at Serendipity 3. For \$25,000, you can order the Frozen Haute Chocolate, a blend of 28 cocoas, with 14 of the most expensive and exotic from around the world. The dessert is infused with edible 23-karat gold, topped with whipped cream and more gold, and served with a side of La Madeline au Truffle from Knipschildt Chocolatier (which costs \$250 for 1.9 ounces). It's served in a goblet lined with edible 23-karat gold. There's a gold bracelet with a karat of diamonds around the base and a gold spoon adorned with white and chocolate diamonds that you can take home. It makes their \$1,000 Golden Opulence Sundae look like a bargain.

And speaking of bargains, the restaurants in New York are adjusting to the recession. Many are lowering their prices or offering more economical prix fixe menus and lower-cost specials. And though the city has seen some casualties, with Zagat reporting 102 closings this year, 157 notable restaurants have opened. So go out and take advantage of lower prices, late hours, great party spaces, and some of the best food on the planet.



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October 25, 2009 marks the kick-off of the Austrian Wine Month in New York. Until November 22nd, a unique selection of restaurants in NYC—many offering Austrian cuisine—will be celebrating remarkable wines from Lower Austria, Burgenland, and Vienna.

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And starting October 25th, enter to win an unforgettable trip to this enchanting countryside! Just go to austria.info/wine and take a short quiz*.

Good luck, and we'll see you in Austria soon!

MAKE SURE YOU TRY THESE RESTAURANTS...

Watty & Meg
248 Court Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718.643.0007
wattyandmeg.com

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422 7th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215
718.369.7776
cafeSteinhof.com

Wallsé
344 West 11th Street
New York, NY 10014
212.352.2300
kg-ny.com

Demel New York
1 West 58th Street
New York, NY 10019
212.572.0989
demel.com

Delmonico's
56 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004
212.509.1144
delmonicosny.com

Stone Park Café
324 5th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215
718.369.0082
stoneparkcafe.com

Café Sabarsky
1048 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10028
212.288.0665
kg-ny.com

Cafe Katja
79 Orchard Street
New York, NY 10002
212.219.9545
cafe-katja.com

Seasonal
132 West 58th Street
New York, NY 10019
212.957.5550
seasonalnyc.com

The Upholstery Store
713 Washington Street
(2 doors down
from Wallsé)
New York, NY 10014

Thomas Beisl
25 Lafayette Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718.222.5800

Blaue Gans
139 Duane Street
New York, NY 10013
212.571.8880
kg-ny.com

Klee Brasserie
200 9th Avenue
New York, NY 10011
212.633.8033
kleebrasserie.com

L'Ecole
462 Broadway
New York, NY 10013
212.219.3300
frenchculinary.com/lecole

For more information, visit austria.info/wine

* Complete details, rules and regulations at austria.info/wine. No purchase necessary.

Pre-Theater Dining

There's a little known area of the city called Restaurant Row in the heart of the Theater District on 46th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues. A leafy street lined on both sides by restaurants, you'll find cuisines from around the world and a variety of places to hear live music, comedy shows, cabarets, or relax in a piano bar. Despite its proximity to Times Square, the street has an intimate, neighborhood vibe.

"The block is extremely diverse," says Aldin Mamish of the Restaurant Row Association. "But Restaurant Row is not famous in New York. People don't know it exists." There are 33 restaurants on the block, and around 11 international cuisines are represented, such as French, Chilean, Italian, Thai, Spanish, Russian, and Southern. "It's within walking distance of the Broadway theater district, so it's perfect for a meal before the show. An afterwards, you can have a drink or something to eat because many of these restaurants stay open late and have special late night menus." The Restaurant Row Association gives people the option of making online reservations for any restaurant at the Times Square Information Center on 7th Avenue between 46th and 47th Streets.

There are some real neighborhood secrets like the Hourglass Tavern with its cozy, artsy rooms, friendly staff, and great home-cooked food. You'll also find some unusual venues on this street, such as Don't Tell Mama, a piano bar and cabaret where Chef Bradley Anderson prepares New American cuisine, and dinner is served until 11pm with the piano bar remaining open until 3am. Or drop into Swing 46, described as an intimate supper club, where you can have a meal, listen to some music, and sign up for a dance class.

