



---

MAJOR FOOD GROUP

---

# COMPANY OVERVIEW

---



MAJOR FOOD GROUP

Major Food Group (MFG) is a New York based restaurant and hospitality company founded by Mario Carbone, Rich Torrisi and Jeff Zalaznick. The founders all exhibit a wealth of knowledge in the food, hospitality and business sectors.

MFG currently operates fourteen restaurants: Carbone (New York, Hong Kong, Las Vegas), ZZ's Clam Bar, Dirty French, Santina, Parm (Soho, Yankee Stadium, Upper West Side, Battery Park, Barclays Center) and Sadelle's. MFG recently opened THE GRILL and THE POOL in The Seagram Building, completing the iconic restoration of the landmarked space that once housed the Four Seasons Restaurant. The Lobster Club, formerly The Brasserie, opened in late 2017. MFG also operates a Lobby Bar at the Ludlow Hotel and provides all F&B and event services for the Ludlow Hotel.

MFG is committed to creating hospitality experiences that are inspired by New York and its rich culinary history. They aim to bring each location they operate to life in a way that is respectful of the past, exciting for the present and sustainable for the future. They do this through the concepts that they create, the food and beverage they serve and the experience they provide for their customers.



**"THE UNSTOPPABLE  
TORRISI WOLFPACK."**

EATER

**"GOOD VIBE, GOOD FOOD,  
AND GOOD PEOPLE."**

LEBRON JAMES, VARIETY

**"THE RED SAUCE  
JUGGERNAUT."**

THE NEW YORK TIMES

---

# EXISTING RESTAURANT CONCEPTS

---

## THE GRILL

---

## THE POOL

The Pool Lounge

---

## The Lobster Club

---

## Carbone

New York

Las Vegas

Hong Kong

---

## ZZ's Clam Bar

---

## Dirty French

Lobby Bar

The Ludlow Hotel

---

## Santina

---

## Sadelle's

Soho

Las Vegas (coming soon)

---

## Parm

Soho

Upper West

Battery Park

Yankee Stadium

Brooklyn

Time Square (coming soon)



# THE GRILL

THE GRILL is a historically based American chophouse set in midcentury New York. It takes great inspiration from history. Both the time the Seagram Building was built and the midtown restaurants that existed at that time. It is the precursor to the New York Steakhouse, when things were still intricate and elegant. It celebrates all the animals of the land and some of our favorites from the sea. There is extensive table side preparation and service. THE GRILL is the name of the restaurant, the style of restaurant, and the piece of equipment we use in the kitchen for many of our signature preparations.



---

## Address

99 East 52nd St  
New York, New York



Dinner at  
**THE GRILL**

**THE CHEF'S BUFFET**  
*All items are freshly prepared in our Dining Room.*

*A selection of* CONTINENTAL HAM  
GOOSE TERRINE, *figs and olives*  
HOUSE CURED SALMON  
SALTED ANCHOVIES  
PICKLED SARDINES, *soused onions*  
OYSTERS, *on the half shell*  
LITTLENECK COCKTAIL *tabasco peppers*  
ROYAL MUSHROOMS  
CRUDITE: SEASON'S BOUNTY

— *A Service of...* —  
**TODAY'S CHILLED CRUSTACEAN**  
*with a variety of house dips*

**ASSORTED APPETIZERS**  
*Hot & Cold Selections*

STEAK and ANCHOVY TARTARE  
TUNA Ravigote  
SCALLOP *snail fricassée*  
PASTA A LA PRESSE  
WILD MUSHROOM OMELETTE *prepared tableside*  
THE SEAGRAM CRAB CAKE  
FOIE GRAS *and Onions*

**SOUPS**  
*Caviar Vichyssoise • Blue Crab Gumbo • Mock Turtle*

**SALADS**  
ENDIVE & APPLE CHOPPED  
AVOCADO CRAB LOUIS

*Ideal Accommodations for Banquets and Private Dinners*  
*Dinner Served from 5 P.M. to 11 P.M.*  
*Try our Classic Cocktails*

Dinner at  
**THE GRILL**

**SEAFOOD**

*Scottish* SALMON, in Chartreuse Sauce  
MINTED BLACK BASS  
*Cajun* SNAPPER *Coleslaw, Chowchow*  
LOBSTER *à la Newberg*

---

DOVER SOLE  
*Horseradish Meunière Grilled Riviera*  
*Neptune's Crown*

**STEAKS, CHOPS & BIRDS**

*Larded* SQUAB, *whole grilled, preserved orange*  
HONEY MUSTARD DUCKLING  
SPRING CHICKEN A LA QUEEN  
GUINEA HEN CLAIBORNE, *Madeira, Black Truffle, Endive*  
AMISH HAM STEAK, *Pickled Pineapple*  
TRIPLE LAMB CHOPS, *Curried Flavors, Mint Jelly*  
VENISON CUMBERLAND, *Walnuts and Huckleberries*  
FILET MIGNON *Peppered, Florentine, or Peconic*

**PRIME AGED STEAKS**

*Please inquire with your Captain about our additional cuts of American beef*

NEW YORK STRIP  
PORTERHOUSE, RIBEYE *Priced by weight*

**TROLLEY SERVICE**



**ZUCCHINI**

Grilled  
Steamed  
Jack's Pie  
Baked *with Onions*

**POTATOES**

Cottage Fries  
Buttered Dumplings  
Steamed *with* Dill  
Hashbrown O'Brien  
Hunter's Style  
Whipped

**GRAINS & RICE**

Carolina Pilaf  
Nuttred Wild Rice  
Rye Forester  
Grits *with Marrow*

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

# THE GRILL

"It was always one of the most beautiful dining rooms in New York. Now it's also one of its most exciting restaurants."

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

"There is so much pleasure to be had at The Grill, tremendous pleasure, huge pleasure, pleasure like you've never seen."

**JOSHUA DAVID STEIN, The Village Voice**

"I cannot be in The Grill without feeling the magic of things about to happen as the crowd gathers and the curtain rises."

**MIMI SHERATON, Food & Wine**

"There's no restaurant better keyed to the tempo of Manhattan right now than The Grill."

**RYAN SUTTON, Eater**

"The food is excellent, the service is perfect, and the entire experience is curated from the moment they open the door for you to the moment you leave."

**CHRIS STANG, The Infatuation**

**The New York Times**



Top New York Restaurants of 2017



Best New York Restaurant of 2017

*NEW YORK*



Best Hashbrowns

**EATER**



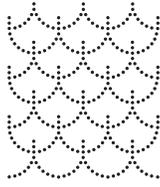
New York Restaurant of the Year 2017

*Esquire*

Best New Restaurant in America 2017



Best Restaurant in America 2017



# THE POOL

THE POOL is a seafood restaurant created by Major Food Group. It is an architectural treasure that will not present the treasures of the world's oceans to match. The greatest expressions of seafood prepared with an eye towards simplicity and a focus on fun. A celebratory experience for all of the senses that incorporates art, architecture, food, and drink. Seafood in all of its forms raw, cooked, and whole.



---

## Address

99 East 52nd St  
New York, New York



## Tonight's Saw Selections

BLUE FIN TUNA  
burnt eggplant

FLUKE  
pink peppercorn

KANPACHI  
fingerlime

MACKEREL  
saor onions

LOBSTER  
yuzu-pineapple

SCALLOP  
matsutake

OYSTERS  
green tomato-wasabi

SPOT PRAWNS  
lemon

KING CRAB  
coconut-vadouvan

SEABASS  
celeriac

THE POOL

## Toast

YELLOWFIN TUNA  
harissa & olive

SANTA BARBARA SEA URCHIN  
apple & spicy mustard

ANCHOVY  
piquillo & lemon

## Caviar Service

50/125g

trout roe

sea urchin

baeri royal

ossetra gold

## Appetizers

CHARRED OCTOPUS  
aji dulce, onion

SHEEP'S RICOTTA GNUDI  
add caviar

FOIE GRAS  
costa rican honey, nutmeg

SCAMPI RAVIOLI  
san marzano, calabrian chili

DUNGENESS CRAB RICE  
fresh bay laurel

## Salads

TUNA CARPACCIO  
baby gem, olives

BEEF MILLE FEUILLE  
yogurt, walnut

WHITE GAZPACHO  
almond, grape

## Entree

ALASKAN HALIBUT sauce of fennel & razor clams

BLOCK ISLAND MONKFISH sepia, ocean emulsion

MAINE LOBSTER orange & coconut vinaigrette

SCOTTISH SALMON smoked sungold mignonette

NEW YORK STRIP STEAK

BLACK PEPPER DUCK

RACK OF LAMB maine scallops, cumin *For Two*

## Whole Fish

market availability

DOVER SOLE

TURBOT

BRANZINO

DORADE

POMPANO

BLACK BASS

## Steaks for two

ask your captain about tonight's  
selection of prime, dry-aged steaks

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

## THE POOL

"The Pool is a temple to luxury of a different sort, with raw and cooked oceanic delights served up with opulent simplicity. "

**JEFF GORDINIER, Esquire**

"...you feel as if you are in the hands of one of the city's best chefs, which Mr. Torrisi is."

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

"The Pool...employs opulence as aphrodisiac, arousing well-heeled New Yorkers not with outright spectacle but with intoxicating indulgence."

**DANIEL MEYER, Time Out New York**

**The New York Times**



New York Times Review



**Esquire**

Best New Restaurant in America 2017

**EATER**



**NEW YORK**



Best Restaurant in America 2017

# The Pool Lounge

The Pool Lounge is a cocktail bar created by Major Food Group featuring unique drinks by legendary bartender Thomas Waugh. Each cocktail focuses intensely on a single flavor and leans towards the tropics. The Pool Lounge sits above and overlooks THE POOL restaurant, which is once of New York's most iconic spaces. The Pool Lounge was designed by William T Georgis.

---

## Address

99 East 52nd St  
New York, New York



## Caviar Service

50/125g

Trout Roe      Sea Urchin

Baeri      Golden Ossetra

SPOT  
PRAWNS

OYSTERS  
by the  
half dozen

CRUDITÉS

RIBBONS OF  
FOIE GRAS

## Toasts

TUNA  
Harissa & Olive

SEA URCHIN  
Apple & Spicy Mustard

ANCHOVY  
piquillo & lemon

## Crispy

BROCCOLI

CALAMARI

SCALLOPS

## Cocktails

JALAPEÑO  
Tequila, Sherry, Cucumber

CINNAMON  
Extra Añejo Tequila, Grapefruit

CHAMOMILE  
Rye, Campari, Elderflower

WATERMELON  
White Rum, Shiso, Lime

ORANGE  
Gin, Mandarine, Aperol

CUCUMBER  
Absinthe, Lime, Cane Sugar

RASPBERRY  
Tequila, Raspberries, Grapefruit

GRAPE  
Pisco, Angostura Bitters, Lime

TOMATO  
Vodka, Elderflower, Lemon

MANGO  
Japanese Whisky, Lime, Aperol

PEACH  
Gin, Rum, Lime & Angostura Bitters

STRAWBERRY  
Gin, Rosemary, Kalamansi

SOUR APPLE  
Rye, Calvados, Basil

BANANA  
Reposado Tequila, Sherry, Ginger

## Champagne

PETER LAUER  
Riesling Sekt NV Mosel, Germany

DIEBOLT VALLOIS  
Blanc de Blancs NV

ROEDERER  
'Brut Collection' NV

BILLECART-SALMON  
Rosé NV

KRUG  
Grand Cuvée 159th Edition NV

# THE LOBSTER CLUB



The Lobster Club is a Japanese Brasserie by Major Food Group. It was designed by Peter Marino, and with chef Tasuku Murakami at the helm, this concept celebrates a unique interpretation of Japanese cooking and sushi. Classic techniques like tempura, gyoza, yakitori and robata are on display along with a focus on Teppanyaki and Sushi. Chef Murakami will source his fish through his personal relationships at Tokyo's Tsukiji market ensuring the highest level of quality. Everything on the menu has been designed to be shared, with the focus on food and fun, not formality.

---

## Address

98 East 53rd St  
New York, New York





ALL ITEMS  
ARE INTENDED TO  
BE SHARED AND  
ARE SERVED  
WHEN READY !

