

MAN ABOUT WORLD



NYC DINING GUIDE

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Eat Up

Feeding the city that never sleeps is a 24/7 job. And it's a job well done. From food trucks to fine dining, there's always something good to eat here. We've pulled together our favorites, and organized them by category, because often it's more about the mood than the food. The city has enough choices that you can really choose based on the vibe, the crowd or the ambiance, whether you're looking for a romantic spot to woo your spouse-to-be or a room full of eye-candy.

Our ManAboutWorld Restaurant Classification System

[Casual Eats](#): Easy, affordable, casual dining

[See + Be Scene](#): A good looking crowd

[Top Tables](#): The city's finest dining

[Unusual, Exotic, Vegetarian + Gourmet Ethnic](#): Menus that expand your horizons

[Neighborhood Comfort](#): Good food and service, without much fuss

[Neighborhood Chic](#): Stylish food and decor, with a bit of a buzz

[Romantic](#): Great for dates

[Brunch](#): The official meal of homosexuality

The NYC Health Department has its own rating system—you'll see big letters right by the door, announcing the results of their inspection. These are controversial among restaurateurs. While they have increased food safety in the city, many foods, from terrine to ice cream, can't be prepared and served to satisfy both the palate and the health department. We don't let a B rating scare us off.

For the food-obsessed, our recommendations are just a starting point. If you're looking for more options, we recommend these three additional resources:

1. [New York Magazine Critics Picks](#) For really good food.
2. [The New York Times \\$25 and Under](#) For value-conscious choices
3. [The New Yorker Tables for Two](#) For quirky, sophisticated options.

It's Saturday night, you're looking for a reservation at 8pm and everything is booked? Joseph and Mary had it easier on Christmas Eve. Here's how we handle it:

1. [OpenTable.com](#)

OpenTable can quickly show you restaurants that have availability. Most participating restaurants have availability that they don't list online, so if you're looking for a specific reservation that doesn't show available, pick up the phone.

2. Eat at the Bar - Many restaurants have bar seating available without reservations.

3. Get on the List - Some great restaurants don't take reservations. Go put your name on the waiting list, and ask if the host/ess will give you a call when your table is ready so you can walk around the neighborhood while you wait.

4. Try your luck. All restaurants end up with no-shows. Show up with your best smile and cross your fingers. There's always pizza by the slice as Plan B if you strike out.



CASUAL EATS

Sometimes dining is an event, and sometimes you've just got to eat something. Fortunately, you can find a pretty decent slice of pizza within a 2-block radius of just about any point in Manhattan. Even more fortunately, the city serves up a cornucopia of casual dining options. Our favorites cover a broad spectrum of cuisines and styles, and generally share these characteristics:

- No reservations necessary
- Quick and efficient
- Inexpensive prices
- Good, tasty food

CHELSEA

Westville

Tasty, healthy "eclectic American" food, simply prepared, reasonably priced and casually served. The successful formula keeps all three of their downtown locations popular. If there's one flaw, it's an overabundance of options and a hard to decipher handwritten menu. They don't take reservations, but it's always good people watching while you wait.

Bareburger

This all-organic burger joint has a number of outposts. The gayest is a new spot on 8th Ave. Diners craft their own sandwiches, choosing the meat (elk, anyone?), bread and toppings. Great prices, friendly service, and virtually guaranteed to find other local gay burger lovers. There are vegetarian options and a Brooklyn-esque sampling of artisanal sodas.

The Dish

The Dish isn't fancy, expensive, new or particularly delicious, which is why you can almost always get a table fairly quickly. It is however a solid option with a broad menu, (usually) good service, and a diverse clientele. Ask for a spot upstairs towards the front. It's less hectic plus you have a commanding second floor of the continuous gay parade along 8th Ave.

Lasagna Ristorante

Often overlooked by visitors strolling along 8th Ave. seeking a last-minute dining option, Lasagne has been consistently serving heaping plates of very good Italian lasagna and other staples for years. Best time to go is during their lunch special starting at \$8.95-14.95 for pasta with choice of soup or salad.

Foragers Grocery

It's surprising that the stretch of 8th Ave. in Chelsea didn't have its own super fancy gourmet food store till this past spring with the opening of Foragers, a Brooklyn import selling fresh local, organic produce, in-house butchered meats, prepared foods and premium groceries at premium prices. In warm weather, pick up a ready made sandwich and head to the tables near the Apple Retail Store on 14th St. and 9th Ave or further west to the High Line, Christopher Street Pier (super gay), or the Hudson River Park, for jaw-dropping male pulchritude and a picnic.

Spice

There are about a thousand Spice Thai Restaurants now in NYC (a slight exaggeration), including a pair within blocks of each other on 8th Ave.—the two we recommend for the added

benefit of a reliably gay clientele. They are unsurpassed for their inexpensive lunch specials which come with an appetizer for less than \$10.

[Grand Sichuan Chelsea Chinese](#)

This neighborhood joint on 9th and 24th (not to be confused with the not-recommended Grand Sichuan East on 8th Avenue) serves the best Chinese between Chinatown and Shun Lee on the Upper West Side. The wait staff may seem to be yelling at you but it's really just the way Cantonese sounds... or they may be a little overworked with a lot of big tables and demanding New Yorkers. This was a secret spot for a long time but word got out so it gets crowded quickly. Go early or late. And be sure to try the soup dumplings.

HELL'S KITCHEN

[Shake Shack](#)

The original location of this updated version of a roadside hamburger stand is Madison Square Park. The lines are long and slow though. For speedier (indoor) service, check out their Hell's Kitchen location on 8th Ave at 44th. Their menu is limited – burgers, hot dogs, frozen custard – but that's probably one of the reasons they are so good. You can't go wrong ordering the double Shack burger and fries.

[5 Napkin Burger](#)

The Hell's Kitchen outpost of this food empire is busy and gay-popular. Among a surprisingly wide-ranging menu, the 10 oz. burger is a standout. It's piled high with toppings but they thoughtfully provide a steak knife if it's too much to get in your mouth.

[Pam Thai Encore](#)

This no-frills, inexpensive Thai spot is an offshoot of Pam Real Thai (two blocks away) and makes for a quick, dependably good meal before or after theater or heading out to the bars. Note: they serve beer and wine but not hard liquor.

[LimeJungle](#)

There are two LimeJungle locations near each other on 9th Ave. The cheaper one is at 53rd St. It's a hole in the wall but the food is as good as the other, bigger restaurant at 50th St. Beers and margaritas are inexpensive as are the tacos, copious salads and ample quesadillas.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

[Corner Bistro](#)

Fans of the Bistro Burger served at this timeless, unpretentious tavern located at the intersection of W. 4th, 8th Ave and Jane St., maintain this is the juiciest, tastiest and best hunk of beef you can obtain in the city at the best price. To avoid lines, go during a weekday afternoon.

[Meatball Shop](#)

Here, the focus is all about their balls. They're served up in sandwiches and heroes and come with a variety of sauces. All meat is ground in-house (no pink slime here!). The Meatball Shop also offers salads and a daily risotto and other accompaniments.

[Bareburger](#)

Although the crowd here isn't as gay as the Bareburger outpost on 8th Ave, the burgers are the same, natch, and this location has a large outdoor section that's set back from the street in a leafy green setting on LaGuardia Place.

[Favela Cubana](#)

This small but cheery establishment features an enticing fusion of Brazilian and Cuban cuisines. It easily and happily accommodates small groups and then proceeds to ply them with an array of mojitos (one concocted with basil instead of mint) and fresh-fruit caipirinhas (raspberry, kiwi, blueberry, raspberry, kiwi and more).

[Westville](#)

Tasty, healthy "eclectic American food, simply prepared, reasonably priced and casually served. It's a successful formula that keeps all three of their downtown locations popular. They don't take reservations, but it's always good people watching while you wait.

['SNice](#)

Bring your computer, spend the day. They have a rent payment too, so be sure to order an occasional coffee and choose from among a large selection of vegetarian and vegan sandwiches. This is a well-named mini-chain of cafes.

[Cafe Minerva](#)

This minimalist bistro is in a *très romantique*, tree-lined street corner of the West Village with large windows facing the pedestrian traffic and opposing brownstones. They offer 20 wines at \$20, with some really decent options. The food is tasty and reasonably priced as well. Who says romance in Manhattan has to be expensive?

[Yerba Buena Perry](#)

Yerba Buena serves up delicious dishes incorporating a range of Latin American and Spanish influences. The wine list also heavily emphasizes South American vintages, but also Californian. The location, in one of those small, super-charming West Village brick buildings, belies the sleek modern interior with broad splashes of white set off by warm woods and exposed brick. There's another Yerba Buena, in the East Village, which is also excellent.

[Cafe Gitane @ The Jane Hotel](#)

Just off the Hudson River inside the Jane Hotel is the quirky yet regal Cafe Gitane, a mish-mash of French ballroom, Moroccan charm and Havana spirit, plus the alligator on the wall. The orange blossom waffle topped with bananas and strawberries is delicate and full of flavor and the avocado toast is a nice appetizer. Little to no waiting makes this a first choice if you need a cute breakfast spot on a weekday.

SOHO

[Pepe Rosso To Go](#)

Though primarily a take-out place, grab one of the few tables and enjoy tasty, inexpensive pastas and panini, while watching the show as the Italian proprietors serve up lunch and wisecracks to an appreciative crowd. No Diet Coke, no skim milk, no decaf. It's that kind of place.