Mr. Mamish adds, "There are several events held on Restaurant Row each year and one of them is the Taste of Times Square, one of New York City's most popular outdoor food festivals presented by the Times Square Alliance. The event took place on June 8, 2009. Attendees sampled specialty foods from all participating restaurants while enjoying live entertainment. The next event will be held in June 2010."

Check the website for details www.restaurantrownyc.com.



Barbetta
321 West 46th Street
212.246.9171
barbettarestaurant.com

Founded in 1906, this is the oldest restaurant in the city that's still owned by the same family that founded it, and it was the first restaurant in the city to serve a pre-theater menu in 1971. You'll find traditional Italian dishes such as risotto and ratatouille along with free-range organic chicken and Roasted Organic And Herb-Fed Rabbit. In the 1960s, the restaurant began bringing white truffles to their menu, which are hunted by their own truffle hounds (in Italy, truffles are hunted by dogs rather than pigs). Try them in dishes such as Fonduta con Tartufi. (Pre-theater dinner, \$58. Dinner, 5pm-12am.)

Firebird
365 West 46th Street
212.586.0244
www.firebirdrestaurant.com

Designed as a pre-Revolutionary Russian restaurant, the opulent interior emulates the home of St. Petersburg mansion. There are numerous rooms on two floors, bedecked with period antiques, samovars, crystal,

paintings, statues, and original costumes from the Ballet Russe. The first floor Library has shelves of rare Russian books, the second floor Parlor is outfitted with antique chairs and empire sofas, and the Ballroom has a domed ceiling and skylights—and those are only a few of the rooms. The menu is traditional food, with house-cured herring, Ukrainian-style borscht, and dinner items with names like Kotlety Po Kievski (chicken Kiev). The Vodka Menu is phenomenal, with over 160 spirits from around the world, but the honey-infused house vodka is stellar. (Pre fixe dinner \$49.99. Wednesday-Saturday dinner served from 5pm-11pm. Tuesday & Sunday until 9pm.)



La Rivage
340 West 46th Street
212.765.7374
www.lerivagenyc.com

Step into this French country house and relax with a three-course meal of classic food, but don't worry about making the show because the staff will plan your meal to make sure you're on time. The décor features lots of rich wood, earthy brick walls, and

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Pre-Theater Dining



LA RIVAGE

paintings of the French countryside, which are also for sale. Located on Restaurant Row since 1984, Chef Paul Denamiel prepares traditional (and delectable) dishes such as a moist Sole Meunière, which is sautéed with red wine sauce; the classic Coq au Vin; and a juicy Lamb Chops Vert Pré, which is grilled with Burgundy sauce. (Prix fixe dinner, \$37. Tuesday–Saturday until 11pm. Sunday & Monday until 9:30pm.)

Lattanzi
361 West 46th Street
212.315.0980
lattanzinyc.com

Housed in a historic brownstone, the Lattanzi has brought Roman-Jewish cuisine to Restaurant Row. This rustic restaurant has exposed brick and wood beam ceilings, a Skylight Pa-



LATTANZI

tio, and an Open Garden in the back. The food is hearty and distinctive, slow cooked with fragrant spices and olive oil, and it is sure to satisfy. The restaurant has fed the pre-theater crowd for 20 years with a menu of fish, meat, and pasta. Signatures offerings include Carciofi alla Giudica (artichokes cooked in olive oil and garlic), Fettuccine al Ragu (homemade fettuccine with tomato and meat sauce), and Vitello Capriccioso (veal chop with peppers, onion, and marinara sauce). (Monday–Saturday, 12pm–12am.)

Meson Sevilla
344 West 46th Street
212.262.5890
www.mesonsevilla.com

Vibrant colors, arches, copper pots, a tapas bar, and a heady aroma of spices greet guests



MESON SEVILLA

who venture down the stairs to dine at this traditional Spanish restaurant, which has an Old World vibe. Though the menu also features a few Italian dishes, it's the tapas that are a standout with hefty portions and robust flavors. Some of the best include Pulpo A La Gallega (octopus Galician style), Chorizo A La Parrilla (grilled Spanish sausage), and Pimientos De Piquillo (stuffed picadillo peppers). There are also succulent entrées such as the Pork Chops Riojana cooked with peppers, onions, and wine, and Mariscada, a combination of scallops, shrimp, clams, and mussels cooked in an excellent green sauce. (Pre-Theater menu prix fixe \$29.95. Sunday–Thursday until 11pm. Friday & Saturday until 1am.)



