

# GRUB STREET

## The Scene Inside Tribeca Grill's 25th Anniversary Party

By Gillian Duffy November 11, 2015 12:00 p.m.



Robert De Niro and Drew Nieporent opened Tribeca Grill together in 1990.

By all accounts, it was Robert De Niro's idea to buy the building at the corner of Greenwich and Franklin Streets and install a restaurant at its base. This is a crucial piece of Tribeca Grill's origin story, and it was repeated, almost verbatim, by all parties involved one night early this fall.

"I had a restaurant called Montrachet," explained Drew Nieporent, a partner in the restaurant and venerable New York front-of-house man. "And De Niro came in as a customer this one night and looked up from the table and said, 'How would you like to open up another restaurant in New York?' And, of course, I said, 'Are you talkin' to me?'"

Over the next two and a half decades, Nieporent and De Niro, with a few partners and an endless string of prodigy chefs, built their restaurant into both an anchor of the newly glossy neighborhood and a reliable producer of talent for the city's restaurant industry at large. So to celebrate Tribeca Grill's 25th anniversary, Nieporent invited back some of the kitchen's diaspora. And then he invited 500 people for them to feed.

The guests were friends, neighbors, early investors, and longtime diners. The food spanned sushi from Nobu to pork ribs from Harlan Social to dumplings from Kings County Imperial (all started by Tribeca Grill alumni). Upstairs, an army of the restaurant's sommeliers, past and present, manned a wine station. Guests picked off cupcakes from a tower of them, while De Niro himself held court in the corner of the dining room.

"I always thought of having a restaurant — a place where people could meet and talk," said De Niro between bites of dessert. Soon, the line of well-wishers would swell, and De Niro would proceed into the kitchen to take selfies with the on-duty crew. But first, there was a story to tell. "Drew had Montrachet a few blocks away, and I said, well, let me ask Drew if he wants to do it." You know the rest.



Tribeca Grill kitchen, past and present: Brad Steelman (now chef of [River Café](#)), Stéphane Motir (pastry chef at [Tribeca Grill](#)), Pat Trama (chef and owner of Trama's Trattoria), Shane Lyons (chef and co-owner of [Distilled](#)), Markus Glocker (chef at [Bâtard](#)), Richard Corbo (current executive chef at [Tribeca Grill](#))



Spiced duck breast from [River Café](#).

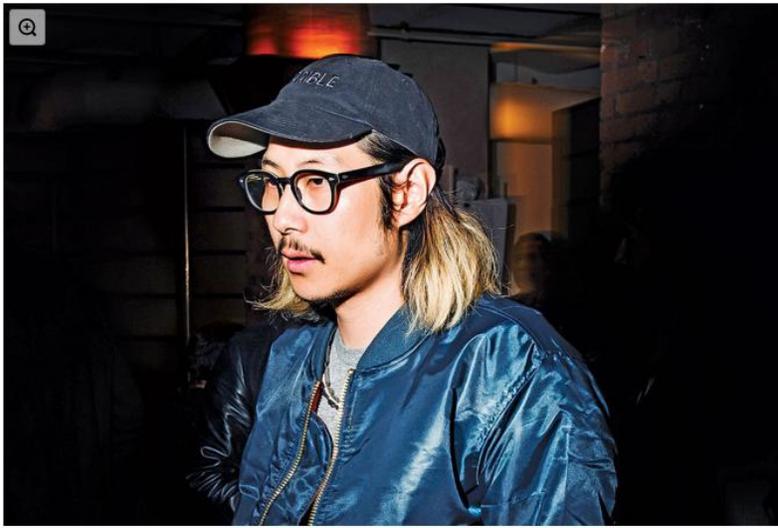



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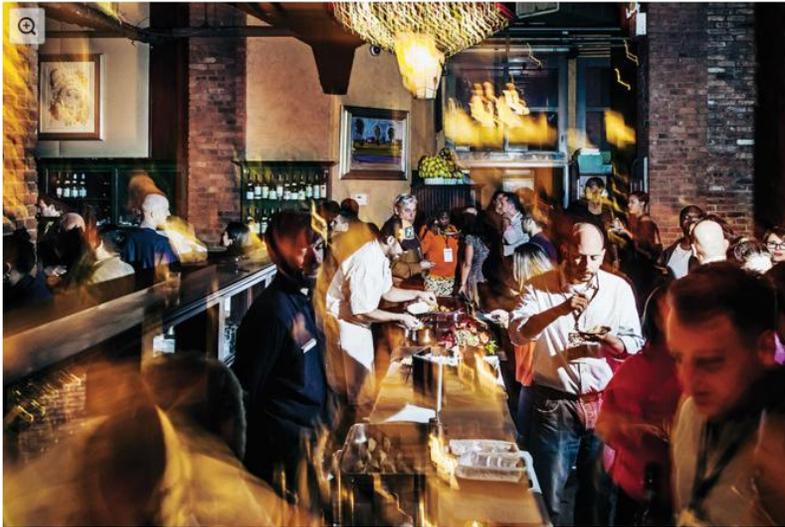
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Danny Bowien, of [Mission Chinese Food](#), worked at Tribeca Grill in 2004.



On a regular night, the restaurant will feed 300 to 400 diners.

  
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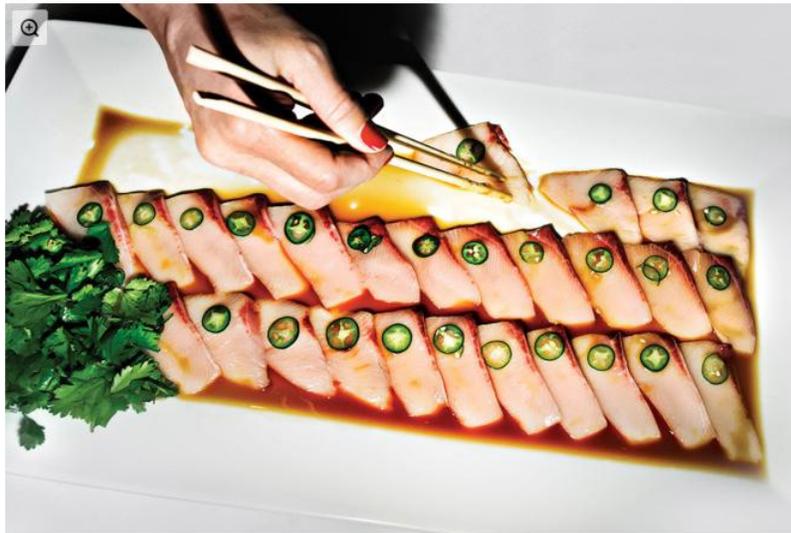


Danny Aiello, a longtime guest. “We had a lot of star power,” said Nieporent. “So we had to deliver.”





Danny Meyer: "Why would you feel competitive in a city of 26,000 restaurants? I'm Drew's biggest fan."



Nobu, the second collaboration between De Niro and Nieparent, opened around the corner in 1994.



<http://www.grubstreet.com/2015/11/tribeca-grill-anniversary.html>