[Olive's](#)

This is a take-out place -- the only place to sit is the bench outside. But the soups and sandwiches are delicious.

[Mooncake Foods](#)

This is the original of three NYC locations, serving pan-asian cuisine with an emphasis on healthy preparation and natural, fresh ingredients. The sandwiches, salads and small plates are all priced under \$10. We particularly like the whitefish hero, the Vietnamese meatball hero, and the hoisin fish tacos. Open Monday-Saturday, 11-11. Cash only.

[Snack](#)

Tiny Snack serves up traditional rustic greek fare. Service is excellent, but with only 5 tables, there's often a wait to be seated. You can't go wrong with the marinated octopus or traditional Greek mezze.

EAST VILLAGE

[S'Mac](#)

The city's best macaroni and cheese is Sarita's, and found at her restaurant S'mac. Many different variations are available (including vegan and gluten-free), and if you can't choose, there's a sampler that includes 8 different varieties for \$16.

[Westville](#)

Tasty, healthy "eclectic American food, simply prepared, reasonably priced and casually served. It's a successful formula that keeps all three of their downtown locations popular. They don't take reservations, but it's always good people watching while you wait. This restaurant is on Avenue A near 11th St. There are two other locations including Greenwich Village and Chelsea.

[Pommes Frites](#)

At last, a restaurant dedicated to serving nothing but french fries. These Belgian-styled wedges are delicious, and the quirky gimmick is reason enough for a quick stop if you find yourself in the area and wanting a snack. But the real stars here are the dipping sauces. Pomegranate teriyaki mayo? Check. Mexican ketchup? Check. Mango Chutney sauce? You got it. This place is a incredibly cramped and overflowing with creativity. Stop in, get an order to go, and nosh while you stroll through nearby Tompkins Square Park.

[Black Hound Bakery](#)

Busy Bee Cake and Hazelnut mocha cake to die for.

[Veniero's](#)

Operating since 1894, this is the oldest Italian bakery in the city. It has boatloads of Old World character.

MIDTOWN

[The Burger Joint](#)

Hidden inconspicuously and incongruously off the otherwise serene lobby of the French-accented Meridien Hotel Midtown (57th between 6th and 7th), this noisy, boisterous spot sells one thing only: luscious, perfectly made burgers, accompanied by fries or onion rings. And a soda. Arrive early to snag one of the few tables or go with a friend who can scan for a table about to be freed up while you order. (Midtown West)

[Eataly](#)

This famous Mario Batali food hall lures throngs of visitors and locals to stalls packed high with Italian specialties grouped by type: fish, meat, vegetables, pasta) and restaurants from vegetarian (Le Verdure) to upscale (Manzo) to fun (the rooftop beer garden). You'll find endless take-out possibilities from charcuterie plates, shellfish, cheeses, vegetables, fruits, pastas and drinks; Madison Square Park conveniently beckons east across Broadway. (Gramercy)

[The Food Plaza by Todd English](#)

A high-end food emporium is tucked beneath the new condo-ized Park Plaza Hotel across from the Apple Store on 5th Ave at 59th. There are lots of eat-at bars organized by food category but there's also a market and other take-out opportunities. Grab some cheese and charcuterie and create an impromptu picnic across 59th St. in Central Park. (Midtown West)

[Grand Central Market](#)

You may have heard of the stunning and popular new Apple Retail Store on the East Balcony of New York's most beautiful train station but at ground level you'll find apples (and more) of a different sort: Fresh produce, baked goods and take out in the Grand Central Market. We like [Dishes](#), on the lower level concourse, but there are plenty of options. Grab a table on the lower level or head over to Bryant Park a few blocks to the west for a spontaneous picnic. (Grand Central)

[Hill Country Fried Chicken](#)

Fried chicken, pies, ice cream shakes! What is this Texas? Well, the portions are Texas size and it's good and inexpensive. (Gramercy)

[Stumptown](#)

At the Ace Hotel on Broadway at W. 29th you'll find a little piece of Portland, Oregon in the form of Stumptown Coffee Roasters. They are dead serious about their coffee roasting, preparation and serving process. The baristas, dressed in tweeds, ties and caps, are good looking and well trained. Stumptown is a nickname for Portland. (Gramercy)

[Ollies Noodle Shop](#)

A little slice of Chinatown (complete with language-challenged reservations takers) with contemporary decor and a jaw-dropping range of options at reasonable prices. (Times Square)

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Fairway Cafe](#)

Upstairs above the famous market, Fairway offers cafe seating, and a casual, affordable menu. We've loved it for a long time, even more so after sighting Cynthia Nixon and her clan dining there.

[Shun Lee Cafe](#)

The main Shun Lee restaurant has been a mainstay for years, with haute Chinese food and elegant decor befitting their popularity with Upper West Side Jews and Lincoln Center theatergoers. Next door is the Shun Lee Cafe, serving delicious dim sum in a more casual atmosphere.

[Épicerie Boulud](#)

This gourmet market across the street from Lincoln Center offers packaged and cook-to-order food, soups, salads, sandwiches, charcuterie and pastries that you can eat at their stand-up tables, or take away. At night, it turns into oyster and wine bar, perfect for an elegant quick snack before catching a show.

[Barney Greengrass](#)

For more than a century, Barney Greengrass has served up the classic New York Jewish soul food: Chicken soup, smoked fish, latkes, pastrami, chopped liver, babka... all of Nana's favorites. Expect high-ish prices, large portions, brusque (but friendly service), and a line on the weekends.

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Viand Coffee Shop](#)

This bowling-alley of an old-time coffee shop wedged in among Madison Avenue's pricey boutiques is great for a cheeseburger deluxe or turkey sandwich. Less well-known than the time-warped [Lexington Candy Shop](#), it offers only two-top tables and counter seating.

[Tony Dragonas](#) Though people rave about his burgers, the char-grilled marinated chicken is the star at Tony "The Dragon"'s food cart, served in a pita or on a platter with rice. Tony's been on E. 62nd street near Madison Avenue for more than two decades, drawing a long line for the tastiest value-priced lunch in the neighborhood.

[Pio Pio](#)

This Peruvian restaurant is named for the chirping sound made by baby chickens, and known for the succulent deliciousness those chickens achieve coming off the rotisserie. The \$9.50 lunch special is a real bargain for the neighborhood.

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Fairway Market Café](#)

Upstairs above the famous market, Fairway offers café seating, and a casual, affordable menu. We've loved it for a long time, even more so after sighting Cynthia Nixon and her clan dining there.

LOWER MANHATTAN

[Cafe Katja](#)

Cafe Katja serves up simple, hearty, Austrian fare, served in a comfortable, friendly, unpretentious environment. Grab a seat at the bar for Bavarian pretzels and beer, or sit down

for a belly-stuffing meal of wurst and dumplings. Even vegetarians can be satiated here, with cabbage and beet salads, and the best spaetzle in the city. Be sure to save room for dessert.

HARLEM

Harlem Tavern

At the bustling intersection of 8th and 116th, Harlem Tavern is the best spot in the 'hood to get a beer and burger and engage in some very satisfying people watching. It's set back from the street allowing for a huge outdoor space, covered and heated in colder weather. You'll almost always find a few tables of gay lads and lasses. Be prepared when it's crowded: The interior can be very noisy.

Bad Horse Pizza

Bad Horse, located at the corner of 8th Ave. and 120th St. makes individual made-to-order pies with super fresh ingredients. Their early evening special (till 7PM) is one of the best in the area: \$25 for two ample individual pizzas and two glasses of wine.

BROOKLYN

Franny's

At this chic Park Slope restaurant, you'll find some of the best (to many it's the best) pizza in the borough, which is saying something given all the laudable competition. The garden is open in the summer through Labor Day.

Frankie's Spuntino

This comfortable Carroll Garden's eatery is midway between a bar and a restaurant, a neighborhood favorite that also attracts farther flung customers attracted to the organic, fresh, farm-to-table produce served here. The dinner line can be crazy long so consider popping in for a glass of wine and small plate before heading out for dinner elsewhere.

If you like our recommendations, then [like us on facebook](#), [follow us on Twitter](#), and sign up for a free membership at ManAboutWorld.com.



See + Be Scene

Okay, we'll admit it. Sometimes we choose restaurants because of the crowd, more than the food. These are the places we go to when we're more interested in the quality of the eye candy than the entrées. Not that the food is bad in any of these places, but it's not memorable like the crowd.

CHELSEA

Elmo

The food is not as consistently good as nearby Cafeteria and it can be loud, but you won't find a better looking stream of patrons and staff in any Chelsea restaurant, especially on weekends. They'll take reservations only for parties of six or more so you may have to wait for a table but don't worry there's a busy, fun bar and a DJ so you can mingle and shimmy.

Cafeteria

This is one of the best restaurants in the city that is open 24/7 year-round. It's appropriate for a business lunch but also for a post-club fix of eggs and grits. In warmer weather, the outside seating is terrific for people watching, though this corner of Chelsea (7th Ave. at 17th) is not quite the parade you'll find one block west.

Bottino

Located in West Chelsea's gallery district, Bottino is where the art crowd chatters about the latest inside gossip. The partially enclosed garden is a lovely bit of paradise.