Pomaire
371 West 46th Street
212.956.3055
pomairenyc.com

This is the only Chilean restaurant in the city, which is a reason in itself to check it out, and the food will make you happy you did. You'll find a rough-hewn space with brick walls adorned with art, wrought iron lanterns, a colorful backlit ceiling, and the distinct flavors of South America. They have traditional Chilean food such as robust empanadas filled with beef or seafood, ceviche, and clay casserole meals like Pastel de choclo or Meat and corn pie, with seasoned beef, onion, raisin, hard boiled eggs, and chicken topped with sweet corn. Don't forget to sample a Pisco Sour, which is a bit like a margarita but it's made with grape brandy. (Sunday–Thursday, 12pm–11pm; Friday–Saturday until 12am.)

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Hottest New Restaurants

Though having a master chef at the helm always gets people talking, the buzz on a new restaurant is fueled not just by its food, but by its whole presence: its ambience and its decor. Here's a look at some of the best new spaces that have recently opened their doors.

Aureole
One Bryant Park
135 West 42nd Street (bt. Broadway and Sixth Ave.)
212.319.1660
www.charliepalmer.com

Charlie Palmer moved his restaurant to midtown with a new chef, Christopher Lee, and a "progressive American" menu. Designed to suit its flashier home, there's an impressive glass wine mezzanine containing over 3,500 bottles on display above the brushed zinc bar, five custom-made chandeliers,



AUREOLE

and oversized windows with a view of Times Square. It's more informal in the bar area with an à la carte menu featuring far-from-your-typical bar food like the diver sea scallop sandwich topped with sautéed foie gras and served with sugar snap peas, passion fruit, and chives. The dining room proper serves a three-course meal with hearty entrées like the Canadian hard shell lobster tail and Colorado lamb loin. (Dining room is prix fixe \$84; bar menu runs from \$9-\$40.)

Corton
239 West Broadway (bt. Walker and White Sts.)
212.219.2777
www.cortonnyc.com

Sleek and elegant, but with a downtown vibe, it opened with a bang and is still going strong, thanks to chef Paul Liebrandt's fusion of classical French cuisine with a contemporary twist.



CORTON

Rossini's

Located in the charming neighborhood of Murray Hill, Rossini's has been serving fine Northern Italian Cuisine for more than 30 years. The genuine friendliness and warm service makes diners feel right at home in this family owned restaurant.

Rossini's specializes in Northern Italian Cuisine but also features dishes through out the Italian Peninsula. Our cuisine is based on many long standing family recipes as well as new and innovative Italian presentations.

Our menu offers a wide variety of pasta, chicken, veal or fish dishes.

The large chairs and roomy interior provides an ambience that is perfect for the important business lunch or the intimate romantic dinner.

Music has become a mainstay in the daily operation of Rossini's. Saturday nights are our opera night where the "Trio Romantico" sings both popular arias as well as famous Broadway hits. During the week Rossini's has the soft mellow sounds of a pianist Sunday through Friday.

Rossini's has the capacity to entertain large groups of up to 100 people for a sit-down or 200 people for a buffet style party. Whether corporate or personal, our manager Nancy Martino can design the perfect arrangement to make your occasion a success. Choose from Rossini's extensive wine menu for the right pairing with your gourmet meal and ask for Peter Serpica the Matre'D to make sure your visit is one that you will always remember.

BENJAMIN
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52 East 41st Street (btw. Park & Madison Aves.)
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Rossini's

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Telephone: 212.683.0135
 www.rossinisrestaurant.com

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 (Park & Lexington Aves)

Reserve early for Thanksgiving Day

Hottest New Restaurants

The space is serene and uncluttered with under-lit white walls that are embossed white-on-white with vines and leaves and earth-toned furniture. The menu changes frequently to highlight seasonal ingredients, especially in his "From the Garden" dishes containing an abundance of fresh vegetables, which are all prepared differently and always get rave reviews. Menu options have included Elysian Fields Farm Lamb with eggplant chutney, espelette, and anise hysop and Painted Hills Beef with fig, comté, and black olive oil. (Three-course prix fixe \$85; tasting menu \$135.)