## GOLD APPETIZERS

WASABI OYSTERS  
TUNA & CHILIES  
SEABASS & CRISPY SPROUTS  
SCALLOP & PISTACHIO  
YELLOWTAIL & MATSUTAKE  
LOBSTER COCKTAIL  
CHILLED CRAB  
WAGYU & UNI

## SALADS

SPICY CUCUMBER  
SEARED SASHIMI  
TRI-ER CALAMARI  
LOBSTER AVOCADO

## HOT APPETIZERS

CRISPY SQUID  
COCONUT ROCK SHRIMP  
TEMPURA MUSHROOMS  
CHICKEN TSUKUNE  
BARBECUE PORK JOWL  
LEMONGRASS SHORT RIB  
SANSHO OCTOPIUS  
CRISPY EEL  
CURRY CHICKEN WINGS  
WOK LOBSTER  
PORK GYOZA  
LOBSTER DUMPLINGS



021 2310 8811

## TEPPANYAKI



WAGYU SKIRT  
FILET MIGNON  
NEW YORK STRIP  
PORTERHOUSE  
**TOMAHAWK RIBEYE**  
CUBIN & SZECHUAN RUBBED  
DIVER SCALLOPS  
MADAGASCAR SHRIMP  
WHOLE LOBSTER  
WHOLE BRANZINO  
HALF CHICKEN  
LAMB CHOPS

ALL MEAT IS  
SERVED BY THE  
WITH SOY SAUCE  
AND A COLLECTION  
OF SAUCES

  
JAPANESE RICE  
IS AVAILABLE  
UPON REQUEST

## RICE

GARLIC  
SPICY SHRIMP  
UME SHISO

## FISH

YUZU BLACK BASS  
SALMON TERRIYAKI  
CRISPY VIETNAMESE FISH

## ROLLS

ALL CLARIFIED ROLLS ARE  
AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

### HOUSE ROLLS

TRIPLE SALMON  
TUNA ROSSINI  
SPICY TORO  
SURF & TURF

KANPACHI  
SHIMAJI  
YELLOWTAIL  
IKURA  
KING SALMON

FLUKE

### HAND ROLLS

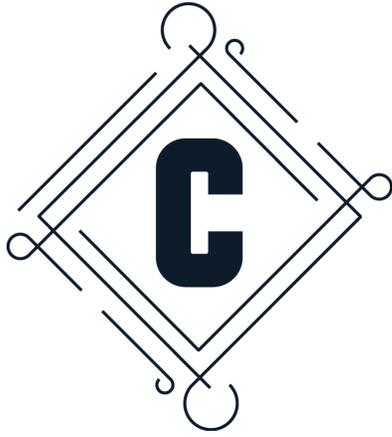
SALMON-KURA  
TEMPURA LOBSTER  
TORO-UNI  
CAVIAR

SEA BASS  
KINMEDAI  
AJI MACKEREL  
SABA MACKEREL

OUR TUNA IS SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED IN AN  
OCEAN FISHERY IN KAWASIMA, SELECTED BY  
MR. ITOH AND FLOUNDER FROM JAPAN

## SUSHI & SASHIMI

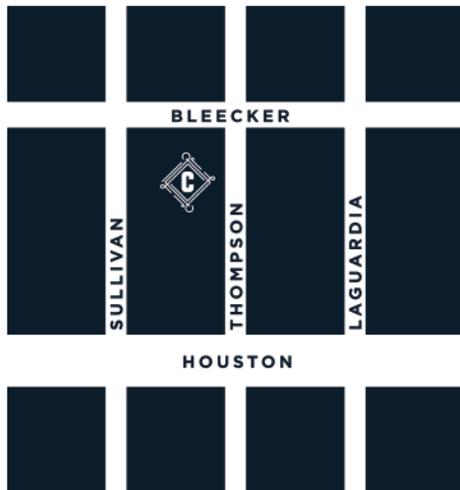
TUNA  
CHU TORO  
O TORO  
PEN SHELL  
SCALLOP  
KOHADA  
SANTA BARBARA UNI  
JAPANESE UNI  
SWEET SHRIMP  
UNAGI  
ANAGO



Carbone opened in 2013 and is located in the heart of Greenwich Village. Carbone occupies the space that once housed the legendary Rocco Restaurant, which was one of the most historic Italian-American eateries in Manhattan. Built on the great bones that were already there, Carbone pays homage to the Italian-American restaurants of the mid-20th century in New York, where delicious, exceptionally well-prepared food was served in settings that were simultaneously elegant, comfortable and unpretentious. The food nods to that same history, but takes its culinary cues from the great talents and techniques of the present and of the future. Familiar dishes like Seafood Salad, Linguini Vongole, Lobster Fra Diavola, Chicken Scarpariello and Veal Parmesan are elevated to a new level. Carbone received a dazzling five out five stars from Time Out New York and four and a half stars from Bloomberg. In June 2013, Carbone received its' greatest honor and was awarded three stars by The New York Times. The service at Carbone will transport you to another time; a perfect blend of elegance and of comfort.

**Address**

181 Thompson Street  
Greenwich Village, New York



SEAFOOD COCKTAIL SELECTIONS · *Ask Your Captain*

ANTIPASTI

*Carpaccio Piemontese*

*Baked Clams*

*Zuppa di Mussels*

*Octopus Pizzaiolo*

*Beets Siciliana*

*Scampi alla Scampi*

*Sizzling Pancetta*

*Zucchini Flowers*

*Prosciutto & Mozz*

ZUPPA E INSALATE

*Minestrone*

*Caprese*

*House Chopped*

*Caesar alla ZZ*

MACARONI

*Tortellini al Ragù*

*Fettuccine con Funghi*

*Lobster Ravioli*

*Spaghetti Pomodoro*

*Linguini Vongole*

*Spicy Rigatoni Vodka*

*Angel Hair AOP*

*Scungilli Shells*

*Lasagna di Rabe (please inquire)*

A PIACERE

PESCI

*Bass Alison*

*Shrimp Su'modo*

*Dover Piccata*

*Bass Oreganata*

*Zuppa di Pesce*

*Scallops Piselli*

*Whole Branzino*

*Lobster Fra Diavolo*

CARNI

*Veal Marsala*

*Chicken Massimo*

*Veal Parmesan*

*Chicken Scarpariello*

*Double Lamb Chops*

*Ribeye Diana*

*Pork Chop & Peppers*

*Cherry Pepper Ribs*

*Prime Porterhouse (for two)*

*All steaks & chops grilled on charcoal*

CONTORNI

*Steamed Asparagus · Potatoes Louie · Funghi Trifolati*

*Corn Tartufato · Artichoke Hearts*

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

# CARBONE

“Carbone might be the best Italian-American restaurant of all time.”

**ALAN RICHMAN, GQ**

“We didn’t know how good we had it. Carbone is here to remind us.”

**PETE WELLS, New York Times**

“Carbone...is conceptual art.”

**JOSHUA DAVID STEIN, New York Observer**

“...helped New Yorkers shake off any snobby quibbles about authenticity and rediscover the pleasures of class red-sauce cuisine.”

**JEFF GORDINIER, New York Times**

“The restaurant of the year.”

“This Greenwich Village spot is spectacular.”

**RYAN SUTTON, Bloomberg Restaurant Review**

“The equivalent of court side Knicks tickets, or a private box at the Met.”

**ADAM PLATT, New York Magazine**

“...a perfectly conjured tribute to the Italian red-sauce joints of our collective imagination.”

**ADAM SACHS, Travel + Leisure**

**The New York Times**



New York Times Review  
Best New Restaurant 2013



Top 10 Best Dishes and Drinks 2013  
Best Italian Restaurants in America 2017



The Absolute Best Pasta Dishes in NYC

**Bloomberg**



Best New Restaurant 2013

**bon appétit**

Best New Restaurant 2013



Best Restaurant in America 2014



Michelin Guide 2016, 2017, 2018

# CARBONE

## VEGAS

CARBONE Las Vegas opened in October of 2015 at ARIA Resort & Casino and is Major Food Group's first domestic expansion outside of New York City. It combines the celebrates classic Italian-American cuisine and world-class service of the New York original with the glamour and attitude of Las Vegas. The menu features iconic dishes such as Veal Parmesan and Meatballs alongside evolving dishes exclusive to Las Vegas. Additionally, in a nod to the history of the city, the beverage program offers both classic cocktails and a vintage rum cart.

**3730 S Las Vegas Blvd**  
Las Vegas, Nevada



## HONG KONG

Carbone Hong Kong opened in August 2014 on the 9th floor of the LKF Tower and represents Major Food Group's first international venture. Just like the New York original, the ambience at Carbone Hong Kong is at once nostalgic and progressive, bringing the charm and splendor of the original to the heart of the Central district. The menu features the same classics made famous at the New York location, such as Baked Clams, Spicy Rigatoni Vodka and Lobster Fra Diavolo, while integrating local, special ingredients unique to Hong Kong.

**33 Wyndham Street**  
Central, Hong Kong



---

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

---

# CARBONE

## LAS VEGAS

"I don't want Mario Carbone to get mad at me, but I think Carbone in Vegas is better than Carbone in New York."

**DAVID CHANG**

THE  
HUFFINGTON  
POST

Top 6 New Vegas Restaurants

"It's so damn good and fun that you just have to give in to the experience."

**Las Vegas Weekly**

POPSUGAR

Top 6 Vegas Culinary Hotspots

"...the spirit of mid-20th century New York City is alive and well at Aria at Carbone."

**KEN MILLER, Las Vegas Magazine**

Los Angeles Times

Top 3 Las Vegas Restaurants  
to Try Right Now

"Spending a night in Carbone is like walking into an elegant mid-century film...It's a scene from a Coppola film, right before someone's blood ends up in the grout of the geometric black-and-white floor tile—oh, yeah, Carbone has that exact tile, too."

**MELINDA SHECKELLS, Las Vegas Seven**

VOX  
CREATIVE

Las Vegas' Best Date  
Night Dancing

---

## HONG KONG

"A New York-style Italian restaurant with mid-20th century vibes."

**HK Magazine**

"Following the lead of the original Carbone in Greenwich Village, this colorful restaurant in LFK Tower pays homage to the Italian-American eateries of the 1950s."

**MICHELIN Guide**

"One of the hottest New York City imports to breeze into the city after roaring success on its home turf."

**Hong Kong Tatler**

# ZZ's Clam bar

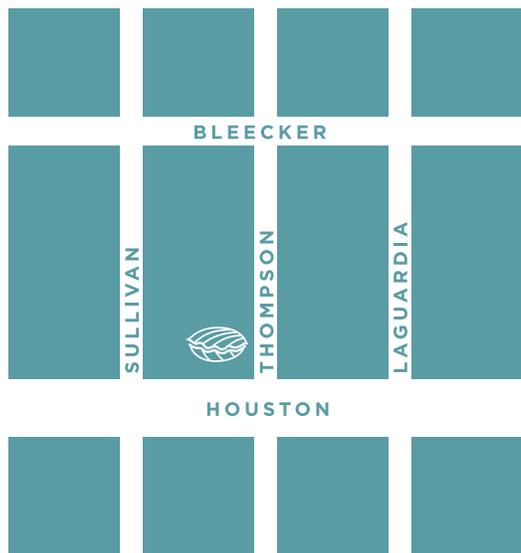


ZZ's Clam Bar opened in 2013 and is a raw seafood and craft cocktail bar. Serving only the highest quality ingredients, ZZ's is an intimate space and a study in raw fish and cocktails from around the world. Dishes like Chianina Beef Carpaccio, Seared Goldeneye Snapper and Kampachi Tartare are paired exceptionally with specialty seasonal drinks. ZZ's Clam Bar received three stars from GQ Magazine and Bloomberg and was credited by The New York Times for ushering in a new age of raw eating in New York City. ZZ's Clam Bar serves as the hub of cocktail creativity for Major Food Group. In 2014, ZZ's was nominated as the Best New Bar in America by Tales of the Cocktail, as well as awarded a Michelin star, one of the few cocktail bars in the world to hold this distinction. ZZ's is elegant yet welcoming and invites guests to enjoy exquisite food in an unadulterated state.