La Bottega

Located on a deck raised a story and a half about street level, the large outdoor seating area is removed from the busy, street-level traffic. You'll find competently prepared Italian dishes and a good selection of wines and beers. This is a good choice if you're heading to or escaping from the bars, shopping and gay scene along Chelsea's 8th Ave.

Rocking Horse Café

You can get very good Mexican cuisine here with tasty homemade tortillas—but it's really the tables full of cute guys slurping margaritas that packs this place consistently. Grab a spot by the front window or on the outdoor terrace and enjoy prime viewing of the endless man parade.

The Park

New Yorkers love their green spaces. They don't particularly mind if they are actually inside. The Park is true to its name, especially its garden area: a spacious, voluminous riot of trees and plants in an atrium with the occasional bird fluttering about. Open all year long it's great for groups which can be accommodated at long tables. In summer months, you're steps from some of the fun gay weekend parties so time your last Mimosa for the start of Summer Camp at the nearby Maritime Hotel.

HELL'S KITCHEN

Arriba Arriba

Though it does not offer the best Mexican food in town, Arriba's Mama Margaritas have been getting Hell's Kitchen gays drunk before Hell's Kitchen was gay. This is also a good spot for a pre-theater drink and nibbles

Vynl

This Hell's Kitchen hotspot is usually packed with cute neighborhood guys. The added bonus is the food is inexpensive and consistently good, with eclectic choices ranging from Thai Stir-fry to Grandpa's Traditional Meatloaf. It's more inventive and even tastier for weekend breakfast/brunch. The cocktails are potent too.

Hell's Kitchen

Named for the neighborhood, but serving consistently excellent nouvelle Mexican cuisine. It can get quite crowded and tables are set snugly together but a solo diner will enjoy super cute crowds (skewing younger, trendy and usually quite gay) and the tastiest of seasonal ingredients served up in innovative creations. Summer months, the chef plays with a grilling technique imparting pleasant smoky flavors.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

Minetta Tavern

Named for a river long ago paved over, this neighborhood favorite has been operating since 1937 under various ownerships and has served many of the NYC greats from Earnest Hemingway to e.e. cummings. It has a great old NYC vibe and the Black Label Burger is topnotch.

The Standard Grill

A great burger and some people watching aside, The Standard Grill is too-often inconsistent to be the truly great restaurant we know it can be. The beautiful wait staff is dressed tastefully in Burberry vests, but the service can be hit-or-miss. The food is tasty, but overpriced; the scene trendy but not exactly welcoming. For a consistently great brunch with a friendlier vibe, we'd recommend Pastis, but the grill is a solid choice for a quick lunch in a lively part of town.

EAST VILLAGE

B Bar

With an indoor-outdoor setting, B Bar attracts a more downtown – hipper and trendier – and East Village crowd.

[DBGB Kitchen and Bar](#)

Cross a French brasserie with an American Tavern, the result is this casual chic eatery, known for its burgers, craft beers (22 varieties on tap) and shellfish. This is comfort food done right and affordably by Daniel Boulud. The three-course prix-fixe menu for \$35 runs from 5:30-7:00pm, a great pre-theater option if you time it right.

SOHO

[La Esquina](#)

This secretive and chic Mexican brasserie is hidden beneath an ordinary deli on the corner of Kenmare. With your reservation (book three weeks out!) verified by the Men In Black standing guard at a door marked 'Employees Only', you'll walk down a candle-lit stairway, through the kitchen and into a sexy, brick-walled dungeon. Worth it for the ambience alone, the tacos are affordable and delicious—a rare combination even above ground in NYC.

[The Dutch](#)

The "it" restaurant of SoHo, this celebrity hangout has been getting raves since it opened last year and continues to impress. Located off the idyllic tree-lined Prince Street, The Dutch has captured the imaginations of Manhattan foodies, scenesters, socialites and locals, combining truly great, inventive food with a bustling downtown vibe. The restaurant somehow feels simultaneously like the hotspot of the moment and your dependable neighborhood eatery at once. Reservations available up to 30 days in advance, but they also hold tables for walk-ins.

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Fred's at Barneys](#)

Conveniently located on the 9th floor of the city's trendiest department store, Fred's caters to a mixed power lunch/ladies who lunch crowd, Although the restaurant stays open through early dinner, it becomes as quiet as Loro Piana cashmere against napa leather by late afternoon.

LOWER MANHATTAN

[Pulino's](#)

The butcher their own meat in the basement of this restaurant have some of the best charcuterie in town but it's really all about the pizza at this chic, busy, buzzing dining emporium on the border with the southernmost part of the East Village. Diners love or hate the pizza, in particular the non-round shape and the thin crust. We happen to love it.

HARLEM

[The Red Rooster](#)

Famed chef Marcus Samuelsson's Harlem food emporium, on Lenox Ave (6th Ave) at 125th, is renowned for ingenious takes on Southern cuisine and sometimes hard-to-get reservations. Their new supper club, [Ginny's](#) is a more casual speakeasy-like space downstairs with lighter fare, creative cocktails and live music. It evokes the Harlem Renaissance of the '20s.



Top Tables

When it comes to truly fine dining, New York's cup runneth over. Spectacular settings, remarkable wine lists, and some of the most exquisite food you'll ever taste. There are no bargains here, and reservations can be hard to get. Here's our advice:

- Book well in advance, if you can, and ask your hotel concierge for assistance.
- Be polite and personal: If you're celebrating a special occasion, or have a particular reason you're eager to dine at that specific restaurant, let them know.
- Be flexible: Dine early or late, and ask about a waiting list for cancellations.
- Use your connections: If you know someone who dines there often, ask them to call for you. Regular patrons are always given preference.

If you're unaccustomed to such fine dining, don't be intimidated. You'll find the staff welcoming and gracious, and happy to discuss unfamiliar ingredients and preparations, special requests or wine pairing recommendations. Tasting menus showcase the chef's signature dishes and talents in a series of small portions. They're sometimes mandatory, but even when not, they offer a much richer experience for not much more money. Be prepared to spend 2-4 hours dining, and by all means ask for a souvenir menu printout, or a quick peek at the kitchen, if they're not too busy.

If you like our recommendations, then [like us on facebook](#), [follow us on Twitter](#), and sign up for a free membership at [ManAboutWorld.com](#).

CHELSEA

[Del Posto](#)

Chelsea's only Michelin-starred restaurant is an unusual pastiche of classic Italian, regional Italian and American Italian tastes, presented with the reverence of haute French cuisine. The secret attraction here is the \$39/49 prix fixe 3- or 4-course lunch.

HELL'S KITCHEN

[Esca](#)

To impress your date, make reservations 100 years in advance at ESCA, a Southern Italian trattoria with a James Beard-award-winning chef specializing in seafood. For a fun table-side performance, order the whole fish for two. Roasted in a sea-salt crust, the server cracks it open for you at your table.

MIDTOWN

[Eleven Madison](#)

One of the—if not *the*—most impressive restaurants in the city, Eleven Madison is in the process of changing hands from the famous restaurateur Daniel Meyer (he of Gramercy Tavern, Maialino and the Modern) to his protégé-chef. Michelin recently raised the restaurant's rating to 3 stars. The tasting menus are superb. (Gramercy)

[The Modern](#)

Inside the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Modern is an elegant space enclosed in glass and marble. Danny Meyer's heralded restaurant is split into two rooms: a casual bar area and a fine dining room. A seat in the bar area offers laid-back atmosphere perfect for a drink and a two-course prix fixe lunch, which will run you about \$50. The menu is robust with more than 30 dishes, two tasting menus, and little treats in between servings like inventive amuse bouche and bread baskets. For dinner, grab a seat by the window if you can for a view of the museum's sculpture garden.

[Le Bernardin](#)

A stunning makeover helped loosen the collar of this glorious Midtown institution in need of an update. It's still packed with grey-suit businessmen and ladies who lunch at lunch but in the evening, the restaurant has achieved its goal of appealing to a younger demographic. The food here is the real star, served by the utmost professional wait staff, and if this is your splurge restaurant just go for one of the tasting menu (Le Bernardin at \$145 or the chef, for gourmands, for \$190). Pair with wines for a divine culinary journey.

[Gramercy Tavern](#)

Gramercy Tavern is one of the most "affordable" of the great restaurants in town (it's all relative) especially thanks to its prix-fixe and tasting menus. There's a vegetable tasting menu that is delicious though it is not entirely vegetarian. There is a more formal dining area in the back and the more casual bistro/bar Tavern area in front, which offers first-come-first-serve seating without reservations. (Gramercy)

[Adour Alain Ducasse](#)

Located at the St. Regis Hotel, Adour's elegant, understated surroundings whisper romance, as does the impeccably professional service. The restaurant is named for the renowned chef/owner, Alain Ducasse, who has held at least a score of Michelin stars during his illustrious career. Their vegetarian tasting menu at \$85 is a luxurious bargain, and it's often surprisingly easy to get a reservation. (Midtown East)

[Four Seasons Restaurant](#)

If your special occasion is underwritten by an expense account, order a table here (the Grill Room), especially for lunch and absorb the sense of power quietly exuded throughout the space. (Midtown East)

[ABC Kitchen](#)

It can be difficult to get reservations here but call as early as you can and persevere. It's so worth it. The atmosphere is country chic. The clientele is a mixture of foodies, business people and celebrities. The locally sourced food is simply divine. There are several large tables for groups. If you have to wait a bit before being seated, fret not. You're in one of the most interesting and eclectic department stores in the entire city. Looking for a \$50,000 Oriental rug or brass Syrian salt and pepper shakers? Look no farther! (Gramercy)

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Per Se](#)

Arguably one of the best restaurants in the city if not the country. Sister establishment to the French Laundry in California, Per Se wows local foodies and critics alike. Reserve as far in advance as possible and break open your piggy bank. This kind of fabulousness in New York does not come cheap, although the \$295 prix fixe does already include gratuity. For a taste, you can eat in Per Se's salon, offering a la carte dining, and a 5-course dessert menu for \$65, with no reservations required or accepted. (Columbus Circle)

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Daniel](#)

Expensive and worth every cent, the eponymous creation of chef Daniel Boulud, consistently earns top ratings from the city's most finicky critics. Located in the Upper East Side, the clientele can be stuffy but it's worth it for the incredibly nuanced and surprising combinations of familiar flavors. Don a suit coat; pack your credit cards.

