

dish du jour

GREAT DINING EXPERIENCES » by Bonnie Davidson

Visual Feast

"Wow" is probably the most commonly uttered word upon entering **ONO** for the first time. Designed by Architect Jeffrey Beers, the stunning, two-level modern Japanese restaurant in the Meatpacking District features such eclectic elements as a giant mural of a tattooed human head, an O-shaped fiber-optic "rain" chandelier, communal tables covered in translucent fish mosaics, walls lined with illuminated sake bottles and a red-stone spiral staircase that curves up to the mezzanine lounge. The same sense of inventiveness and surprise is reflected in the cuisine—a creative interpretation of indigenous Japanese ingredients and American whimsy. Spicy crab pizza consists of sweet lump crabmeat, avocado, radish sprouts and red miso on a crisp flatbread. Skewers of robata-grilled meat (lamb chop, wagyu beef, chicken meatball), seafood (head-on shrimp, sea scallop, ahi tuna), vegetables (shiitake mushrooms, shishito pepper, asparagus) and combos (duck and lychee) arrive with

» **ONO**, Hotel Gansevoort, 18 Ninth Ave., enter on Hudson St., 660-6766

five zesty dipping sauces. Riceless sushi rolls are wrapped in paper-thin slices of cucumber. Surf and turf is a hunk of braised Kobe beef short rib—so soft you can eat it with a spoon—and succulent grilled king crab legs. Desserts include warm chocolate miso cake (*right*) with vanilla bean anglaise and black sesame ice cream.



Artistry is exhibited in design, decor and, of course, cuisine.



Classic Change

Paolo Buffa, the new executive chef of **Salute! Restaurant and Bar** (*left*), is passionate about preparing Italian cuisine with organic and locally grown ingredients. His arrival at this elegant Murray Hill outpost coincides with the popular restaurant's multimillion-dollar expansion, which is making it even more luxurious while retaining its pervasive warmth enhanced by a rotating exhibit of world-class art. Among the exciting new seasonal dishes that Chef Buffa brings to the table are Parmesan and white truffle crème brûlée with Kobe steak and pumpkin-stuffed ravioli with white and black truffles. Menu classics include homemade pastas and brick-oven pizzas, and an extensive list of fine wines, hand-picked by restaurateur Gennaro Sbarro, are available

» **Salute!**
Restaurant and
Bar, 270 Madison
Ave., 213-3440

by the glass. For a more casual dining experience, the full menu is also offered at the spacious, quadrangle bar. *Salute!*