## Address

169 Thompson Street  
Greenwich Village, New York



# Zz's Clam bar

## Toasts

TUNA • TROUT ROE • UNI

CEVICHE	<i>Japanese Shrimp, Chilis, Thai Basil Parrotfish, Cucumber, Pine Nuts</i>
SEARED	<i>Live Scallop, Sicilian Pistachios, Brown Butter Golden Eye Snapper, Strawberry, Cilantro</i>
CRUDO	<i>Cherry Trout, Trout Roe, Fried Leeks Lobster, Aji Peppers, Mole Butter</i>
TARTARE	<i>Baby Yellowtail, Golden Beets, Vadouwan Shimaaji, Ricotta, Caviar</i>
CURED	<i>Japanese Sardine, Seasonal Citrus, Szechuan Scottish Salmon, Honey Mustard, Dill</i>
CARPACCIO	<i>Tuna, Foie Gras, Razor Clams Chianina Beef, Sea Urchin, Caviar</i>

## Raw Bar

OYSTERS • CLAMS • CAVIAR

CONSUMING RAW OR UNDERCOOKED SEAFOOD OR SHELLFISH  
MAY INCREASE YOUR RISK OF FOOD-BORNE ILLNESS



PEANUT BUTTER *Burbon, Rum, Pineapple, Banana*

PINEAPPLE *Gin, Lime, Orange, Spices*

PISTACHIO *Gin, Lemon, Honey, Kumquat*

POMEGRANATE *Gin, Apple Brandy, Vermouth, Absinthe*

RHUBARB *Gin, Strawberry, Cherry, Cinnamon*



## ails

*al, Cherry, Vanilla*

*Lime, Orange*

*n, Shiso, Basil*

*ndy, Lemon, Tonka Bean*

*th, Bitters, Salt*

*Vanilla, Chartreuse*

*umin, Cayenne Pepper*

*e, Bitter, Flamed Orange*

*o Cucumber, Pomegranate*

*ney, Smoked Cinnamon*

*ple, Mango, Almond*

*, Lemon, Almond*

*me, Bitter, Club Soda*

*c, Mango, Ginger*

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE



“This is where Thomas Waugh makes New York’s best cocktails”

**RYAN SUTTON, Bloomberg**

“ZZ’s is incredible. It’s a supremely stylish, delicious raw bar”

**ALAN RICHMAN, GQ Magazine**

“Precisely prepared, formally composed food and drinks showcased in a glitzed-up, once-abandoned storefront”

**GLENN COLLINS, New York Times**

“At moment-defining restaurants like...ZZ’s Clam Bar... the menu reflex of our age involves going raw”

**JEFF GORDINIER, New York Times**

“In the case of ZZ’s, imagination rarely does the final drink justice...resulting in an experience that is nothing if not transporting.”

**LESLIE PARISEAU, Punch**



**GQ MAGAZINE**

**Bloomberg**



**Best New Restaurant 2013**



**Top 10 Best Dishes and Drinks 2013**

**TRAVEL+  
LEISURE**

**Best New Restaurant 2013**



**Michelin Guide 2016, 2017, 2018**

# Dirty French

Dirty French, located in The Ludlow hotel in Manhattan's storied Lower East Side, is an edgy New York bistro that takes its cues from the great legacy of the neighborhood and relevant worldly influences. Opened in September 2014, the restaurant features the timeless dishes and preparations of the classic French bistro, enlivened with modern techniques and bold flavors. Dishes like Duck à l'Orange with ras el hanout and preserved oranges and Trout Amandine with sesame and apricots remain true to their French roots but are restyled with flavors that explore the breadth and depth of the global French culinary influence. Dirty French is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.



**Address**

180 Ludlow Street  
New York, New York



# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

*Dirty French*

“I can say without thinking twice that some of the most extraordinary food I ate this year came from the kitchen of Dirty French.”

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

“Dirty is a look toward the diverse and diaspora-fueled future of high-end French fare...one of the fall's finest openings...a coherent vision of the Future of French.”

**RYAN SUTTON, Eater**

“The ‘dirty’ French creations are worth a special trip.”

**ADAM PLATT, New York Magazine**

“Dishes so original and unexpected they almost make you dizzy.”

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

“...over-the-top—and totally seductive.”

**TEJAL RAO, Bloomberg**

**The New York Times**



**New York Times Review  
Best New Restaurant 2014  
Best Restaurant Dish 2014**

**EATER**



**Top New Restaurant 2014  
Best Dish 2014**

*NEW YORK*

**Best New Restaurant 2014  
Best Sandwich in New York  
The Best Hot Cocktail in NYC  
The Absolute Best Tuna Tartare in NYC**



**Top 10 Best Dishes and Drinks 2014**

**Bloomberg**

**Top New Dishes 2014**

**NEWYORKOBSERVER**

**Best Dish 2014**

## HÛÎTRES

EAST COAST OYSTERS, TABASCO MIGNONETTE



## JAMBON AMÉRICAIN

SURRYANO, MUFFULETTA REMOULADE

### HORS D'ŒUVRE

#### *Capaccio*

LAMB, SHISHITO, LABNEH

#### *Leek Vinaigrette*

CRISPY BRIC, PRESERVED LEMON, FINES HERBES

#### *Tartare*

AHI TUNA, BIRD'S CHILI, CRÊPE INDOCHINE

#### *Salmon Maison*

CURED LOX, POMMES CHEMEL

#### *Millefeuille*

TRUMPET ROYALE, KABOCHA SQUASH CURRY

#### *Etouffée*

MUSSELS, RICE CAKES, CRAB

#### *Bourguignon*

GRILLED OYSTERS, GARLIC, PARSLEY

### SALADE

#### *Verte*

LITTLE GEM, BUTTERMILK, RADISH

#### *Requefort*

ROASTED BEETS, CANDIED CASHEWS

#### *Chèvre*

KALE, SUNCHOKES, SAND PEAR

#### *Endive*

CAJUN SHRIMP, DIJON VINAIGRETTE



## Poisson

#### *Pisteu*

STEAMED BASS, SCALLION, HERBES EXOTIQUES

#### *Meunière*

BROOK TROUT, SESAME, DRIED APRICOTS

#### *Provençale*

SCALLOP, ARTICHAUT, VADOUVAN

#### *Persillade*

POACHED COD, BUTTERBALLS, HARISSA



## RÔTISSERIE

(LIMITED AVAILABILITY)

#### *Bordelaise*

SHORT RIB, HAKUREI TURNIP, CORIANDER

#### *Boulangère*

LAMB SADDLE, POTATO, CUMIN

#### *Duck à l'Orange*

RAS EL HANOUT, PRESERVED ORANGES



#### *Porc aux Moutardes*

SPARE RIBS, CELERY REMOULADE

## POUR DEUX

(PRESENTED IN 2 SERVICES)

#### *Côte de Boeuf*

#### *Chicken and Crepes*



## ACCOMPAGNEMENT

#### *Pommes Frites*

#### *Pommes Purée*

#### *Champignons*

#### *Brussels Sprouts*

#### *Squash Epicées*

#### *Haricots Asiatique*

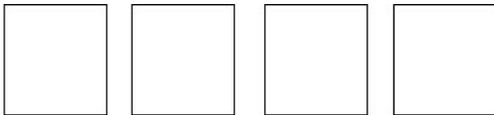


# Lobby Bar

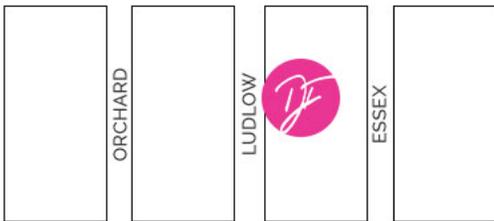
Located in The Ludlow hotel, the Lobby Bar opened in July 2014. The Lobby Bar is a cocktail bar and lounge featuring cocktails from Major Food Group's acclaimed Bar Director, Thomas Waugh. In addition, the Lobby Bar serves a select food menu of dishes like Cajun Shrimp Pain Grillé, East Coast Oysters and Jambon Américain. The Lobby Bar seats 100 guests indoors and outdoors year-round in The Ludlow's garden courtyard.

## Address

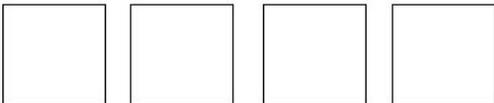
180 Ludlow Street  
New York, New York



HOUSTON



STANTON



## COCKTAILS



### *Montecristo*

IRISH WHISKEY, CRÈME DE BANANE, AMONTILLADO, FRESH LIME



### *Chai Matsuda*

CHAI-BOURBON, AMERICANO, CARDAMOM, ORANGE BITTERS



### *Muddy Water*

CUMIN-RYE, IRISH WHISKEY, CINNAMON, XOCOLATL MOLÉ BITTERS, ABSINTHE RINSE



### *Belmondo*

BLANCO TEQUILA, PEAR EAU DE VIE, GINGER, GENTIAN, FRESH LEMON JUICE



### *Litkei*

COGNAC AND JAMAICAN RUM, PASSION FRUIT, HOUSE FALERNUM, FRESH LIME, AROMATIC BITTERS



### *Grand Père*

GRAIN JAPANESE WHISKY, COCONUT-VERMOUTH, RAS EL HANOUT, AROMATIC BITTERS



### *Pigalle*

BOURBON, ANCHO CHILE, BITTER APERITIF, FRESH ORANGE AND LEMON JUICES



### *Lavageza*

REPOSADO TEQUILA, VANILLA YOGURT, CRÈME DE PECHE, FRESH LIME, CLOVE



### *Ludlow Gimlet*

PLYMOUTH AND NAVY STRENGTH GINS, CINNAMON, CRÈME DE ABRICOT, FRESH LIME



### *L'usine*

BANANA CHIP-BLACK RUM, COFFEE BEAN-VERMOUTH, AMARO, CACAO



### *Imperial Planter's Punch (or two) \$35*



TRINIDAD AND MARTINIQUE RUMS, PLANTERS SPICES, FRESH GRAPEFRUIT AND LIME JUICES

**THE LUDLOW  
NEW YORK CITY**

*Dirty French*

## *Lobby BAR*

### *Bourguignon*

GRILLED OYSTERS, GARLIC, PARSLEY

### *Tartare*

AHI TUNA, BIRD'S CHILI, CRÈPE INDOCHINE

### *Salmon Maison*

CURED LOX, POMMES CHEMEL



### *Tartine*

SMOKED HAM, TOMATO, MUSTARD OIL

### *Burger*

LAMB, BUCHERON, CUMIN ONIONS



### *Haricots Aïatique*

*Pommes Frites*

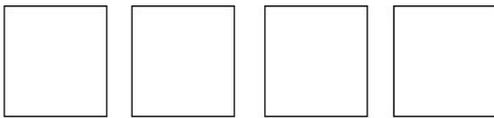
# THE LUDLOW NEW YORK CITY

In addition to Dirty French and the Lobby Bar, Major Food Group operates all food and beverage for The Ludlow hotel. MFG manages 24-hour room service, event catering and production, and minibar service for the property.

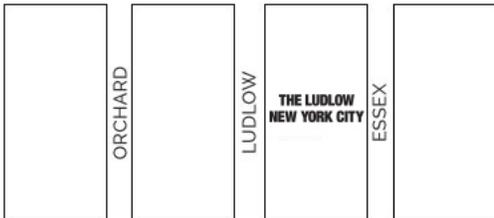
---

## Address

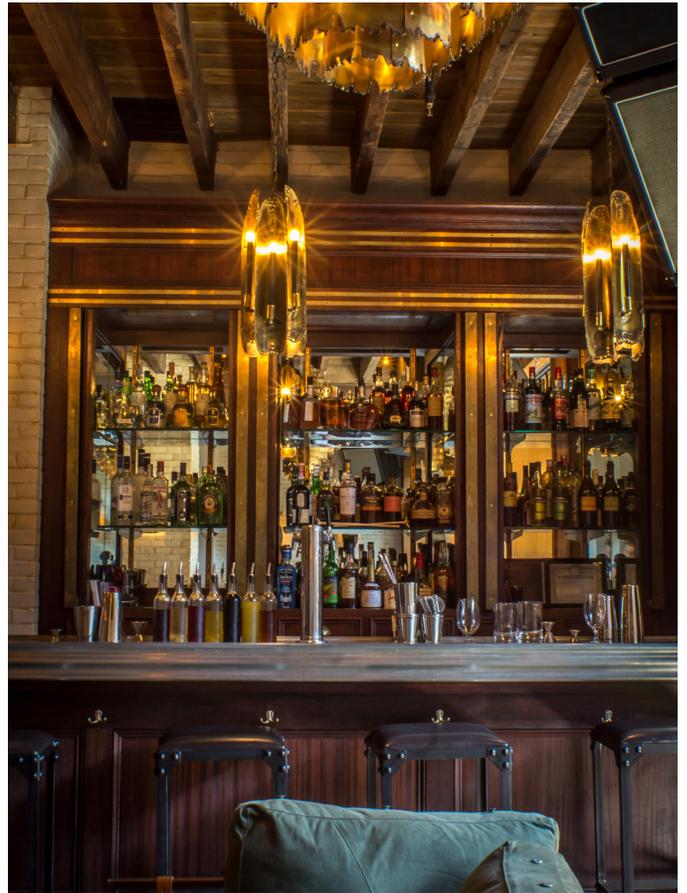
180 Ludlow Street  
New York, New York



HOUSTON



STANTON



# SANTINA

Santina opened in January 2015 and is located underneath the High Line park in Manhattan. The restaurant is housed in a glass structure designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano next to the new Whitney Museum. Situated on what used to be the coast of Manhattan where some of the city's first farmers market once stood, Santina is a coastal Italian restaurant that takes inspiration from the neighborhood's history with a menu that highlights vegetables and fish. Dishes like Giardinia Crudite, Spaghetti Blue Crab and Bass Agrigento integrate Italian coastal cuisine with modern culinary sensibilities. In its first year Santina was named one of the best restaurants of 2015 by The New York Times, GQ and Bon Appétit, amongst other publications.