[Bouley Restaurant](#)

David Bouley's namesake restaurant in Tribeca offers delicious seasonal tasting menus that are just fabulous, no doubt a driver in Michelin's decision to bestow one star. The decor is elegant, the service is solid. The prices can seem exorbitant, equivalent to some of the other higher-rated top table spots.

BROOKLYN

[Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare](#)

The only restaurant in Brooklyn with three Michelin stars, the Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare is a small, pristine room with a half-counter of 18 seats and a clear view of the prep area, and, more importantly, Chef Cesar Ramirez, who fixes all 25 dishes right before your eyes. At \$225, the price is among the steepest in the country. If you're willing to take the plunge, best to think of it as dinner and a show, as it's surely both, and an unforgettable dining experience. Reservations are hard to come by, so give yourself plenty of time when making them. And be on time.

[Peter Luger Steakhouse](#)

Still the best steakhouse in town. Peter Luger's worn awning and drab interior are more classic than old, but you're not here for ambiance, you're here for steak. The all-male waiter staff, dressed sharply in white jackets, will rush by you with sizzling plates full of perfectly cooked steaks. And while they're arguably the best steaks in America, don't rule out the Peter Luger burger. The oversized bun and aged beef can compete with any burger anywhere in the country and is worth a trip all by itself. The place books up fast so be sure to make a reservation at least a week in advance. Cash only.



Unusual, Exotic, Vegetarian & Gourmet Ethnic

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CHELSEA

[Izakaya Ten](#)

Although you will find sushi and tempura on the menu, the genius of this dark, clubby restaurant is their Japanese pub food—think of it like tapas, washed down with sake instead of sangria. Their unique infographic sake menu takes some of the mystery out of ordering, if you don't know your junmai from your ginjo.

[Bombay Talkie](#)

New York has no shortage of Indian restaurants serving the typical cream-based Mughal Indian cuisine. But Bombay Talkie serves an updated, modern Nouvelle Indian, inspired by Indian home cooking and street food. The menu morphs traditional flavors and techniques into flavorful surprises that are served in a sleek, modern atmosphere. (No Taj Mahal paintings on the wall!) Be sure to try the Papdi Chat and Frankie Roll.

[Blossom](#)

It's hard to find great vegan cuisine anywhere, but the "animal-caring" Blossom has three outposts serving great vegan, including gluten free, fare all organic and sourced as locally as possible.

HELL'S KITCHEN

[Taboon](#)

Sometimes you want a lot of small plates, a few exotic dishes and fun surprises as culinary foreplay to a nice romantic evening. This terrific Hell's Kitchen spot serves up all three. Taboon, which means oven in Arabic, boasts that it's the first "Mediterranean" restaurant, a hybrid of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean. Once seated, a friendly server offers warm puffy house flatbread. Everything's good here, so be adventurous: Order a bunch of meze (small plates), including those with unrecognizable names.

[Danji](#)

Bulgolgi sliders. Yum! Danji, with modern takes on traditional Korean specialties, is located on 52nd St. a few doors from Therapy and across the street from Industry. Don't expect to just pop in though on your way to or from these gay watering holes. Reservations are a must especially since this tiny little hole-in-the-wall received a Michelin star.

[Ben's](#)

In the heart of the Garment District, Ben's serves up authentic NY Kosher Jewish delicatessen food. Wash it down with a Dr. Browns Diet Cream soda.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

[Redfarm](#)

New York has been home to many illustrious Chinese restaurants, but this is the first to bring a modern, greenmarket sensibility to the menu and decor. The farm sensibility is more apparent in the decor than the food: wooden produce crates, hanging flower pots and a long communal table running the length of the restaurant, give the small 2nd floor dining room a light airy feel. No reservations, so get there before you're hungry, and spend the wait walking the neighborhood. We're particularly fond of the dim sum here -- how could we not be, when it includes "pac man" shrimp dumplings and a Katz' pastrami egg roll.

[Gobo Restaurant](#)

Founded by the sons of the famously vegetarian restaurant, Zen Palate, Gobo promotes a unique proposition: food for the five senses. Unlike Zen, it sells beer and wine. Gobo is Japanese for burdock root.

[Do Hwa](#)

This little in-the-know spot on Carmine near 7th Ave is beloved for its tabletop Korean barbecue specials, and rightly so. It's also a great value at lunch, with specials starting at \$12.95 and including a main, a salad-size watercress garnish and a slew of appetizing cured and spiced vegetables.

[Favela Cubana](#)

This small but cheery establishment features an enticing fusion of Brazilian and Cuban cuisines. It easily and happily accommodates small groups and then proceeds to ply them with an array of mojitos (one concocted with basil instead of mint) and fresh-fruit caipirinhas (raspberry, kiwi, blueberry, raspberry, kiwi and more).

[La Camelia](#)

Delicious traditional Mexican cuisine served in a bright and friendly dining room might make you think you're in Southern California. Don't miss the homemade tortillas and chiles rellenos.

[Tertulia](#)

For some of the best and most sophisticated Spanish cuisine in town, you can do a lot worse than Tertulia, which means "an informal social gathering." Especially noteworthy is the chimney-

style oven and the smoky treasures that emerge from there. We recommend the Ibérico ham, squid and other seafood. The desserts are much more complex and sophisticated than they may at first appear.

EAST VILLAGE

[Kyo Ya](#)

The kaiseki tasting menu is an elaborate, ritualized and delicious tasting menu that must be reserved 48 hours in advance, as some of its ingredients must be flown in from Japan. Friendly servers help make sense of the intricately prepared food.

[Dirty Candy](#)

The name refers to “dirt that’s been transformed by plenty of sunshine and rain into something that’s full of flavor.” The vegetarian food is prepared with the utmost attention to artistry and flavor. Try the mushroom appetizer and chard gnocchi: out of this world.

[Kajitsu](#)

The East Village’s intimate 28-seat room dressed in the minimal decor of ceremonial Kyotonese tea rooms—is the only restaurant to serve shojin, a style of Japanese vegetarian cooking created by Buddhist monks. The space earned chef Masato Nishihara two Michelin stars for his colorful and beautifully structured dishes. The 8-course fixed menu will run you \$70; the four-course \$50. We recommend you sit at the bar to observe this master chef’s culinary adroitness.

MIDTOWN

[Devi](#)

Many people don't think gourmet and Indian go together but they do elegantly here. Note: A few of the dishes are complicated. If your server doesn't speak English well, don't hesitate to ask one of the more language proficient staff to come by and explain the interesting dishes. (Gramercy)

[Sushi Yasuda](#)

Now in its second decade of operation, Sushi Yasuda, which was founded in 1999, does what it does best: creating some of the most succulent and memorable sushi and fishes dishes in town at the most affordable prices (relatively speaking). Our recommendation is to sit at the bar and give yourself over to a chef by ordering à la omakase (chef’s choice). You’ll get the freshest and best fish of the day prepared in the manner and order that best highlights their flavor.

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Candle Café](#)

Vegetarian and organic, the Candle Cafe is an updated urban incarnation of the groovy hippy vegetarian restaurants of old. It's super popular with the yoga-mat toting, stroller-pushing, juice-fasting mommy crowd, but that doesn't stop us from dropping in to enjoy their delicious soups, salads and sandwiches, served by a friendly and welcoming staff quite accustomed to the intricacies of vegan/gluten-free/allergy-prone diets.

Sushi of Gari In a neighborhood known for the quality and quantity of its sushi restaurants, Sushi of Gari stands out for the inventive and unusual ingredients, combinations and preparations. Book a day or two in advance, or be prepared to wait. Either way, be prepared to open your wallet: The UES surcharge is definitely in evidence here.

Hospoda

This Central European gastro-pub is a far cry from the Czech food we ate in Prague in the '90s. The menu bridges traditional Bavarian-Bohemian-Austrian cuisine (Veal Schnitzel) with modern worldly influence (Seared Scallops). And then there's the beer: Four styles of **Pilsner Urquell** (sweet, slice, creme, neat), the world's first Pilsner beer.