Marea
240 Central Park South (bet. Broadway and Seventh Ave.)
212.582.5100
www.marea-nyc.com

The latest venture by chef Michael White and restaurateur Chris Cannon opened this year with some fanfare after the successful launch and lauded menu of last year's newbie Convivio and the previous year's Alto. Imperially designed with a bar of golden Egyptian onyx, floors and walls of Indonesian rosewood, and silver coated seashells, it's the seafood that

stands out with offerings like Hawaiian blue prawns with chanterelles and Marcona almonds and lobster and butternut squash soup with porcini mushrooms and brown butter—and that's just the antipasti. The fish is flown in from destinations around the globe, and you'll find a cornucopia of exotic delicacies such as seaweed marinated Alaskan halibut and grilled Mediterranean cuttlefish. (Lunch five course seafood tasting menu, \$75; dinner four course prix fixe \$89. À la carte, \$10-\$45.)

Momofuku Ko
163 First Avenue (bt. 10th and 11th Sts.)
<http://momofuku.com>

For an extraordinary experience, make a reservation at this restaurant. Or rather, try to make a reservation! You can only make one online, starting a 10am, and for a week in advance. There are only 12 seats, but the lucky ones are chosen randomly by the computer, and if your number comes up, you'll feel like you've won the food lottery. There's a 10-course daily tasting menu, and you are instructed to leave three hours for lunch and two hours for dinner. Owned by chef David Chang, the executive chef is Peter Serpico, who you'll meet if you're lucky enough to get in because the chefs serve the meals. It might seem like a lot of trouble to go through for a meal, but the wait will be worth it. The food is unique and delicious. (Lunch menu, \$175. Dinner menu, \$125. Both include pairings of sake, wine, or beer.)





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212-758-3989 • www.relaisdevenise.com

Late Night Bites

They say that New York is the city that never sleeps, and these eateries prove it. Some restaurants serve dinner all night long, while others have a late night menu of lighter food. The following restaurants stay open for dining until 11pm and beyond.

Bourbon Street

346 West 46th Street (bt. 8th and 9th Ave.)
212.245.2030

www.bourbonny.com

You'll feel like you're in the Big Easy as soon as you see the antebellum balconies on this 100-year old two-story building. Chef Tommy Hines relocated from New Orleans and now brings his authentic flavors to the Big Apple. The restaurant is a replica of its namesake in the French Quarter with gas-burning lanterns, chandeliers decked out in Mardi Gras beads, checkerboard floors, and fleur-de-lis.

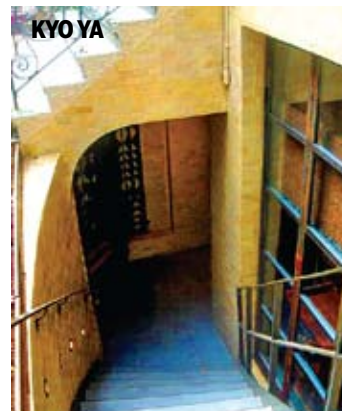
The first floor bar has a huge, carved mahogany bar and an intimate lounge in the back, while more formal dining takes place on the second floor balcony and the outdoor patio. Signature dishes include Alligator in a Blanket, Cajun Jambalaya, and Bourbon Steak and Shrimp. If you're in the mood to celebrate, check out the Mardi Gras party on the last Tuesday of every month. (Prix fixe menu, \$32. Dinner served until 2am.)



Kyo Ya

94 East 7th Street (bt. 1st and Avenue A)
212.982.4140

You may have trouble finding it, but after a meal at this small Japanese hideaway, you won't forget it. There's no sign out front, so keep a lookout for the Open sign and a flight of stairs. There are only eight tables, but the space is a Zen gem with rippling cherry wood wall, Japanese paper lamps, and sleek lines. The food is elaborate, and the specialty is kaiseki, the traditional 10-course Japanese diner of small plates served with tea, which requires a reservation a few days in advance. Drop-ins are welcome for the à la carte menu, featuring seasonal delicacies and exotic dishes such as Seafood Shutoan (scallop, blue shrimp, and king crab with cured bonito sauce) and Smoked Hotate (cherry wood smoked hokkaido scallop marinated in white sesame oil). (Tuesday-Saturday 5:30pm-11:30pm; Sunday from 5pm to 11:30pm.)