---

## Address

820 Washington Street  
New York, New York



# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

## SANTINA

“...restaurateurs who somehow find the time to endow each place they open with the thematic complexity of a Paul Thomas Anderson movie.”

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

“One of the most vibrant, lively places to eat in New York...the food is subversively good.”

**TEJAL RAO, Bloomberg**

“A fine example as to why Major Food remains one of the city’s most entertaining restaurant groups.”

**RYAN SUTTON, Eater**

“Design is destiny. Santina is a glass-box folly so festive, it nudges timid diners outside their predictable-Italian comfort boxes.”

**STEVE CUOZZO, New York Post**

“The three restaurateurs take their concepts further than anybody else in New York.”

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

**The New York Times**



Critic's Choice

Best New Restaurant of 2015

**Bloomberg**



NEWYORKOBSERVER



**EATER**



Top Restaurant of 2015

*NEW YORK*



Best Cannoli



Best Restaurant in America 2015

## CECINA

ITALIAN CHICKPEA PANCAKES

**AVOCADO TRAPANESE**  
tomato, almond pesto

**FUNGHI**  
nebrodini mushroom

**LAMB TARTAR**  
green olive, aioli

**GAMBERETTI**  
rock shrimp, ginger

**CALABRIAN TUNA**  
spicy tuna tartare



**GIARDINIA CRUDITE**  
raw seasonal vegetables  
FOR THE TABLE



## VEGETABLES + FISH

**OYSTERS**  
cucumber mignonette

**BRANZINO CRUDO**  
acqua pazza, chili oils

**HOUSE ANCHOVIES**  
lemon, garlic

**ARTICHOKES & GRAPES**  
cardoon, hazelnut

**RADISH & SALMON**  
lemon, coriander

**OCTOPUS SPIEDINI**  
eggplant, peppadew

**FRITTO MISTO**  
caper tartar sauce

## SALAD

**ARUGULA FIG**  
goat cheese, almonds

**TRICOLORE SPENDIDO**  
tuna carpaccio

**GRILLED CALAMARI**  
wild rice, tomato

**INSALATA POMPEII**  
cucumber, radishes

## SQUASH

**SQUASH CARPACCIO**  
honey agrodolce, pink peppercorn

**KALE SALAD**  
pomegranate, mint

**LAMB MEATBALLS**  
spaghetti squash, sage

**ORECCHIETTE**  
pumpkin seed pesto

## RICE + PASTA

**BROCCOLI & PECORINO**  
cipollini onion

**SHRIMP ZINGARA**  
tomato, olive

**GUANCIALE E PEPE**  
pork jowl, black pepper

**TORTELLINI SORRENTINA**  
pesto, marinara

**RIGATONI ALLA NORMA**  
eggplant, ricotta salata

**FUSILLI SANTINA**  
merguez, mussels

**SPAGHETTI BLUE CRAB**  
cherry tomato

## MAIN

**BASS AGRIGENTO**  
orange, peppers

**CHICKEN DIAVOLA**  
pepperonconi, eggplant

**WHOLE LOBSTER**  
zucchini, mint

**EGGPLANT PARMIGIANA**  
neapolitan style

**SWORDFISH DOGANA**  
green tomato, olive relish

**GRILLED BRANZINO**  
grapefruit giardinia

**GRIGLIATA DEL GIORNO**  
please inquire

## SIDES

**SPICY POTATOES**

**GARLIC BROCCOLI**

**GRILLED MUSHROOMS**

# SANTINA

SANTINA ACCEPTS CREDIT CARDS ONLY.



Sadelle's is a New York bakery and restaurant from Major Food Group located in the heart of SoHo. The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. For breakfast and lunch, Sadelle's features quintessential appetizing selections like sliced-to-order salmon and sturgeon, chopped salads, and other New York classics. Every night, Sadelle's transforms from a bakery into a fantastical brasserie that is illuminated solely by candlelight. Sadelle's dinner menu emphasizes brasserie classics with an Eastern European twist. The restaurant also specializes in traditional Russian caviar and vodka service.

The bakery highlights one of New York's greatest food traditions—the bagel. Our hand-rolled bagels, pastries and breads are made fresh on-site throughout the day in a glass-enclosed bakery, located in the center of the dining room.

**Address**

463 West Broadway  
New York, New York



## FISH

All selections served with bagel, tomato, cucumber, onion & capers

HOUSE SALMON  
SMOKED SCOTTISH  
SABLE

STURGEON  
WHITEFISH SALAD  
SALMON SALAD  
└ (Add Trout Roe)



### SADELLE'S TOWER

TUNA SALAD  
EGG SALAD

SHRIMP SALAD  
LOBSTER SALAD

## EGGS

LEO  
House Salmon, Caramelized Onion

SALAMI & EGGS  
Hard Salami, Mustard

SALMON BENEDICT  
Poached Eggs, Smoked Scottish, Hollandaise

CLASSIC EGG SANDWICH  
Fried Eggs, Bacon, Muenster

HEALTHY EGG SANDWICH  
Egg Whites, Arugula, Green Chili

EGGS ANY STYLE  
Scrambled, Fried, Poached, served with potatoes and bagel

CUSTOM OMELETTE  
Choose Three: Mushroom, Pepper, Onion, Tomato, Chives, Herbs, Salami, Bacon, Ham, Muenster, American, Cheddar, Swiss

### CAVIAR

FRENCH TROUT ROE OR BAERI ROYAL (30g)

SOFT SCRAMBLED EGGS  
LATKE ROYALE  
LOBSTER BENEDICT  
TRADITIONAL CAVIAR SERVICE  
ADD TO ANY DISH

## SPECIALITIES

FAMOUS STICKY BUNS  
GRAPEFRUIT COCKTAIL  
OATMEAL  
FRENCH TOAST  
BLUEBERRY PANCAKES  
CHEESE BLINTZES

## SIDES

BREAKFAST POTATOES  
BACON  
SAUSAGE  
AVOCADO  
SADELLE'S COLESLAW  
PICKLES  
GLUTEN FREE BAGEL & CREAM CHEESE  
BAGEL & CREAM CHEESE  
TOAST Challah or Rye

◀ WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS ONLY ▶

## STARTERS

EAST COAST OYSTERS  
TUNA TARTARE  
PIGS IN A BLANKET  
ASPARAGUS VINAIGRETTE  
VEAL PELMENI



### SOUP

MATZO BALL  
MUSHROOM BARLEY  
GAZPACHO

## SALADS

Choice of Russian, Blue Cheese, Dijon, Balsamic or Lemon Vinaigrette

BEVERLY  
Turkey, Cheddar, Bacon, Beet, Tomato

WALDORF  
Chicken, Raisin, Walnut, Celery, Apple

FREDDY  
Shrimp, Heart Of Palm, Avocado, Radish, Crispy Shallots

GREEK  
Cucumber, Feta, Tomato, Olives, Red Onion

COBB  
Chicken, Bacon, Egg, Avocado, Tomato

LOBSTER  
Whole Lobster, String Bean, Potato, Tomato, Asparagus



## SANDWICHES

TUNA MELT  
GRILLED CHEESE  
DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER

### TRIPLE DECKER

Choose two

TURKEY ... ROAST BEEF ... SALAMI ... CLUB



## SUPPER

ROASTED SALMON  
Mustard, Confit Potato  
TROUT FRANCESKA  
Capers, Beet Meuniere  
SPICY FRIED CHICKEN  
Truffe Honey, Coleslaw

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

---



“The most charming new, big-league restaurant in many a moon... a gorgeous, Jewish-influenced, slightly Russian noshing-hall in the heart of seen-it-all Soho.”

**STEVE CUOZZO, *New York Post***

“Sadelle’s takes the humble schmear into brave new territory.”

**ROBIN RAISFELD AND ROB PATRONITE, *New York Magazine***

“An instant New York daytime classic...the bagels...are spectacular.”

**RYAN SUTTON, *Eater***

“Sadelle’s is packed with more ideas and more good things to eat than we get from most other restaurants.”

**PETE WELLS, *The New York Times***

“Sadelle’s is a modern day synagogue you don’t need to be Jewish to belong to, as long as you’re down to pray to the God of Smoked Salmon.”

**ANDREW STEINTHAL, *The Infatuation***

**Bloomberg**

Best Dishes of 2015

**The New York Times**

Sticky Buns, Best Dish of 2015

*NEW YORK*

The Absolute Best Bagel in New York  
The Absolute Best French Toast in New York

**EATER**

Most Anticipated Opening 2015  
The Best Breakfast Sandwich in NYC

**THRILLIST**

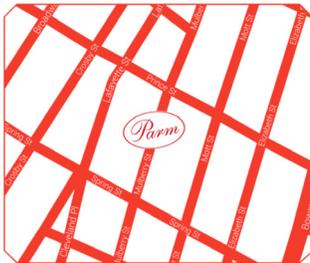
Best Restaurants of 2015



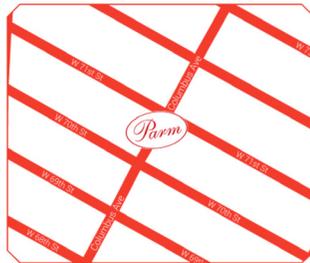
The Best Bagel in NYC



Parm is a casual restaurant and sandwich shop that celebrates classic Italian-American food. The first location of Parm opened its doors in 2011 on Mulberry Street in the Soho neighborhood of Manhattan; since then, Parm has opened on the Upper West Side, in Battery Park City and in Yankee Stadium. Famous for dishes like chicken parm, garlic bread, baked ziti and meatballs, Parm has received two stars from The New York Times and was named as one of the 101 Best Places to Eat in North America by Newsweek. Parm is open for lunch, dinner and take out and also has a critically acclaimed cocktail program.



**Soho**  
248 Mulberry Street



**UPPER WEST SIDE**  
235 Columbus Avenue



**BATTERY PARK CITY**  
250 Vesey Street



**YANKEE STADIUM**



**BARCLAYS CENTER**



# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE



“...it is completely faithful to your memories while being much, much better than you remembered.”

**PETE WELLS, New York Times Restaurant Review**

“Memorize these names now, NYC: They’ll be on the lips of tastemakers for years to come.”

**JAY CHESHES, Time Out New York**

“Wonderful, loveable Italian-American food”

**JOHN MARIANI, Esquire Magazine**

“In a city where Italian restaurants proliferate, these two chefs have also brought a distinctive edge to the food they serve.”

**NICHOLAS LANDER, Financial Times**

“People who want the best, know to walk a couple of blocks north to Parm.”

**ALAN SYTSMA, New York Magazine**

“The Torrissi Boys are already building a dining dynasty.”

**FOSTER KAMER, New York Observer**

“We’re already salivating at the thought of many future meals; and we’re sure you will be, too.”