LOWER MANHATTAN

Pulqueria

If this Mexican restaurant in the basement of an old Vietnamese dim sum parlor off an alley in Chinatown doesn't typify the cultural eclecticism of Lower Manhattan, nothing will. Attracting Williamsburg hipsters and Village foodies alike, Pulqueria is half-bar, half restaurant, and rocks an almost Aztec look. The pumpkin seed dip is popular, and a pitcher of margaritas can satisfy a party of four. If you can look past the uncomfortable turquoise chairs, this place will quickly become a favorite. The space is dark and loud, and a perfect spot to kick-off some weekend debauchery. (Lower East Side)

Oriental Garden

Known for its incredibly fresh seafood dishes, this Cantonese restaurant located in Chinatown attracts some of the best chefs and restaurateurs in the city as customers. We like it for the dim sum and an atmosphere slightly more refined than its Chinatown neighbors. (Chinatown)

Neighborhood Comfort

These are our go-to spots for delicious dining without a fuss. You can often walk in without reservations and not wait too long for a table (prime time and weekend dining... maybe you'll wait). Most have been around for a while, long since their new-restaurant buzz has died down—a true testament to their quality. The decor and the patrons are a little less dressed up than their Neighborhood Chic counterparts.

CHELSEA

[Momoya](#)

This open airy dining room offers an appealing median between the ubiquitous ordinary sushi available on every block of the city, and the astronomical pricing of the top-rated Japanese eateries. Although they don't take reservations, there's rarely a long wait, other than during the 8pm dinner rush.

[Tía Pol](#)

The Basque Tapas and delicious sangria are worth waiting for—which is a good thing, since Tía Pol doesn't take reservations for parties smaller than 6, and the small dining room and bar are usually packed with a convivial local crowd.

[Txikito](#)

This is another Basque Tapas place in Chelsea, slightly more expensive than Tía Pol (those little plates quickly add up!), but delicious, and usually easier to get a table.

[Bar Veloce](#)

Located on 7th ave at 20th, it's more a wine bar than a restaurant though they have a good range of filling and tasty light options. Grab a spot at the bar, presided over by nattily dressed and gregarious sommeliers/bartenders who uncondescendingly guide diners through their myriad wine offerings. Can't decide between two vintages? Ask for a sample of each. This is also a nice spot for a first date, just be sure to get there early to grab a couple of seats at the end of the bar for some privacy.

[CityBakery](#)

If you like great hot chocolate, this is the place to go, and their pretzel croissants available only in the morning are one of the best salty things you can put in your mouth. They also offer freshly made bagels but so few they usually run out by about 8am. The gourmet, locally-sourced salad bar is one of the best in the city. Pricey but very high quality.

[Le Zie 2000 Trattoria](#)

Le Zie serves reliably good Italian cuisine in the heart of Chelsea (with entrance on 7th Ave). Their little lounge, with entrance just around the corner on 20 St., is the real secret hideaway where locals meet after work or for a first date.

Artichoke Basille's

The gourmet-ish pizza may be a little over-hyped, but the location offers convenient takeout for a High Line picnic, and late-night seating for those who need some solid food to balance out the cocktails.

HELL'S KITCHEN

44 & ½

Sister restaurant to 44 & X, this location boasts a beautiful patio in back, which somehow still feels like a hidden gem though it's been around for seven years. Unlike at its older sibling, you don't have to worry about being annoyed here by passing traffic or the occasional panhandler walking along the street.

Pio Pio

This Peruvian restaurant is named for the chirping sound made by baby chickens, and known for the succulent deliciousness those chickens achieve coming off the rotisserie. There's plenty of other things to eat here, like the potato cakes stuffed with avocado and crabmeat or the ceviche, but it's really all about the chicken.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

August

August is a favorite for romantic dinners and a relaxing brunch. It's a small restaurant right in the center of the West Village with a great covered garden patio and delicious baked egg dishes. The Alsatian, with bacon, onion and creme fraiche is one of our favorite brunches in the city. Let the baked eggs continue to cook for a minute or two after they're served in their cast iron skillet before digging in—easier if you order a starter for the table (Like the apple crumble or fluffy buttermilk pancakes.)

Café Cluny

The Americanized French Brasserie fare here is dependable, if not exactly inspired. Likewise, the decor is pleasant and unpretentious, giving the place a neighborhood feel that's perfect for the cobblestoned corner it sits on. Try the scallops or lamb (or the short-rib hash at brunch), and be sure to leave room for dessert. Café Cluny has a \$35 prix-fixe menu served during the week until 6:30pm.

No. 21 Griffou

This fabulously decorated restaurant has a rich history, located in the same building that once housed an 1870s boarding house for artists (and after whose proprietor, Madame Griffou, the place is named.) Many local writers and artists ate here in its previous incarnations, and Mae West stopped by for a celebratory drink after her obscenity trial! The shotgun restaurant features lots of small dining rooms -- one more inviting than the next, so don't be offended as the host leads you deeper and deeper inside. The dinner menu is tasty and uncomplicated, organized into small and large plates that make for fun group dining.

[Market Table](#)

A perfect date spot, this cozy yet open space serves delectable favorites like gnocchi, beef carpaccio, and some of the freshest fish anywhere in the five boroughs with the same seasonal ingredients you can buy at their adjoining retail market. Lunchtime sees natural light pour through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows, while mid-evening dinner is illuminated with the dimly-lit candles, flowers, and wine bottles that surround you. A good alternative to always-packed Little Owl, Market Table never disappoints.

[Spotted Pig](#)

An Italian-Scottish gastro pub and local favorite, Spotted Pig is reliably packed just about every night from 8-10pm. Just be a bit flexible by coming earlier or later or eating at the bar. This is a spot locals love. Those it's now widely known, it still somehow feels like a hidden gem. Favorite plates include prosciutto and ricotta tart with marjoram and the pan roasted skate with wild mushrooms.

[Zampa Winebar + Kitchen](#)

For those who've graduated up from boozy weekend afternoons swilling cosmopolitans, Zampa offers up a small, swank space to a sophisticated crowd with an oversized bar, cicchetti (tasty Northern Italian tapas-like small plates), bigger main dishes and a two dozen Italian wines available by the glass.

[La Camelia](#)

Delicious traditional Mexican cuisine served in a bright and friendly dining room might make you think you're in Southern California. Don't miss the homemade tortillas and chiles rellenos.

EAST VILLAGE

[Café Smile](#)

The sunken entrance at 26 Bond Street leads to a country garden-style diner with a Northern California vibe. Serving farm-to-table, locally sourced dishes accompanied by a subtle soundtrack of bluegrass banjo and slide guitar, this comforting nook will transport you to a Charleston daydream. And if the momentary serenity is too much to bear, feel free to whip out your MacBook and get some work done.

[Mexicana Mama Centro](#)

One of the best Mexican restaurants in the city, Mexicana Mama is actually small but they can accommodate groups of up to 10 people. Just be sure to make a reservation well in advance. It's located at 47th E. 12th St.

[Hearth](#)

Everything about Hearth is done right: The low lighting, the exposed brick, the open kitchen; and then there's the food. Chef Marco Canora is an artist when preparing Tuscan creations like roasted duck, ricotta meatballs, and grilled quail. This place is a welcomed addition to

Alphabet City, a neighborhood otherwise devoid of strong Italian options. The lamb sausage is delectable, the potato gnocchi is a must-try, and no one should leave without trying the apple cider doughnut.

[Il Buco](#)

We love the atmosphere created by the beautifully jumbled shelves, bottle, tables and chairs in this antique store turned restaurant. Nosh on small plates and big ones with Mediterranean influences. The menu changes every day but be sure to try any seafood (their key strength) and especially the octopus if it's available.

SOHO

[Barmarché](#)

Located in Nolita, just east of Soho, this small bistro features a décor that's part Parisian café, part country house, part quirky art boutique. Despite the eclectic decoration and the tiny kitchen Barmarché consistently produces perfect dishes from mouthwatering risotto to a succulent burger in an atmosphere that's tailor-made for date night. Reserve on the early side since after around 10pm the sound system is amped up and the restaurant loses some of that romantic appeal.

[Parm](#)

This retro casual eatery on the border of SoHo and the lower east side serves up classic parmesan dishes and some of the best fried calamari in the city. Their full bar includes a selection of craft beers and Schaefer—if you're hip enough to find PBR too pedestrian. Open 'til 1am Thursday-Saturday.

[Torrise Italian Specialites](#)

Torrise is a godsend to foodies looking for Italian cuisine like nonna used to make, if grandma had worked at French Laundry. At only \$65 for a four-course menu that changes every week, it's also a bargain (relatively speaking). It's located in the NoLita section of SoHo.

MIDTOWN

[Tony's DiNapoli](#)

This is your classic big Italian family style restaurant serving up heaping piles of tasty pasta in red sauce. It's located in the charming Casablanca Hotel, a boutique property hidden in plain sight amidst the madness known as Times Square. (Times Square)

[Cafe SFA](#)

This serene oasis on the 8th floor of Saks Fifth Avenue overlooks Rockefeller Center and St. Patricks. Careful with the cocktails, however. There are two tempting floors of men's clothing below. (Rockefeller Center)

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Momoya](#)

Like its sister restaurant in Chelsea, Momoya on the Upper West Side serves up the best sushi in the neighborhood, at prices that only slightly exceed the ubiquitous mediocre sushi restaurants around it.

[Kefi](#)

Serving greek taverna food served in an upscale rustic atmosphere, Kefi is popular for its bold tastes and moderate prices.