Minetta Tavern

113 MacDougal Street
(bt. Bleecker and West 3rd St.)
212.475.3850

www.minettatavernny.com

An oldie-but-goodie from the 1930s with a history of attracting poets and artists, it underwent a restoration and was reopened this spring by restaurateur Keith McNally (of The Odeon, Pravda, and other luminaries) with a lot of buzz as a gastropub. There's an authentic quality to the renovation with black and white checkerboard floors, tin ceilings, re-finished oak bar, and original framed celebrity photographs. It's already received a Michelin star and raves from the most respected restaurant critics. You may have to make reservations way in advance, but the wait will be worth it. The menu elevates tavern food with the Black Label Burger made with dry-aged, grain-fed Pat La Frieda beef and the Dry-Aged Côte de Boeuf for two with roasted marrow bones. (Dinner menu, Monday-Friday until 12am; supper menu, Monday-Sunday 12am-1am.)



Pastis

9 Ninth Avenue (at Little West 12th St.)
212.929.4844

www.pastisny.com

Trendy and popular, this informal place draws fashionistas and undercover celebrities who are looking for a snack way after hours. Located in the Meatpacking District, it's designed to evoke a 1930s Parisian bistro with rough plank floors, antique mirrors, brass railings, and a long zinc bar. Serving traditional French food (though you can get a hamburger), you'll find delectable and satisfying dishes like Braised Beef with glazed carrots; Heritage Pork Chops "Miel et Lavende" with Fennel, Tomatoes, and Spinach in Madeira; and Seared Organic Salmon "Amandine" with Piquillo Peppers, Green Beans and Almonds. (Dinner until 12am daily; supper until 1am Sunday-Wednesday, 2am on Thursday, 2:30am Friday-Saturday.)



Seppi's

123 West 56th Street (bt. 6th and 7th Ave.)
212.708.7444

www.seppisny.com

Located on the ground floor of Le Parker Meridien, this French bistro is a cozy, inviting place for a late night meal. The tin ceiling, round bar stools, black and white circular booths, and an abundance of paintings and murals will make you feel like you're dining in a French café. Chef Claude Solliard brilliant classical French cuisine maintains the simplicity and purity that he is known for, but manages to still be whimsical, and he mixes in a few sassy Italian dishes as well. They have an assortment of menus, but they are particularly known for late night fine dining. Some favorite dishes include Steak au poivre (black peppercorn steak), Lobster with Avocado, Bacon, Tomato, Onion on Homemade Brioche, and the Poisson du Jour (Monday-Sunday until 2am.)



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Party Spaces

With the holiday season fast approaching, it's time to start planning your party. There are tons of great options in the city, and because of the economy, this year there is some wiggle room when it comes to prices. Shai Tertner, president and owner of Shiraz Events, has some tips for this year's party season.

"Right now, everyone is a little more flexible, so you can ask for more." For example, if you come with a big group, you can ask for a prix fixe menu, but you can probably negotiate to add some different dishes from the regular menu. You can also ask for different wines, or even better ones. "And you can do the same thing with service," Tertner says. "In galas or dinner parties, ask for a least a server and a half per

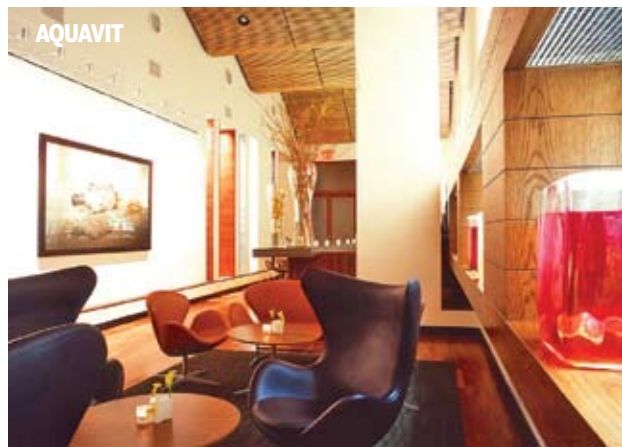


table of ten people to make sure that you have really great service." For a large dinner party, he suggests asking the restaurant to decorate the table. "Even if they won't do it as part of the package, they can probably apply the special rate that they get from their florist." Another thing to consider is asking the restaurant to print the guests' names on the menu in lieu of place cards. "It looks a little bit more custom made and more invested." And in terms of entertainment, if you're using a private room, you can probably control the sound or bring your own music.