**ED LEVINE, Serious Eats**

**The New York Times**



**New York Times Review**

*NEW YORK*

**Best of NY 2012, Where to Eat 2013**  
New York Magazine

**Newsweek**

**World’s 101 Best Places to Eat**  
Newsweek Magazine



**“Best New Spinoff”**  
Time Out New York



**“New Sandwich of the Year”**  
Eater Top 10 New Sandwiches NY

**GRUB STREET**

**Best Sandwiches of 2015**

# Parm

## APPETIZER

MEATBALLS  
*mario's recipe*

CRISPY ZUCCHINI  
*lightly fried*

BAKED CLAMS  
*oregano style*

ARTICHOKE CASINO  
*stuffed hearts*

PROSCIUTTO  
*thinly sliced*

BUFFALO CUCUMBERS  
*hot sauce, blue cheese*

CAESAR SALAD  
*the classic*

SUNDAY SALAD  
*iceberg, zesty dressing*

CHOPPED SALAD  
*tricolore, peanuts, tomato*

GREEK FARRO  
*feta, olive, cucumber*

ARUGULA SALAD  
*fig, almond, parmesan*

ADD CHICKEN OR SHRIMP  
ADD AVOCADO

house made  
**FRESH MOZZ**

**CALAMARI**  
*long hot peppers*

## PASTA



RIGATONI FRA DIAVOLA  
*pink sauce, calabrian chili*

PENNE SCAMPI  
*shrimp, garlic sauce*

FUSILLI BOLOGNESE  
*meat gravy, ricotta*

LINGUINE VONGOLE  
*clams, oregano*



**BAKED ZITI**  
*add meat gravy*  
ALLOW 15 MIN

## MAIN COURSE

EGGPLANT PARM  
*ten layers*

CHINESE RIBS  
*san gennaro style*

THE OZERSKY  
*roast beef hero, italian fries*

CHICKEN PARM DINNER  
*spicy rotini pasta*

WHOLE FISH  
*grilled orata, salsa verde*

PORK MILANESE  
*pounded chop, arugula salad*

CHICKEN LIMONE  
*half chicken, lemon vinaigrette*

## SIDE

ITALIAN FRIES  
GARLIC BREAD  
ICEBERG SALAD  
GARLIC BROCCOLI  
SPICY ROTINI

PARM BATTERY PARK · 250 YESEY ST | WWW.PARMNYC.COM | @PARMNYC · #PARMLIFESTYLE

# Parm

## SANDWICH

*roll hero platter*

ROLL: sweet semolina - HERO: classic sesame  
PLATTER: no bread, choose salad or spicy rigatoni

CHICKEN PARM · EGGPLANT PARM

MEATBALL PARM · HOUSE TURKEY

CHICKEN CUTLET



ITALIAN COMBO

## FOR the TABLE

**BAKED ZITI**  
*add meat gravy*  
ALLOW 15 MIN

GARLIC BREAD DELUXE  
BUFFALO CUCUMBERS ·

SUNDAY SALAD  
ADD CHICKEN  
CALAMARI  
ITALIAN FRIES  
SIDE RICOTTA

# Torrisi ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

“The dishes...edible paintings, comestible short stories. It is strange and wonderful to eat them”

**SAM SIFTON, New York Times Restaurant Review**

“The ultimate in throwback Italian cuisine”

**ADAM PLATT, New York Magazine Where to Eat 2011**

“...chefs Rich Torrasi and Mario Carbone plotted the future of their lavishly acclaimed restaurant—and, just maybe, of Italian food in America.”

**FRANK BRUNI, New York Times Magazine**

“Torrasi Italian Specialties might be Manhattan’s best Italian-American restaurant.”

**RYAN SUTTON, Bloomberg Restaurant Review**

“If fine dining is going to be saved in America, this is how it’s going to happen.”

**JOSH OZERSKY, Time Magazine**

“A masterwork by two passionate, perfectionist cooks at the height of their creativity”

**DAVID CAMP, Food & Wine Magazine**



“Best New Restaurant in America”  
James Beard Foundation Award Nominee 2011

**The New York Times**



**New York Times Review**

**FOOD & WINE**

“10 Best Restaurant Dishes 2010”  
Food & Wine Magazine

**ZAGAT**

“Top Italian 2011”  
27 out of 30 points for food  
(2nd Highest in NY)  
Zagat Survey



“Restaurant of the Year”  
Eater Awards Winner 2010

---

*Torrisi* ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

---

*NEW YORK*  
MAGAZINE

**2012**

BEST OF NY

**2013**

WHERE TO EAT

**2012**

BEST OF NY  
TASTING MENU

---

**#1 Italian Restaurant in New York**

---

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

“In the realm of red-sauce cooking, it’s nothing short of revolutionary.”

—ROB PATRONITE & ROBIN RAISFELD, New York Magazine

★ ★ ★

“...the best restaurant, pound for pound, in the city.”

—ADAM PLATT, New York Magazine

# CHARITY

---



In 2016, Major Food Group launched a significant new partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation, a charity that aims to fight poverty in New York City by building soup kitchens, homeless shelters, schools and job-training programs.

Major Food Group works with the Robin Hood Foundation on many initiatives including donation of 100 percent of its cancellation fees as well as a portion of its catering proceeds to the organization. Major Food group is a supporter of the Robin Hood New York City marathon team and is also a sponsor of the annual Robin Hood Benefit, which in 2016 raised over \$61 million for the foundation.

“

Torrisi Boys to Take  
From the No-Show  
and Give to the Poor

**NICK SOLARES, Eater**

“

Restaurants Add  
Reservation Cancellation  
Fees to the Menu

**PETE WELLS, The New York Times**

---

# CHARITY

---



# FARE

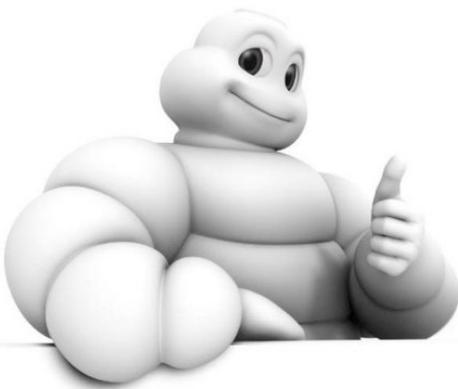
Food Allergy Research & Education

Recipient of the  
2015 Lifetime Achievement Award



2015 Friends of the Highline Honoree

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE



Carbone Awarded · 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

## ONE MICHELIN STAR

Torrise Italian Specialties Awarded · 2013, 2014, 2015

## ONE MICHELIN STAR

ZZ's Clam Bar Awarded · 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018

## ONE MICHELIN STAR



---

# ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

---

# FOOD & WINE

Inspiration served daily

---

# BEST NEW CHEFS 2012

---



**Rich Torrisi &  
Mario Carbone**

---

# RECENT ACCOLADES AND PRAISE

---

**Forbes**

**ZAGAT**

**30 UNDER 30  
2012**

---



**JEFF ZALAZNICK**

**CRAIN'S**  
NEW YORK BUSINESS

**40 UNDER 40  
2016**



## The Return of the Power Restaurant

The guys behind some New York's spendiest restaurants have opened a pair of showstoppers in the city's most venerated restaurant space.

By Brett Martin  
GQ  
December 6, 2017

Some new restaurants you can encounter and assess with dispassionate objectivity. Some you've been waiting to go to your whole life.

I'm being literal. In the early 1980s, for their wedding anniversary, my parents went to The Four Seasons for dinner. This was a big deal in our house. They had been once before, soon after getting married in 1965. My mother's salary then, as a newly minted New York City public-school teacher assigned to an elementary school in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, was \$5,300 before taxes; my father, variously a cabdriver, optician, civil servant, and eventually CPA, could not have earned much more. Luckily, the pre-theater prix fixe menu was \$16.95, a number that nevertheless required, if not scrimping, then at least a deep breath at a time when the fried-shrimp dinner at Lundy Bros., closer to home in Sheepshead Bay, cost a mere three bucks.

The return visit to The Four Seasons was the subject of anticipatory discussion for months and great excitement when the day finally arrived. I've never entirely shaken the glow that the name of the restaurant took on. Throughout my childhood, I would occasionally take out the slender matchbook they had brought home and stuffed in a drawer, running a finger over the famous logo of four trees in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. And whenever my brother or I would misbehave or commit a table faux pas, it would elicit the same withering response from my parents: "You are not ready for The Four Seasons."

It was a decade or so before I finally made it through the doors of the Seagram Building, up Philip Johnson's famous staircase and into The Four Seasons for the first time. It was a party—I can't recall what for, except that the Yankees were all there. I remember Paul O'Neill, in one of those abominable melted-ice-cream Cosby sweaters popular among white ballplayers in the late '90s, standing like an overgrown kid near the buffet, his plate stacked high with crab legs. In awe, I wandered back and forth between the walnut-paneled Grill Room and the Pool Room, with its bubbling marble bath. I gazed up at the Richard Lippold sculpture of brass rods, suspended over the bar. I surreptitiously fingered the famous window treatments, ascending curtains of rippling beads, slung like jewelry across a belly dancer's midriff. More than a few of these circuits included stops at the open bar. At one point, holding a heavy rocks glass filled with whiskey, I turned a corner into the hallway that connected the two dining rooms and walked directly into Joe Torre. The glass slipped out of my hand and hit the floor at his feet, exploding like a grenade. By the time I looked up, Torre had fled and a team of servers had swooped in with towels and brooms. I stood there alone, watching them sweep, the awful knowledge coursing through me: I Was. Not. Ready.

# "THERE IS NO RESTAURANT BETTER KEYED TO THE TEMPO OF MANHATTAN RIGHT NOW THAN THE GRILL."

I relate these stories to make the point that if you are a New Yorker of any long standing, The Four Seasons was likely to occupy some part of your psychic landscape—even if your version of New York was many physical and metaphorical miles from the one to which the restaurant once acted as a de facto canteen. Was because The Four Seasons technically ceased operations in the Seagram Building in July 2016, replaced this May by two new restaurants in the same space. Appropriately, if un-Google-ably, they are named The Pool and The Grill. The owners of The Four Seasons name plan to open their own new version a few blocks away, but until proven otherwise, it's the space, not the moniker, that holds the magic.



Even so, there haven't been many points in the past two decades when goings-on in the Seagram Building would have been considered big dining-world news, much less the restaurant story of the year. One more memory I have is of being at Food & Wine's Best New Chefs awards, in 2007, the same day, coincidentally, that Frank Bruni had reviewed The Four Seasons for The New York Times, cutting the place's rating from three stars to two. Pete Wells, then the Times's dining editor, was there, and we were talking about what could possibly make the restaurant relevant again. A younger chef, maybe? "What about him?" Pete said, pointing across the room to where David Chang was gloomily plating an endless number of the pork buns that had won him his own Best New Chef award the previous year. We imagined koji-spiked vichyssoise, bao buns stuffed with duck à l'orange. And then we laughed and laughed. Because in the spring of 2007, what could've been more ridiculous? The Revolution of the Line Cooks was well under way, with chefs fleeing everything The Four Seasons represented. They were stripping down, shedding dining-room conventions, shedding dining

rooms altogether. The whole food world was getting younger, looser, more polyglot, farther downtown. To take a job like chef at The Four Seasons—in the fantastical case that it would even be offered—would be to disappear forever.



Ten years later, the narrative shows signs of once again being turned on its head. The Grill and The Pool are operated by Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, two fine-dining refugees who opened a tiny Italian-sandwich shop in SoHo and used it to launch an empire that has now stormed back uptown. It's hard not to see this as either the Revolution's final, capping victory or its Prince Hal-like betrayal.

One thing for sure is that The Grill and The Pool represent the apotheosis of what I think of as the New Nostalgia: a notable pendulum swing back toward the traditional rituals and comforts of fine dining. You see it 60 blocks south of The Grill and The Pool, at Le Coucou, which dares to propose that a French restaurant can be more formal than a bistro or brasserie and still hip; at the newest incarnation of the Beatrice Inn, where you can spend more than \$700 on a whiskey-aged tomahawk steak; at 4 Charles Prime Rib; and at Minetta Tavern, which kicked off this counter-strain almost a decade ago.

These places reanimate the notion of dining out as a special occasion, replete with candles, tableside preparation, even—imagine!—tablecloths. Maybe it's the first wave of revolutionaries aging and finding themselves craving the kinds of nights out their parents once had. Maybe it's the desire for a deeper coddling in anxious times. Maybe we just realized we still need someplace to go on Valentine's Day.