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Mediterraneo](#)

We like this Italian bistro for their simply and perfectly prepared pastas (especially the linguine nere all'Arrabiata) and pizzas from their wood-burning oven. The large dining room and sidewalk seating host as eclectic a crowd as you'll find in this neighborhood.

[Beygolu](#)

Large portions of tasty food are a great bet for healthy appetites amidst the casual, colorful decor of this affordable Turkish restaurant. You could easily make a meal of the meze platters, but the grilled Striped Bass and whole Branzino are favorites.

HARLEM

[Melba's Restaurant](#)

This homey spot is our choice for Southern-styled comfort food. On Tuesdays, there's an open-mic night; on Thursdays, a DJ spins oldies from the '70s and '80s.

BROOKLYN

[Lucali](#)

No reservations. Cash-only. A long wait. A small, simple menu. Walk into this dark, intimate restaurant in Carroll Gardens with high expectations and be prepared to have them met. Lucali is in a league of its own when it comes to old-school Brooklyn charm: rustic decor, open kitchen, exposed brick walls. But this place is about more than atmosphere, delicious pizzas and calzones. It's about the neighborhood, the faces and voices of the people, the cozy warmth of a night out with your partner. Give the hostess your cell number and go explore. Stop for a drink. Stroll through the brownstone-lined streets. This is an experience you never want to end.

[The Grocery Restaurant](#)

Located in the Carroll Gardens section of Brooklyn, The Grocery really delivers on its promise of serving up the freshest of meat, produce and seafood. Go early to snag garden seating (which is not reserved).



Neighborhood Chic

Great food, stylish decor, and the dining room buzz of a crowd that bothered to get a little dressed up for dinner. These are not the hottest spots in town, but they're decidedly cool and noteworthy. Reservations recommended, not always required.

CHELSEA

Foragers City Table

Attached to Foragers City Market, This dinner-only restaurant serves delicious Asian-inspired food. Friendly service and a warm, urbane atmosphere, including communal tables, add to the experience. One quirky note: they call the service "family style", which really means, "we bring it as it's ready." Most of it is easily shared, although you may need to ask for serving utensils to do so. Don't miss the lettuce herb noodles.

Co. (aka Company)

Known for their individual irregularly shaped (and peppery-dough) individual pizzas and great salads, this Chelsea hotspot is always packed so slip in early or in the middle of the afternoon and spread out at the large communal table.

Pounds & Ounces

The former Viceroy space, the largest dining room on the 8th Avenue strip, has been remade as Pounds & Ounces, an aspiring Neighborhood Chic spot with a split personality. The long bar, even longer communal table and live DJ create a loud see-and-be-seen social environment that doesn't always complement the inventive creative American comfort food menu priced for chic dining. Only time will tell if the two can find a contented balance.

Cookshop

This boisterous chic-yet-homey spot in far west Chelsea (on 10th Ave. at 20th. St.) specializes in meat and fish which you can have grilled or sauteed or from the rotisserie or stone oven (try the grilled Montauk squid). It's a great place also for small plates and inventive cocktails and terrific people watching from the bar facing the busy sidewalk outside.

Spice Market

The menu at this clubby Jean-Georges Vongerichen restaurant is inspired by the street food of South East Asia.

Catch

Catch serves seafood to a celebrity-heavy crowd in an exposed-brick dining room with a roof deck for after-dinner drinks.

HELL'S KITCHEN

44 & X

Named for the intersection it calls home, 44th St. and 10th Ave, this is a trendy spot with great service in an ever-more chic section of western Chelsea. The menu is filled with American Comfort favorites.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

[Wallsé](#)

France isn't the only European country that produces refined cuisine. Wallsé, named for the Austrian hometown of chef/owner Kurt Gutenbrunner, is a modest neighborhood spot that serves up light, sophisticated takes on traditional Austrian fare in a tiny, yet airy and modern setting. This Michelin-starred restaurant is also a gallery of sorts with works by contemporary international artists, such as Julian Schnabel and Albert Oehlen. For a lovely meal start with the artichoke, tomato soup with lobster ravioli, followed by the smoked squab with foie gras, salsify, and fresh black truffles.

[The Little Owl](#)

If you're thinking of planning a celebratory evening here, reserve now and consider lunch if you can't get dinner reservations. There are only 10 tables and the cuisine is extraordinary and priced reasonably (half or so of what you may pay at a bigger high-quality venue). The charm lies in its friendly/professional service, intimacy, neighborly setting and gorgeous stamped tin ceiling.

[i Sodi](#)

A cozy, authentic haunt with a small menu of seasonal, North Florence-inspired dishes, I Sodi is the perfect lunch spot if you find yourself hungry for Italian fare on Christopher St. The trick here is to go for their not-so-well known weekend lunches, where you'll find yourself with more space and attention from the helpful staff than on a crowded and rushed weekday night. The hand-rolled pastas are amazing, and the dessert menu is unique and playful.

[L'Artusi](#)

L'Artusi is a charming, split-level West Village ristorante serving up Italian food as impeccable as its design. With Gabe Thompson, a Batali-trained chef, at the helm, this place boasts 10 or so pasta dishes that will keep you returning and bringing even your most discerning out-of-town foodie friends. For a night out with the boys, we recommend you grab a few seats at their gorgeous white marble bar that overlooks the open kitchen. If you're on a date, try to snag a seat in their upstairs wine cellar beneath the stunning glass atrium. Thompson's wife prepares all of the desserts - so save room for her much-talked-about coconut semifreddo.

[Pastis](#)

Keith McNally's stunning Parisian brasserie is as much a cornerstone to the New York dining scene as the Chrysler building is to the city's iconic skyline. Years after its run as a celebrity scene, McNally's eatery has settled into being a Meatpacking institution that can be counted on for a quintessential New York City dining experience: delicious food, warm ambience and beautiful crowd. These days, we'd recommend you check out their fantastic Sunday brunch.

French-inspired spins on classic breakfast dishes like eggs benedict and french toast. And nothing beats a post-brunch stroll down the cobblestone streets and through the Brownstone-lined neighborhood this restaurant calls home, the West Village.

[Dell'Anima](#)

This cozy trattoria has an open kitchen that dominates the small space. You can even grab a bar seat right at the kitchen and watch the masters put together some of the tastiest Italian dishes in the Village. It's been awarded "best bruschetta" by food critics in town—well deserved kudos in our opinion.

EAST VILLAGE

[Tocqueville](#)

Best known for its seasonal selections and tasting menus (optionally paired with wines), Tocqueville has been operating on 15th Street just east of Union Square with a connection to the Union Square Greenmarket, guaranteeing access to the freshest of local, artisanal products. The restaurant is recognized for its warm, efficient service and vibrant kitchen (helmed by Brazil-born chef Marco Moreira). (Union Square)

[Dirty Candy](#)

The name refers to "dirt that's been transformed by plenty of sunshine and rain into something that's full of flavor." The vegetarian food is prepared with the utmost attention to artistry and flavor. Try the mushroom appetizer and chard gnocchi: out of this world.

[Edi and the Wolf](#)

In a city that plays host to cuisine from around the globe, delicious Austrian cuisine can be surprisingly hard to come by. That's where Edi & The Wolf comes in. A fairy tale of a restaurant with a decor rooted in Bavarian charm this place serves up Viennese comfort food like schnitzel, spaetzle and interesting assortment of beers, making this an unusual yet unforgettable date spot.

SOHO

[Balaboosta](#)

Delicious food + a stylish crowd – attitude make this one of our favorite dining spots. The menu is derivative of your Yiddish grandmother's home cooking—if Nana wore Louboutin heels and shopped at Dean & DeLuca. Do not miss the chicken "under a brick."

[Balthazar](#)

Keith McNally's beloved Parisian masterpiece is a bustling herald of culinary invention and design reminiscent of Le Pantruche <<http://lepantruche.com/>> in Paris' ninth arrondissement. Opened in 1997 under chef's Riad Nasr and Lee Hanson, this old leather wholesaler's warehouse was transformed into a bold-colored bistro, and a must-see destination if you're staying in SoHo. It's also the reigning king of weekday breakfast in the neighborhood. Save your

Sunday brunch for Public and spend your Tuesday morning munching on scrambled eggs in a puff pastry. And order a side of the best fries in the city while you're at it.

[L'ecole](#)

This restaurant at the French Culinary Institute serves haute cuisine prepared by the Institute's professional students. The best deal in town for those looking for an unforgettable meal at a great value. Nowhere else will you find a four-course Prix Fixe dinner for just under \$50. (Lunch menus offers a \$30 prix fixe menu.)