While the city has numerous venues that are designed to be event spaces exclusively, there are also a lot of restaurants that set aside an area for private parties. Here are few of the best.

Aquavit
65 East 55th Street (bt. Park and Madison Ave.)
Special Events: 212.957.9045
www.aquavit.org

This Swedish restaurant is perfect for a formal party because of its sleek, elegant Scandinavian décor, though the café up-front is more casual with swiveling Arne Jacobson egg chairs. The private dining room accommodates up to 50 people, with a frosted glass wall, bas-relief sculpture, and an excellent sound system. The café can also be reserved for a dinner dance with up to 40 guests or for formal diners up to 70 guests. Award-winning chef Marcus Samuelsson creates traditional Scandinavian dishes that won't disappoint like a herring sampler including matjes and fennel, lemon-pepper, pickled, and apply curry, or the salmon plate with gravlax, spiced smoked salmon, espresso mustard sauce and goat cheese ice cream. Second course choices include Hot Smoked Steelhead Trout with sunchoke puree, chive-mushroom salad, and apple-horseradish broth and Venison Loin with pancetta, salsify, lingonberry sauce, and dumplings.



Bottino
246 Tenth Avenue (bt. 24th and 25th Sts.)
(212) 206.6766 ext 6 (Danny Emerman)
www.bottinonyc.com

Situated in the midst of the Chelsea gallery scene, this venue has a casual, eclectic atmosphere. Designed by architect Thomas Lesser in a 100-year-old hardware store, the restaurant retains the original wood floors and handcrafted wooden shelving, which is integrated with modern furniture by Charles Eames, Florence Knoll, and Harry Bertola. You'll find a catering menu of excellent, upscale Italian food including



Filet Mignon Wraps with horseradish and watercress; homemade spinach pasta with fresh ricotta, Swiss chard, tomato, and sage butter; and Grilled Norwegian Salmon with white beans and haricot verts. There are other choices on the regular dinner and lunch menus, and the prices are moderate.

Buddakan
75 Ninth Avenue (bt. 15th and 16th Sts.)
212.989.7049, Deborah Yeom, Special Events Manager
www.buddakannyc.com

Restaurateur Stephen Starr opened this immense, ornate, over-the-top space, which can accommodate a large party in mega-style. It was formerly a cookie factory until French designer Christian Liaigre turned it into a lavish mansion, but it feels more like a nightclub than a restaurant. Located in the Meatpacking District, the atmosphere is chic downtown with a luxury twist. The great hall downstairs is an impressive, two-story space lit by large, glittering chandeliers, which accommodates a banquet table seating around 30 guests in high style. Off to the side, the smaller Library room is more



European minimalist, lined with golden glowing bookcases, and perfect for a cocktail party. You'll find some of the best and most elegant Chinese fusion in the city, with mouthwatering choices including Steamed Red Snapper with lily bulbs and black mushrooms, Mongolian Lamb Chops with crystalized ginger crust, and Shaken Chili Beef Tartare with tapioca and shaved shallots. There are also to-die-for desserts such as Crying Chocolate with malted white chocolate ganache and coffee ice cream.

Eleven Madison Park
11 Madison Avenue (at 24th Street)
646.747.2583 (Dana Kane)
www.elevenmadisonpark.com

Considered one of the finest restaurants in the city, the dramatic space fits the level of the cuisine in the MetLife Insur-



ance Tower overlooking Madison Square Park. The huge dining room has massive windows, a soaring ceiling, marble floors, crown moldings, and stately hanging lamps. But it's really the food that gets all the attention. Swiss chef Daniel Humm is classically trained in French techniques, but takes a contemporary approach to traditional flavors. Specializing in using fresh ingredients, the menus change with the season, and recent dishes include Di Paolo Ricotta gnocchi with violet artichokes, taggiasca olives and Bottarga; Nova Scotia Lobster navarin with chestnuts, butternut squash and tarragon; and Millbrook Farms Venison with herb roasted glazed Bosc pear, black trumpet mushrooms and bacon.