I spent more on two Gibsons—pre-batched and washed with pickled-onion brine—while waiting for my party at The Grill this summer than my parents did on their entire first meal at The Four Seasons. That shouldn't be too surprising, and not just for reasons of inflation. In addition to the building's pedigree and the baseline insanity of what it costs to eat out in New York, Torrisi, Carbone, and their partner, Jeff Zalaznick, have long established themselves as breathtakingly bold upsellers. It took me an inordinate amount of time to realize the trio's company name, Major Food Group, was a pun, in part because the braggadocio seemed so on-brand. With the exception of its casual sandwich shop, Parm, the group's restaurants—Carbone, Santina, ZZ's Clam Bar, Dirty French, and Sadelle's—operate on the principle that, for a surprising number of people, the chance to drain one's pockets is a value-added proposition. Las Vegas has, of course, known this for a long time. When the boys opened a branch of Carbone in Vegas itself, I worried briefly that they might be giving the game away. (They seem to be surviving just fine.)

There have been times I've found the gouging obnoxious, and other times

when I've reminded myself that New Yorkers who want to spend stupid amounts of money on dinner will certainly find a way to do so with or without the help of Major Food Group. In nearly every case, they'll get worse food for their trouble. The group may glorify an old-fashioned, elitist clubbiness (not to say cultivate a new-fashioned douchiness), but there's never any doubt that Torrisi and Carbone are real chefs or that they're working from a place of genuine respect and affection for ingredients, service, and restaurant history.

And in the Seagram Building, they have spaces that, for once, render the question of upsell moot. Put it this way: If you were to charge me an equivalent premium—say, \$35—for a hot dog, but I got to eat it ensconced in the luster of The Grill, or beneath the huge Calder mobile slowly rotating over The Pool's bubbling tub—I'd probably say: "Yeah, seems fair."

Don't misunderstand: The Grill and The Pool are still monuments to conspicuous wealth and luxury. There is no shortage of "while Rome burned" tableaux on which to seize, starting with the thousand Swords of Damocles literally dangling over the swells at the bar, in the form of Lippold's rods; if you're in a revolutionary frame of mind, they look like a phalanx of arrows arrested, Matrix-style, midflight, on their way to strike deep into the heart of capitalism. For what it's worth, The Grill is the only restaurant I've been to this year at which I seriously worried that Donald Trump might show up.

Still, there was a reason my mother and father—whose own first-generation parents would never have dreamed of taking seats, however temporary, among the beau monde—chose The Four Seasons for their foray into Manhattan dining, instead of Le Pavillon, or Lutèce, or any of the other formidable Frenchies that made up the top of the Manhattan food chain in those days. Joe Baum, the visionary leader of Restaurant Associates, which built the restaurant in 1959, explicitly wanted it to be a spectacle understood by all—and an American one at that. (The menu was very deliberately written in English rather than French.) The Four Seasons may never have been populist, but its Kennedy-esque aspirational vision was open to all.

And in the Seagram Building, they have spaces that, for once, render the question of upsell moot. Put it this way: If you were to charge me an equivalent premium—say, \$35—for a hot dog, but I got to eat it ensconced in the luster of The Grill, or beneath the huge Calder mobile slowly rotating over The Pool's bubbling tub—I'd probably say: "Yeah, seems fair."

Don't misunderstand: The Grill and The Pool are still monuments to conspicuous wealth and luxury. There is no shortage of "while Rome burned" tableaux on which to seize, starting with the thousand Swords of Damocles literally dangling over the swells at the bar, in the form of Lippold's rods; if you're in a revolutionary frame of mind, they look like a phalanx of arrows arrested, Matrix-style, midflight, on their way to strike deep into the heart of capitalism. For what it's worth, The Grill is the only restaurant I've been to this year at which I seriously worried that Donald Trump might show up.

Still, there was a reason my mother and father—whose own first-generation parents would never have dreamed of taking seats, however temporary, among the beau monde—chose The Four Seasons for their foray into Manhattan dining, instead of Le Pavillon, or Lutèce, or any of the other formidable Frenchies that made up the top of the Manhattan food chain in those days. Joe Baum, the visionary leader of Restaurant Associates, which built the restaurant in 1959, explicitly wanted it to be a spectacle understood by all—and an American one at that. (The menu was very deliberately written in English rather than French.) The Four Seasons may never have been populist, but its Kennedy-esque aspirational vision was open to all.

And there's more here to fetishize than Mad Men power dynamics—of which

it's worth pointing out that *Mad Men* was itself a critique. The Grill is a menu historian's fever dream. There's a long buffet table, festooned with elaborate decorative centerpieces, that feels like it came out of a 1960s-era *Time-Life* book. It's laden with reclaimed relics like anchovies on toast, clam cocktail, gleaming silver bowls of crudités on crushed ice. I could eat like this forever. Weirder, colder, fustier! Bring me jellied consommé! Cottage cheese! A glass of tomato juice! Aspic! Aspic! ASPIC!

Guéridons swarm the floor like cars at a demolition derby, bearing Dover sole, game birds, pepper-crusting ruby-hued slabs of prime rib. Meat is the currency of the New Nostalgia—in the form of either whole animals (chickens, ducks, rabbits) or cuts big, expensive, and beefy. If the Revolution was built on shimmering cubes of pork fat—the knowledge of which had apparently been lost in the dark time known as the Other White Meat Era—the flesh of the moment is good old-fashioned steer. Prime rib is its emblematic cut: at once stolid and ceremonial, decadent and dad-approved. The Oldsmobile of meats.

There is, of course, a paradox built into the New Nostalgia: Part of what it taps into is a yearning for a time when food simply didn't matter so much, when one could just eat without the exhausting business of knowing everything—about chef comings and goings, ingredients, trends, carbon footprints, all of it. It was once a mark of status for The Four Seasons Power-Lunchers to ostentatiously ignore their food, perhaps on the theory that if you cared too much about Lunch you weren't wielding enough Power. And yet who are we looking toward to re-create this golden era of food-as-fuel but famous chefs? After a generation of privileging the kitchen over the front of the house, that's who's left. And I suspect there's no going back, anyway. We already know too much. Which means The Grill will always be just as much of an art project as, say, *Vespertine*—the L.A. restaurant that opened around the same time, promising, among other things, to be “a place of cognitive dissonance that defies categorization...from a time that is yet to be, and a place that does not exist.”

Or, as a fresh-faced young banker happily put it to me as we nursed our Gibsons at The Grill's bar: “It's like Disneyland!” I'm still not sure, and I'm not sure Torrisi and Carbone are, either. Like members of a classic-rock band, the partners have the reputation of falling on either side of a heart-mind divide: Torrisi the brooding Lennon-like artiste, Carbone the McCartneyite purveyor of pop sunshine. The split is literalized in the side-by-side kitchens of The Grill, which is run by Carbone, and The Pool, which is Torrisi's domain. Like brothers sharing a bedroom, they've cut the space in half with different shades of flooring, the name of each restaurant, inlaid in brass, demarcating its side of the border.

There's no shortage of magic at The Pool. Under the spell of a few ounces of gin, awash in the burble of conversation and a counter-intuitively perfect soundtrack of early reggae, it's a wonderful space. It's also huge and, with less than a full house, risks feeling like a banquet hall after half the wedding has gone home. When the clock chimes midnight, you get the feeling that the dignified pool might turn back into a squalid Jacuzzi.

Simply put, it's a lot of room to fill, and Torrisi largely attempts to do so on the plate, rather than with elaborate service. The menu is almost exclusively seafood—though the Instagram money shot is a rose fashioned from shaved foie gras, served on a polished glass cube. There's a beet mille-feuille so charred and smoky you could close your eyes and believe you were eating barbecue. The fish entrées are immaculate, but they're also strangely dull. It pains me to wonder whether that's a function of seafood being unable to stand up to the meaty pleasures next door. It does suggest that The Pool

requires a different approach to its quieter fireworks.

What I wanted, I realized, to my own surprise, was the very thing that The Grill and The Pool are a reaction against: for Torrisi to embrace his autocratic side and present a multi-course tasting menu. To do so would place the restaurants in fascinating dialogue with each other and nearly the entire spectrum of fine dining under one roof: New Nostalgia and Non Nostalgia, side by side.

You may have noticed something else that binds the list of New Nostalgia restaurants mentioned above. There are smatterings of the trend elsewhere in the country, but I don't think it's an accident that it is rooted in Manhattan—the place whose power and centrality have been most diminished by the proliferation of good food into the nation's every nook and cranny of the nation. The Grill and The Pool are the sound of the Empire striking back, Death Star-style. “Go ahead,” they, and the island they sit on, seem to roar. “Move the James Beard Awards to Chicago. Build a ‘Brooklyn’ in every reclaimed industrial downtown across the country. Point fingers at our stifling combination of high rent and toxic buzz addiction. Lure our chefs home to Minneapolis, to St. Louis, to Iowa City. Let them open nice neighborhood restaurants serving nice neighborhood food, take Sundays off, live in houses with porches, have the prospect of a happy, semi-prosperous normal adulthood. We will always have this”—“this” being shit-tons of money and extraordinary urban spaces. Those are Gotham's fossil fuels, and the Seagram Building is its Strategic Reserve. Is it any wonder it's been tapped just as the lights start to seriously flicker? These restaurants are everything great about New York, a triumph of the New York a kid might dream about growing up in the hinterlands of Deep Brooklyn. It remains to be seen whether they are also a last desperate howl before that greatness sinks, glittering like the Titanic, beneath the waves forever.

So where does that leave The Pool? The nature of The Grill's fantasy is easy to understand. What Disney pavilion do you enter when you walk down that hallway toward its sister restaurant?



So where does that leave The Pool? The nature of The Grill's fantasy is easy to understand. What Disney pavilion do you enter when you walk down that hallway toward its sister restaurant?

The Pool, run by chef Rich Torrisi, counters the retro decor of the dining room with a modern menu of mostly seafood. MIACHEL BRETON

I'm still not sure, and I'm not sure Torrisi and Carbone are, either. Like members of a classic-rock band, the partners have the reputation of falling on either side of a heart-mind divide: Torrisi the brooding Lennon-like artiste, Carbone the McCartneyite purveyor of pop sunshine. The split is

literalized in the side-by-side kitchens of The Grill, which is run by Carbone, and The Pool, which is Torrisi's domain. Like brothers sharing a bedroom, they've cut the space in half with different shades of flooring, the name of each restaurant, inlaid in brass, demarcating its side of the border.

There's no shortage of magic at The Pool. Under the spell of a few ounces of gin, awash in the burble of conversation and a counter-intuitively perfect soundtrack of early reggae, it's a wonderful space. It's also huge and, with less than a full house, risks feeling like a banquet hall after half the wedding has gone home. When the clock chimes midnight, you get the feeling that the dignified pool might turn back into a squalid Jacuzzi.

Simply put, it's a lot of room to fill, and Torrisi largely attempts to do so on the plate, rather than with elaborate service. The menu is almost exclusively seafood—though the Instagram money shot is a rose fashioned from shaved foie gras, served on a polished glass cube. There's a beet mille-feuille so charred and smoky you could close your eyes and believe you were eating barbecue. The fish entrées are immaculate, but they're also strangely dull. It pains me to wonder whether that's a function of seafood being unable to stand up to the meaty pleasures next door. It does suggest that The Pool requires a different approach to its quieter fireworks.

What I wanted, I realized, to my own surprise, was the very thing that The Grill and The Pool are a reaction against: for Torrisi to embrace his autocratic side and present a multi-course tasting menu. To do so would place the restaurants in fascinating dialogue with each other and nearly the entire spectrum of fine dining under one roof: New Nostalgia and Non Nostalgia, side by side.

You may have noticed something else that binds the list of New Nostalgia restaurants mentioned above. There are smatterings of the trend elsewhere in the country, but I don't think it's an accident that it is rooted in Manhattan—the place whose power and centrality have been most diminished by the proliferation of good food into the nation's every nook and cranny of the nation. The Grill and The Pool are the sound of the Empire striking back, Death Star-style. “Go ahead,” they, and the island they sit on, seem to roar. “Move the James Beard Awards to Chicago. Build a ‘Brooklyn’ in every reclaimed industrial downtown across the country. Point fingers at our stifling combination of high rent and toxic buzz addiction. Lure our chefs home to Minneapolis, to St. Louis, to Iowa City. Let them open nice neighborhood restaurants serving nice neighborhood food, take Sundays off, live in houses with porches, have the prospect of a happy, semi-prosperous normal adulthood. We will always have this”—“this” being shittens of money and extraordinary urban spaces. Those are Gotham's fossil fuels, and the Seagram Building is its Strategic Reserve. Is it any wonder it's been tapped just as the lights start to seriously flicker? These restaurants are everything great about New York, a triumph of the New York a kid might dream about growing up in the hinterlands of Deep Brooklyn. It remains to be seen whether they are also a last desperate howl before that greatness sinks, glittering like the Titanic, beneath the waves forever.