MIDTOWN

[Ciano](#)

Located in the Flatiron area in the location formerly occupied by Beppe, Ciano is more casual than chef Shea Gallante's previous fancy pre-recession spot, Cru. But the food earns consistently high marks. The pillowy roasted veal meatballs served on a creamy white polenta are a must. Wine—mostly Italian but also from around the world—is also available by the half bottle and glass. (Gramercy)

[Hurricane Club](#)

We love the intentionally over-the-top Polynesian Tiki decor designed by the forward-thinking design company AvroKO. It's a lighter, brighter, more self-conscious Trader Vic's, which is this restaurant's culinary forefather. But be prepared: The restaurant accommodates 300 diners swilling giant communal Mai Tais and the occasional bachelorette party. This is a fun place for a group of visitors kicking off a rowdy weekend of carousing in the city. (Gramercy)

[Asellina](#)

Located in the Gansevoort Park Ave Hotel, Asellina is more known for its stunning fun, hip atmosphere and look—20-foot high ceilings, modern fireplaces, leather-clad walls—than its cuisine, and the wait can be quite long. However, the manager is super accommodating to gay visitors. Ask for Jeff Orban. (Gramercy)

[Monkey Bar](#)

The Monkey Bar offers an updated take on the old classic New York City experience. Established 1936, the restaurant was purchased and renovated by Vanity Fair editor Graydon Carter. Try the oysters and Berkshire pork chops. (Midtown East)

[The Breslin](#)

The Breslin inside the Ace Hotel is like a charming London pub tucked away from the funky street art flavor of the hotel's shabby-chic lobby. The Michelin-starred restaurant is dressed in dark leather and sleek wood, offering a casual sophistication. The lamb burger is the star of the menu and perfect for a midday power lunch, and they also do one of the city's best yet little-known breakfasts. The lobby is worth a perusing to gander at the thousands of graffiti stickers, bold, kitschy details that make this hotel so unique.

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Cafe Frida](#)

With two locations on the Upper West Side, Cafe Frida serves up authentic (if a little pricey) Mexican cuisine in a stylish casual atmosphere. The chile relleno, chicken mole and roasted salmon are our favorites, though anything would taste good after a few of their signature hibiscus margaritas.

UPPER EAST SIDE

[Fishtail by David Burke](#)

Some of the entrées here can be a bit fussy, but you can't go wrong with the simple fish preparations. More notable than the cuisine, however, is Burke's commitment to sustainability: Most of the seafood is sourced sustainably or locally, including a daily catch from Burke's company-owned New Jersey-based fishing boat. Local art and an outdoor dining deck make a particularly pleasant atmosphere. While pricey, it's pretty easy to get a table.

[The Mark](#)

Located at the very expensive, luxurious Mark hotel, the eponymous restaurant decorated in pink hues, serves up a surprisingly unpretentious menu to ladies sporting \$1,000 hairdos and many billionaire gentlemen. If you're in the neighborhood, but don't want to shell out all that money for an expensive lunch, pony up to the bar, order a delicious kumquat mojito and enjoy the glittering parade of one percenters.

LOWER MANHATTAN

[Dylan Prime](#)

One of the best steakhouses in the city, Dylan Prime also services much-lauded seafood. It's not stuffy or oppressively hetero like some of the power-business steakhouses in Midtown. Their most popular appetizer is the cheese fondue.

[Beauty & Essex](#)

Beautiful people in a gorgeous space in a very cool part of town: This chic spot serves up the quintessential Manhattan experience for visitors. The food is mostly excellent and inventive as are the cocktails. You'll have to speak up to be heard here: The music can be very loud.

[ápizz](#)

The best-kept secret in Manhattan, apizz (pronounced a-beets) is a windowless, one-room Italian restaurant quietly located on the fairly obscure Eldridge Street. And while it's not much to look at from the outside, the interior of this Lower East Side haven rivals any Manhattan hotspot for sexiest ambience, and does so with seemingly effortless simplicity, with flames bursting from the open kitchen's wood-burning oven, bouncing plush oranges and reds off the exposed brick walls. A friendly wait-staff, unmatched Italian cuisine, and affordable prices make this a must-stop dinner choice when hanging in the Lower East Side.

HARLEM

[Lido Harlem](#)

Lido on 8th Ave. at 117th St. offers terrific contemporary Italian cuisine in an airy modern setting with friendly, professional service.

[The 5 and Diamond](#)

The 5 and Diamond has survived and thrived despite a few changes of chef in the last couple of years. It's known for simple, contemporary cuisine and a strong emphasis on locally sourced produce. Prices are reasonable.

[Chocolât Lounge](#)

Best known for its desserts, Chocolât is actually a full-service restaurant, with a potent martini and cocktail menu. Try the shrimp omelette if it's available. Weekend brunch is popular.

BROOKLYN

[Maison Premiere](#)

There may not be a sign, or a name on the outside of the modest building, but you'll recognize Maison Premiere by the impressive line stretching out onto Bedford Avenue. Inside, you'll feel like you're back in the French Quarter as Charlie Parker plays to patrons sipping cocktails under a tin ceiling. With about 30 different kinds of oysters from the U.S. and Canada, and the largest collection of absinthes in the city, this place is worth a detour from Manhattan. The interior is sexy and dark, evoking 19th-century New Orleans charm, and the garden patio out back is perfect in the spring. Be sure to take a special trip to the bathroom to check out the pull-handle toilets that'll transport you back to Paris. Happy hour is 4-7 p.m., offering \$1 oysters, but the crowds are so overbearing we recommend you come at 7:30 p.m., where, for an extra \$2 per oyster, you'll get and the place to yourself.

[Momo Sushi Shack](#)

The freshest sushi you'll find anywhere in the five boroughs can be found here at Momo Sushi Shack, an criminally overlooked gem of a place tucked away in the hit-or-miss area of Bushwick. With sashimi flown in fresh from Japanese markets, Momo delivers perhaps the most creative sushi dishes in the city. The inconspicuous space is warm and inviting, with an orange glow and long, wooden tables gracing its interior. The hilarious, free-spirited wait staff make this an unforgettable night out, well worth the trek to Brooklyn. The Party Bomb dish is a favorite. Street parking available.

[Isa](#)

The latest restaurant by handsome Estonian designer Tavo Somer (the very cool Freemans and Peels in downtown Manhattan), Isa sports a lot of wood (including stacks of it for a wood-burning oven). There is a boisterous bar area and a more sedate dining area. The menu can be daring and quirky but there's usually always a cod dish if you're feeling less adventurous. It's difficult to lure Manhattan-based foodies across the river but this is one of those unusually

good "outer borough" spots worth the trek.



Romantic

We love a dinner date. There's nothing like a cozy table, soft lighting, hushed dining room or leafy terrace to put us in the mood for love, or at least a rich chocolatey dessert with two spoons.

CHELSEA

[Gascogne](#)

This little hole in the wall on 8th Ave at 18th in Chelsea is one of the most overlooked secret gems in the neighborhood. The menu changes little over the years and offers primarily specialties of Southwestern France. The courtyard dining area is tiny but magical: eight tables in a little garden that could be in Toulouse. Polish your French; the waiters are usually fresh off *le bateau*.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

[Cafe Minerva](#)

This minimalist bistro is on a *très romantique*, tree-lined street corner of the West Village with large windows facing the pedestrian traffic and opposing brownstones. They offer 20 wines at \$20, with some really decent options. The food is tasty and reasonably priced as well. Who says romance in Manhattan has to be expensive?

[The Little Owl](#)

If you're thinking of planning a celebratory evening here, reserve now and consider lunch if you can't get dinner reservations. There are only 10 tables and the cuisine is extraordinary and priced reasonably (half or so of what you may pay at a bigger high-quality venue). The charm lies in its friendly/professional service, intimacy, neighborly setting and gorgeous stamped tin ceiling.

[Blue Hill](#)

New York Magazine called it one of the "best low-profile restaurants in town," and we're inclined to agree though we'd add it's also romantic. Tucked below ground in a former speakeasy, Blue Hill occupies a charming space which you're likely to share with real foodies reverentially analyzing the choice of mushrooms and farm-raised turkeys, much of it sourced from their eponymous farm located in western Massachusetts.

MIDTOWN

[Novità](#)

Despite its name, this restaurant isn't new; it opened in 1994. Since then, the original chef-owner Marco Fregonese and his team have been dishing up inventive takes on traditional cuisine from Italy's Piedmont region. Come for the elegant, romantic atmosphere, or during warmer months, enjoy dinner with your honey at their outdoor terrace on a tree-lined side street. Order their scrumptious feather-light gnocchi as a starter and branzino as a main. (Gramercy)

[Robert Restaurant @ MAD Museum](#)

To soak up stunning views of Columbus Circle and Central Park be sure to reserve a table for two at the window, otherwise you'll largely miss out on what makes this restaurant worth a visit. The contemporary décor includes two light sculptures, a video installation and what they call a "sound wave" at the communal table, which is another reason to reserve at the table for two. (Columbus Circle)

[Adour Alain Ducasse](#)

Located at the St. Regis Hotel, Adour's elegant, understated surroundings whisper romance, as does the impeccably professional service. The restaurant is named for the renowned chef/owner, Alain Ducasse, who has held at least a score of Michelin stars during his illustrious career. Their vegetarian tasting menu at \$85 is a luxurious bargain, and it's often surprisingly easy to get a reservation. (Midtown East)

[Gilt](#)

This is one of the most stunningly gorgeous and very "New York" venues to celebrate a birthday, anniversary or just life, located in the historic Villard Mansion (six opulent attached townhouses surrounding a courtyard build in the late 1800) in New York's Palace Hotel once imperiously ruled by Leona Helmsley, the "Queen of Mean," it's worth it to just stop by for a drink. But if your credit card cooperates, you won't go wrong at Gilt where brilliant old meets new world atmosphere; try the John Dory fish dish. There are reasonably priced prix-fixe options (for a fine New York restaurant) and a pre-theater menu if your special occasion includes a show. (Midtown East)

UPPER WEST SIDE

[Lincoln](#)

Elegant and modern, Lincoln sits on the Lincoln Center campus, next to the reflecting pool and Henry Moore sculpture, with a lawn atop its sweeping roof. Although the dramatic setting calls for an elaborate meal, we recommend an alternate plan: Cocktails, pasta and dessert. Lincoln's Negroni bar allows you to riff on this classic cocktail by mix-and-matching your choice of spirit, bitter and vermouth, with five varieties of each. The pastas are superb, and the desserts are the best of any we've had in the city.

