The Musket Room

265 Elizabeth St. (bet. Houston & Prince Sts.)
Subway: Broadway - Lafayette St
Phone: 212-219-0764
Web: www.themusketroom.com
Prices: $$$

In the bohemian haven that is Nolita, find this clever little spot with a contemporary take on the cuisine of New Zealand. The Musket Room’s whitewashed door frames and 19th century name immediately casts it as a reprieve from the neighborhood’s ongoing fiesta. Inside, the uniquely urban and modern farmhouse decor combines bright white paint with rough brick walls and views out to the blossoming backyard herb garden, illuminated with string lights. The crowd is hip and more sophisticated than young. Service is so friendly and warm that it seems almost surprising, considering the downtown norm. Their sense of enthusiasm extends right down to the food.

A cold-smoked scallop starter arrives with the sweet meat pulled and shredded into strands, with neat cubes of juicy pear, cucumber rosettes, briny sea beans, and black garlic lending a mellow, pungent note. New Zealand red doi seasoned with the “flavors of gin” delivered through salted juniper meringues, roasted and pureed fennel, and licorice jus.

Desserts may express a unique beauty and sense of grace, like an artistically presented, fragrant peach with fennel ice cream, dabs of lavender yogurt, puffed rice and candied nuts.