## New York's hottest new restaurant doesn't have to break the bank

By Steve Cuozzo  
New York Post  
November 28, 2017

Major Food Group has opened its third new restaurant in the Seagram Building — the eagerly awaited Lobster Club, a Japanese-ish pleasure pit in the sunken space that was once The Brasserie. Unlike the Grill and the Pool, which resemble the departed Four Seasons, the Lobster Club has an all-new look and a menu that can scare you at first glance.

It isn't just because of a downtown-like advisory, "all items are intended to be shared and served when ready!" There's a huge price gulf between chef Tasuku Murakami's starring-role teppanyaki dishes and the menu's more reasonably priced choices.

But it isn't hard to enjoy the place if you choose smartly. If \$95 is more than you can spring for a nicely grilled, but familiar 2.5-pound Maine lobster, enjoy the restaurant's namesake crustacean in the form of dumplings, which are a relatively reasonable \$19. Yummy and plump, they take on an herbal tint with fennel seeds and are sparked by ginger-and-scallion sauce. They alone are worth the trip to 98 E. 53rd St.

The Lobster Club's all-over-the-map pricing made us half-jokingly ask Major Food Group managing partner Jeff Zalaznick if the house had a minimum. "No!" he assured us. "Anything goes!"

Whew! Good to hear, because the place is too much fun for nonoligarchs to miss. Have a look.



### The history

The original Brasserie, which opened in 1959, was open 24 hours a day until a fire destroyed it in 1995. In an era when Midtown was buzzer than it is today,

# "ALL THE SUSHI I TRIED WAS OUTSTANDING — WONDERFULLY FRESH-TASTING AND PRICED ONLY SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN AT NEIGHBORHOOD JOINTS."

revelers from Studio 54 and West 50s jazz clubs flocked there at 3 a.m. and made flamboyant entrances down the dining room stairs. The restaurant reopened in 2000 with shorter hours and a new design, but never really caught on.



### The new look

The Lobster Club, designed by Peter Marino, is a drop-dead gorgeous animal with an eye-popping dining room and lounge in too many colors to count. There are walls of bronze and shimmering white ebony, terrazzo floors with Jackson Pollock-like paint swirls, curved chairs, "interpretive" Picasso-like drawings by Marino, and prime booths with green seats that appear to hover in the air. A sexy rear dining room is drenched in red and mahogany.



### Fun fact

Seagram Building landlord Aby Rosen notoriously banished the beloved Picasso “Le Tricorne” curtain that separated the Four Seasons’ Pool and Grill rooms, but the artist reigns at the Lobster Club. Picasso-designed plates and ceramics once adorned the pre-fire Brasserie; Major Food brought them out of storage and mounted them behind the bar.

### The vibe

The Lobster Club draws younger crowds than the Grill and the Pool. Snazzily dressed locals groove to a driving, Curtis Mayfield-heavy soundtrack.

### The must-haves

Skip the pricey teppanyaki and go for the raw stuff. Murakami earned a Michelin star at seriously Japanese Sushi Azabu in Tribeca, but his Lobster Club menu roams throughout the Pacific — and the downtown party circuit. Coconut rock shrimp (\$17) tasted sweeter and fresher than the usual happy-hour favorite. Fresno chili vinaigrette sparks raw bluefin tuna sprinkled with puffed rice (\$23).

Black bass steamed in yuzu dashi and topped with pea greens (\$34) dazzled both eye and palate. Crispy fried Vietnamese snapper (\$36) is vibrantly flavored with fish sauce, chillies, mint, cilantro and Thai basil.



Some raw fish is flown in from Japanese markets but varies day to day. All the sushi I tried was outstanding — wonderfully fresh-tasting and priced only slightly higher than at neighborhood joints. Sweet shrimp (\$6), tuna (\$7) and ikura (\$6) drew moans all around. The chef’s 10-piece selection is a deal for \$68.

For dessert, go for the kakigori (\$15) — a dome-shaped, shaved-ice affair built around blood orange (pureed, candied and added to creme anglaise). The four-layered folly tasted as refreshing and sweet as it looked. How the kitchen keeps it from melting into a puddle is a mystery.

### And to drink

Wines aren’t overly marked up by Manhattan standards, but the book-size list doesn’t have nearly enough good choices under \$200 — although floor-roaming sommelier Sheri Griffith can help you find them.



On the other hand, \$18 specialty cocktails are cheaper than at some Midtown spots and they’re grand, such as a well-balanced potion made with white rum, pineapple and the slightly sour citrus fruit sudachi. There are 10 sake choices by the glass (starting at \$15 for a 4-ounce pour) and even more by the bottle.



## THE POOL

By Daniel Meyer  
Time Out New York  
October 11, 2017

“Whoa, it’s dead in here,” says your guest as you enter the Pool. Compared to the restaurant you just walked through to get here (the Grill), a rollicking room bustling with shiny trolleys of prime rib, it indeed seems stoic, hushed. You can practically hear the massive, fishlike Calder mobile spinning imperceptibly on its axis above; what passes for activity in this soaring space is its famous metallic blinds shimmering in the breeze. The last night I spent here (back when it was Four Seasons) ended with my wife, her dad and me drinking whiskey in the white marble pool. But still waters run deep.

Like its iconic predecessor, the Pool—the latest from Major Food Group’s Jeff Zalaznick, Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone (the Grill, Santina, Carbone)—employs opulence as aphrodisiac, arousing well-heeled New Yorkers not with outright spectacle but with intoxicating indulgence. In the hands of chef Torrisi, that means a tin of caviar—trout roe (\$45) if you’re “cheap,” osetra (market price) if you’re not—heaped onto blini (skip ‘em), toast points (skip ‘em) or the best fucking duck-fat potatoes you’ve ever had. It means even more why-the-hell-not hulking caviar atop impossibly light ricotta gnudi in a \$100 combination. It means a coral reef of foie gras ribbons served on a glass cube (\$32), its cold petals softening as you lay them onto shatteringly crisp disks of fried orange.



Solemnity notwithstanding, the Pool is filled with subtle and satisfying crescendos. The music swells from breezy Marley to bumping Belafonte to Dick Dale’s manic Pulp Fiction theme song; the backlit mezzanine bar (the Pool Lounge) glows softer with each passing cocktail; the attentive servers get funnier and more irreverent with each passing course. The fish-focused menu swells beautifully, too, starting small with tiny toasts (rich and buttery anchovy; \$19) and ending big with crisp-skinned grilled whole fish, plus a serious contender for surf-and-turf king of NYC: alternating slices of blushing cumin-rubbed lamb loin and fatty seared scallop (\$65/pp), slicked with briny shellfish juice and flanked by mostarda-glazed ribs. This is Peter Luger on a fishing trip.

The Pool is a solid addition to Major’s resplendent repertoire. So go ahead and order that \$10,000 bottle of Château d’Yquem. Drink in old New York. The Pool is for lapping it up. Who knows? After that you might just feel like taking a swim.



# The New York Times

## The Grill Is Confident, Theatrical, Sharp and New Yorky

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
April 24, 2017

New York kept certain fantasies about the Four Seasons alive for a long time. We told ourselves that it was an elegant restaurant, that it was an important restaurant, that the roll call of designers, editors and so on who ate lunch there — a short list that grew shorter as publishers moved downtown, expense accounts were clipped and longtime patrons were called by the great reservationist in the sky — was proof of something other than the tendency of famous and busy people to act from habit and herd instinct.

Long before the end, fantasy and reality had gone separate ways. The Four Seasons was a mess. The beaded curtain chains that rippled upward for 20 feet in endless waves like a waterfall running in reverse were coming apart, some of them missing or broken or lying on the floor like dead snakes. The bronze-rod Richard

Lippold sculpture that hangs in midair over the towers of whiskey and gin bottles inside the square bar was furry with dust.

A dinner I had in 2013 was a disaster, from the stale rolls to the zombified service to the dry and crumbly duck served with fruit compote that tasted like the filling in a grocery-store pie. It goes without saying that all this cost a pile of money.

Because the restaurant's lease was winding down, I never wrote up that meal. And when the landlord signed a new one with the Major Food Group instead of the old owners, New Yorkers might have mourned the end of our fantasy Four Seasons, but there weren't a lot of reasons to be sad about losing the real one.

Now, instead of one restaurant, we have two. Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, the two chefs who run the Major Food Group with their noncooking partner, Jeff Zalaznick, have taken a divide-and-conquer strategy. Mr. Torrisi is in charge of what was the Pool Room and is now just the Pool. The Grill, formerly the Grill Room, is in the hands of Mr. Carbone. It was the first to open, in May, and comes very close to being the kind of restaurant many of us imagined in this space all along.

The Grill is confident, theatrical, retro, unsentimental, sharp and New Yorky. Like other projects from Major Food Group, it is packed with ideas and historical allusions. Unpacking it all is a lot of fun if you can afford it; preposterous expense is one reality of the old restaurant that the new tenants preserved.

**"THE GRILL IS CONFIDENT,  
THEATRICAL, RETRO,  
UNSENTIMENTAL, SHARP  
AND NEW YORKY."**

They also preserved the Philip Johnson interior, after the landlord proposed some changes that were swatted down by the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Rightly so: funded by the Seagram Company, Johnson did something astonishing in this room. It's a vast space that offers privacy, a corporate monument that gives back to the public, an expression of International Style austerity that feels exuberant.

All that is in sharp focus again now that it's holding a restaurant with a full battery charge. The beads have been strung back together. Lippold's bronze glints again. The book-matched French walnut paneling is glossier and more radiant, the patterns in the grain more evocative of monumental abstract paintings, than before.



Photos: Liz Barclay/The New York Times

Mr. Carbone, Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Zalaznick prepare for their restaurants the way Matthew Weiner or David Simon get ready for a new show, with a mountain of research. Taking over a high point of midcentury modernism gave them license to study James Beard, rolling trolleys, Jacqueline Kennedy, the martini, John Cage, club sandwiches, Joe Baum, continental cuisine, Delmonico's, green goddess dressing, Craig Claiborne and Catalina sauce.

Some dish names are cryptic, as if written to invite a question the servers can answer with a story. The one about "Jack's Pie" involves John F. Kennedy and comes in two parts. The second is a dubious dirty joke about Marilyn Monroe.

This postmodern approach to modernism leads to some self-conscious nonsense. Next to the staircase is a buffet table set with a surreal cornucopia of vegetables, fruits and layer cakes. It's stunning to look at but it's purely decorative — "a buffet in name only," the servers have to explain.

Dinner sees a traffic jam of rolling carts parked tableside for various bits of stage business, some of which are pointless. Peach Melba doesn't get better when you set it on fire, and when a server painstakingly removes a pastry seal on a cocotte to reveal two pieces of endive, you have to wonder if Mr. Carbone hasn't lost his mind.

But any doubts about his sanity vanish when you taste the spectacularly good guinea hen that the endive accompanies. Roasted and sauced with jus, Madeira and black truffles, it is among the most delicious things I've eaten this year. --

So is the Seagram crab cake, very sweet and pure under a golden lid of potato coins.

So is the prime rib, carved thick or thin at your elbow — this time, the ritual makes sense — and set in front of you along with a meaty barbecued bone in a dark mustard and spice crust.

So are the lamb chops, brushed with curry oil and grilled, with yogurt sauce and a fantastic molded cone of apple-mint jelly.

So is the honey-mustard duck breast, dry aged for a month until it is supernaturally tender.

So is the larded squab in bittersweet orange sauce with a grilled candied orange; the lard is provided by a cloak of whipped fat that bathes the squab breast as it cooks.

So is the slice of lemon chiffon cake confectioned by Jennifer Yee, who is serving as pastry chef until the restaurant is on solid footing. Perfectly tender and fluffy and just sweet enough, it is the kind of dessert that has almost disappeared from New York restaurants, and deserves to come back.