BROOKLYN

[The River Cafe](#)

Never mind the hyperbole: this is the most romantic restaurant in all of New York City; your table against a pane of floor-to-ceiling glass peering out onto breathtaking views of an glistening skyline, its lights bouncing off the rivers reflection, and the candle on your table dimly lighting your partners face. The River Cafe books up fast, but if you're looking for an intimate dinner with a delicious prix fixe menu and views nonpareil, this cozy spot under the Brooklyn Bridge has no equal. The waitstaff is unpretentious, helpful and comforting. It's around \$100 a person for dinner before wine, so make it a special occasion. (Brooklyn Bridge)

[Café Moto](#)

Impress your friends with this hidden artists café, incognito beneath the JMZ train in Williamsburg. This affordable French café has a charming steampunk decor that will throw you back to 1930's France. Creative dishes, a friendly staff and live music every night of the week make this spot perfect for a Saturday night date. We recommend you go in the warmer months, as the small space can get a bit chilly in the fall and winter. Bring cash and don't leave without trying the raved about date cake. Look for the hanging bicycle out front or you'll walk right by it. (Williamsburg)



BRUNCH

No part of the Gay Agenda is more universally beloved than Brunch. Whether it's a romantic meal for two on a lazy Sunday morning, or a raucous group outing with pitchers of sangria, we heartily approve.

CHELSEA

Elmo

The food is not as consistently good as nearby Cafeteria and it can be loud, but you won't find a better looking stream of patrons and staff in any Chelsea restaurant, especially on weekends. They'll take reservations only for parties of six or more so you may have to wait for a table but don't worry there's a busy, fun bar and a DJ so you can mingle and shimmy.

Cafeteria

This is one of the best restaurants in the city that is open 24/7 year-round. It's appropriate for a business lunch but also for a post-club fix of eggs and grits. In warmer weather, the outside seating is terrific for people watching, though this corner of Chelsea (7th Ave. at 17th) is not quite the parade you'll find one block west.

The Dish

The Dish isn't fancy, expensive, new or particularly delicious, which is why you can almost always get a table fairly quickly. It is however a solid option with a broad menu, (usually) good service, and a diverse clientele. Ask for a spot upstairs towards the front. It's less hectic plus you have a commanding second floor of the continuous gay parade along 8th Ave.

Le Grainne Café

This cute French bistro is straight out of Paris. It's even in a historic building—one of the oldest in the neighborhood. It's very popular, but really only recommended for breakfast. Grainne is not a misspelling; it's the given name of the owner, Ms. O'Flynn.

HELL'S KITCHEN

Yotel

In this period of NYC brunch wars with huge club-like spaces offering pricey, over-the-top bacchanalia to the well heeled, in comes Yotel's Eat Yo Brunch with a 2-hour \$35 all-you-can-eat and all-you-can-drink gourmet buffet brunch every Sunday from 11am-4pm. The NY Times calls it the 3pm brunch with the 4am vibe. Also included: blaring music, crazy entertainment and more. Located in far west Hell's Kitchen, Yotel's brunch is as gay as it gets. Sundays need no longer suck.

GREENWICH VILLAGE

August

August is a favorite for romantic dinners and a relaxing brunch. It's a small restaurant right in the center of the West Village with a great covered garden patio and delicious baked egg dishes: The Alsatian, with bacon, onion and creme fraiche is one of our favorite brunches in the city. Let the baked eggs continue to cook for a minute or two after they're served in their cast iron skillet before digging in—easier if you order a starter for the table (Like the apple crumble or fluffy buttermilk pancakes.)

i Sodi

A cozy, authentic haunt with a small menu of seasonal, North Florence-inspired dishes, I Sodi is the perfect lunch spot if you find yourself hungry for Italian fare on Christopher St. The trick here is to go for their not-so-well known weekend lunches, where you'll find yourself with more space and attention from the helpful staff than on a crowded and rushed weekday night. The hand-rolled pastas are amazing, and the dessert menu is unique and playful.

Pastis

Keith McNally's stunning Parisian brasserie is as much a cornerstone to the New York dining scene as the Chrysler building is to the city's iconic skyline. Years after its run as a celebrity scene, McNally's eatery has settled into being a Meatpacking institution that can be counted on for a quintessential New York City dining experience: delicious food, warm ambience and beautiful crowd. These days, we'd recommend you check out their fantastic Sunday brunch. French-inspired spins on classic breakfast dishes like eggs benedict and french toast. And nothing beats a post-brunch stroll down the cobblestone streets and through the Brownstone-lined neighborhood this restaurant calls home, the West Village.

EAST VILLAGE

DBGB Kitchen and Bar

Cross a French brasserie with an American Tavern, the result is this casual chic eatery, known for its burgers, craft beers (22 varieties on tap) and shellfish. This is comfort food done right and affordably by Daniel Boulud. The prix-fixe brunch menu for \$27 includes three courses, allowing you to try a nice variety of tasty treats.

Prune Restaurant

Chef Gabrielle Hamilton serves up homey globally-influenced American bistro fare in an intimate, unpretentious setting. The restaurant has won all sorts of awards over the years—best burger, best lunch, but brunch is particularly popular. Reservations aren't available for weekend brunch so be sure to get there early; it's a small restaurant that fills up fast.

SOHO

Public

One of the most inventive restaurants when it first opened both in terms of its design and cuisine, Public earned a coveted Michelin star in 2009 and continues to delight and surprise

diners with highly unusual combinations of ingredients and “Austalasian” flavors. Try the thinly sliced kangaroo with a tangy green-pepper relish. Brunch here is one of the most interesting in the city. Coconut-stuffed pancakes. Just think about that. Is your mouth watering yet? (Nolita)

MIDTOWN

Almond

You’ll find a nice selection of the breakfast greats from around the world here: Croques Monsieur and Madame, Huevos Rancheros, omelettes and Eggs Florentine at very reasonable prices in a bright, airy but sometimes noisy space. Try the Almond Hash washed down with a perfectly spiced bloody Mary. Almond can seat large parties; and it has brilliant food, staff and atmosphere. (Gramercy)

UPPER WEST SIDE

Barney Greengrass

For more than a century, Barney Greengrass has served up the classic New York Jewish soul food: Chicken soup, smoked fish, latkes, pastrami, chopped liver, babka... all of Nana’s favorites. Expect highish prices, large portions, brusque (but friendly service), and a line on the weekends. Cash only!

UPPER EAST SIDE

Hospoda This Central European gastro-pub is a far cry from the Czech food we ate in Prague in the ‘90s. The menu bridges traditional Bavarian-Bohemian-Austrian cuisine (Veal Schnitzel) with modern worldly influence (Seared Scallops). And then there’s the beer: Four styles of Pilsner Urquell (sweet, slice, creme, neat), the world’s first Pilsner beer.

Mediterraneo

We like this Italian bistro for their simply and perfectly prepared pastas (especially the linguine nere all’Arrabiata) and pizzas from their wood-burning oven. The large dining room and sidewalk seating host as eclectic a crowd as you’ll find in this neighborhood.

LOWER MANHATTAN

Oriental Garden

Known for its incredibly fresh seafood dishes, this Cantonese restaurant located in Chinatown attracts some of the best chefs and restaurateurs in the city as customers. We like it for the dim sum and an atmosphere slightly more refined than its Chinatown neighbors.

HARLEM

The Red Rooster

Famed chef Marcus Samuelsson’s Harlem food emporium, on Lenox Ave (6th Ave) at 125th, is renowned for ingenious takes on Southern cuisine and sometimes hard-to-get reservations.

Their new supper club, Ginny's <<http://redroosterharlem.com/ginnys/>> is a more casual speakeasy-like space downstairs with lighter fare, creative cocktails and live music. It evokes the Harlem Renaissance of the '20s. Reserve for the bountiful and musical Gospel Brunch on Sundays.

BROOKLYN

[Egg](#)

Brunch is no longer exclusive to Manhattan. Nestled beside a graffiti-ridden steel door, Egg is a narrow, unassuming space designed with modern simplicity on the North Side of Williamsburg, serving breakfast so good there's almost always a wait. But it's worth it. The Eggs Rothko are a favorite—as are the duck hash and the cheese grits—and this hipster joint boasts some of the best French pressed coffee in the city. All ingredients are locally sourced from the restaurant's own farm. Take the L train over, bring a good book or a good friend and take a couple of hours to enjoy a morning in Brooklyn.

[Marlow & Sons](#)

This rustic, wood-paneled canteen is perfect for a grazing meal, serving up oysters, olives, cheeses and charcuterie, plus a limited number of daily specials. The wine, cocktail and beer list include a nice range of interesting and affordable options. A small general store occupies the front room, with a quirky selection of food and gifts. It's owned by the same folks as the very popular [Diner](#) next door.

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