I'll be thinking about those dishes for the rest of the year, and probably beyond. At least half a dozen others are merely very, very good: the gently spicy salad called avocado crab Louis; the anchovy-laced steak tartare that finishes with a surprising riptide of chile heat; the broodingly dark crab gumbo; the "Neptune's crown" Dover sole under a Creole shellfish sauce; the hot pretzel twists and the griddled anadama bread and the nearly weightless dinner rolls brushed with butter that come around at the start of the meal.

For all of this you pay prices that range from "Wow" to "Are you guys serious?" The reassembled lobster Newburg (or Newberg, as the menu has it), in a reduced-fat sauce outfitted with dried cherry tomatoes and basil leaves, is marked "MP" on the menu; it's \$98, about five times what you'd pay for a live lobster of the same size.

At least it's memorable, which is more than can be said for the \$25 jumble of smoked wild mushrooms held together by a wafer-thin one-egg "omelet," or the \$38 chicken "à la Queen," which is like chicken cacciatore that's been fancied up.

Balanced against a few lapses of taste and judgment, though, is the real achievement of Mr. Carbone and his partners in breathing new life into the formal, French-derived style of dining. This used to be the only style chefs thought was suitable for expensive restaurants. But then tasting counters came along; suddenly the rituals of captains standing at attention above white tablecloths seemed antiquated.

Taking off from the model the Major Food Group polished at Carbone, the Grill turns that old and increasingly empty formality into theater, or a game that everybody can get in on. The captains are allowed to have personalities, which means the rest of us can, too. It would work even better if Major Food Group hired more women for the dining room; it's hard to imagine many female captains who would be O.K. with calling Marilyn Monroe "Jack's pie."

As a strict constructionist about the architecture of this space, I can't write about it without registering the loss of the lovely, understated modernist stemware, bowls and other pieces designed specifically for these rooms by Garth and Ada Louise Huxtable. Eating here without them is like visiting a Frank Lloyd Wright house furnished by Ikea.

Some of the things they've been replaced by are very good. Others are reasonably apt. A few are painful. The chunky brass bar coasters marked with a big capital G are a Trumpian touch. So are the napkins with "THE GRILL" embroidered in gold thread.

But coasters and napkins can't cause lasting damage to an interior this extraordinary. It was always one of the most beautiful dining rooms in New York. Now it's also one of its most exciting restaurants.



# The New York Times

## An Early Look at the Grill, in the Former Four Seasons Space

By Florence Fabricant  
New York Times  
April 24, 2017

Forget the famous power lunch. For the time being, forget about any lunch at all in the rooms that used to house the Four Seasons.

When the Grill, the first of two new restaurants in the Seagram Building space, opens to the public on May 2, it will serve only dinner. Jeff Zalaznick, a partner in Major Food Group, which now runs the restaurant complex, said the group wants the restaurant to make its mark as a destination for dinner. (Lunch will be added in about two months.)

And though the partners spoke at one point about resurrecting dishes from the Four Seasons' past, the menu will be entirely new.

Major Food, with the blessing of Aby Rosen, the building's owner and a partner in the restaurant, is wiping the slate clean. The Grill, on the second level, aims instead to channel the spirit of 1958, when the bronze Mies van der Rohe tower opened. (The Four Seasons, a celebrity magnet, followed in 1959 and closed last July; its owners plan to reopen a few blocks away.

"It's going to be a classic midcentury chophouse," Mr. Zalaznick said. "We're really into the history of dining in New York in that era." He mentioned Jack Dempsey's and Christ Cella as examples.

Hanging in the travertine lobby on the ground floor are works by Joan Miró, Cy Twombly and others, all dating from 1958. (There are also a few paintings in the private dining rooms.)

The menu by Mario Carbone, the chef and a partner in Major Food, features dishes from that era, like steak tartare, scallops in snail butter, mock turtle soup, avocado crab Louis and lobster Newburg. It also includes honey-mustard duckling, filet mignon any of three ways (including with oysters), and Dover sole finished tableside like a number of other dishes, including the spit-roasted prime rib roast with deviled bones, carved on a silver trolley.

A signature Four Seasons dish was the crab cake; the Grill's is called the Seagram crab cake. "It's all crab meat, no filler," Mr. Zalaznick said.

A sumptuous buffet at the top of the stairs, presided over by a chef, will dispense cold dishes for the table, like cured salmon and assorted hams, crudités and terrines. Also on display will be floral arrangements, platters of food and cakes.

The room has been restored, polished and fitted with thick oxblood carpet, leather Knoll chairs and new banquettes. The balcony, once a Siberia for



diners without boldfaced names, could become a desired location; tables for six are fitted with imposing plush Burgundy banquettes and offer a sweeping view of the dining room.

The host stand has been relocated to the street-level lobby, where guests can check in for the Grill and, in about three months, the Pool, a seafood restaurant with its own bar and lounge run by the chef Rich Torrisi, another Major Food partner.

The dining rooms' landmark protections prohibited any structural changes and even most cosmetic ones. But the kitchen was fair game and has been completely redone, more open yet divided in two to meet the needs of each restaurant.



Photos: Francesco Sapienza/The New York Times

# The New York Times

## The Pool, a Seafood Restaurant in the Former Four Seasons, to Open July 19

By Florence Fabricant  
New York Times  
July 3, 2017

The second new restaurant planned for the former Four Seasons space in the Seagram Building is set to open on July 19 in what was the landmark Pool Room.

The restaurant, the Pool, will fill the generous, soaring space designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson with a square white marble pool as its centerpiece. The room has been spruced up, its four seasonally themed trees eliminated and a giant Alexander Calder mobile, “Three Segments,” hung from the ceiling. Little else has changed.

The news is in the mezzanine above, an area previously used for private parties that is now a spacious and elegant bar called the Pool Lounge. “The Grill has a bar, and we felt the Pool deserved one, too,” said Jeff Zalaznick, a managing partner of the Major Food Group, which runs the building’s restaurants.

In contrast to the polished Grill, which reopened in early May with a rich, meaty Continental menu, this latest venture is all about seafood, down even to the Calder. “We think it looks something like a fish,” Mr. Zalaznick said.

The new lounge reinforces the maritime theme. William T. Georgis, who also designed the restaurant, relied on silver, gray and navy tones, with a bar faced in mother-of-pearl and tabletops made of translucent onyx.

And for the restaurant, Rich Torrisi, a partner in the group with Mr. Zalaznick and Mario Carbone, the chef in charge of the Grill, drafted an à la carte menu divided into toasts paved with chopped yellowfin tuna, sea urchin or sardines with bone marrow; raw bar selections that include king crab and



oysters; first courses like calamari a la plancha, angel hair pasta with razor clams and a few vegetable dishes; and main courses offering choices like poached Hawaiian walu with fennel sauce.

Whole fish of the day, priced by the pound, is available for one and for the table in some cases. A few dishes labeled surf and turf include rack of lamb with scallops. Seasonal garnishes and sides are served family style at each table. Tableside preparation won’t be a feature, and as at the Grill, the waiters will be clad in stylish Tom Ford outfits.

“What sets today’s seafood restaurant apart from the past is being able to showcase so much raw fish,” Mr. Torrisi said, adding that the more he rehearsed his menu, the simpler his food became. “The seafood has to be the star.”

In the Pool’s kitchen, vintage ship lights found by Mr. Torrisi are used as warming lamps, and a ship’s clock hangs on the wall.

A wine list by John Slover emphasizes whites, and is long on Champagnes and Burgundies. In a corridor leading to the dining room is a collection of hundreds of bottles of Château d’Yquem, some dating to the 19th century. A glass could accompany dessert or replace it, though here, it may pay to give dessert a try. Major Food hired Stephanie Prida, formerly the pastry chef at Manresa, the California restaurant with three Michelin stars, to create plated dishes, like an intricate combination using grapefruit and green tea.

“We like the idea of modern desserts in this context,” Mr. Zalaznick said.



Photos: Sasha Maslov/The New York Times



# THE GRILL

By Christina Izzo  
Time Out New York  
June 27, 2017

“Let me get you an emergency martini,” the table captain pronounces the second your behind hits the banquette. You didn’t ask for one—you didn’t even know you needed one until the chilled glass arrives, straight up with a twist, effectively soothing the fuss of hightailing it uptown at rush hour during a heat wave. It’s the kind of showy, hyperpersonalized service and keen eye for detail that has come to define Major Food Group, the restaurant label from Rich Torrisi, Mario Carbone and Jeff Zalaznick that’s yielded some of New York’s splashiest dining rooms (Carbone, Dirty French, Sadelle’s).

The group’s branded blend of New Age ballsiness and nostalgic reverence was met with considerable kickback when Four Seasons landlord Aby Rosen announced the trio would take over the iconic space inside midtown’s Seagram Building. (Martha Stewart and Henry Kissinger were among the high-profile dissenters.) Scrutiny, in this case, is a given: Since 1959, the Four Seasons was the city’s most exclusive supper club, a veritable village green for New York’s wealthy, famous and powerful. The real surprise, however, is how deftly Major Food has silenced such critics with this dazzling remake of the famed Grill Room.

And it’s not just the deference for the landmark interior, though the familiar glass walls, metallic blinds and Richard Lippold–designed brass fixture over the bar should pacify the worried old guard. It’s also that Major Food has finally returned to form: For the past few years, Team Torrisi has been



swallowed up by spectacle, surrendering culinary consistency for high-priced high jinks, but the Grill is MFG’s first restaurant since Carbone to successfully synergize both whims. Sure, tuxedo-clad waiters still wheel \$10,000 silver-domed service trolleys to tables populated with Jerry Seinfeld, Gwyneth Paltrow and Regis Philbin, but the real draw is what’s on those trolleys—everything from blushed slabs of prime rib to brandy-soaked cherries jubilee.

Inspired by midcentury menus from Delmonico’s and 21 Club, chef Carbone reconstructs continental classics like filet Peconic, lobster Newburg and three iterations of Dover sole (horseradish meunière, \$67; grilled Riviera, \$69; and Neptune’s crown, \$72). His finest dishes are those that fuse dinner and theater: an à la minute omelette scrambled tableside, with earthy morels and trumpet mushrooms piercing fluffy egg (\$24); and a twirl of noodles that begins with your waiter running pieces of roasted duck, squab and pheasant through an antique press at your table, the savory jus of which serve as the pasta’s sauce (\$29).

And, of course, there’s that prime rib (\$62). The spit-roasted beef is sliced to order, revealing rosy, dripping flesh beneath a dark, charred crust, which is then showered in grated horseradish. While your eyes are still glazed over, out comes the accompanying deviled bone, imbued with equal parts juicy fat and blackened rub that’ll make you want to eat it with your damn hands. But compose yourself—after all, Seinfeld’s watching.



Photos: Teddy Wolf



## THE GRILL

---

By Chris Stang  
The Infatuation

I don't smoke. Or at least I don't anymore. As a matter of fact, I'm the guy that does a disgusted fast walk when someone is in front of me on the street with a butt in their hand. How dare you pollute my personal ozone of hot garbage smells and bus fumes with your mouth smog? Do you even work out?

That said, there are two things in this world that make me desperately want to smoke a cigarette again: hanging out in Paris, and having dinner at The Grill.

If you happen to be new to the food internet, have better things to do than keep up with daily restaurant news, or were born after 1983, there is some important backstory that you need to know before you read this review. Before The Grill was The Grill, it was a legendary restaurant called the Four Seasons. The Four Seasons opened in 1959 and became famous for many things over the years, such as pioneering the concept of "New American" cuisine, popularizing the idea of seasonal cooking, and being an exemplar of New York extravagance. But the Four Seasons was probably most famous for its powerful clientele. It was a place where heads of state, moguls, icons, and tycoons all came to be seen, cut deals, and maybe even eat some food.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, except for The Simpsons, and the Four Seasons closed in July of 2016 amidst a dispute with the owner of the building. To be honest, by that point, the restaurant was probably past its prime. But it certainly marked the end of an era.

Now a new era begins, in which the Four Seasons has been brought back to life by Major Food Group, the owners of Carbone and Sadelle's and other meticulously-crafted experiences masquerading as restaurants. They've taken over the entire space, splitting the famous dining rooms into two separate restaurants, and naming them after the colloquial terminology used back in the day to distinguish the two - The Grill (room) and The Pool (room). And they haven't changed all that much aesthetically, because they can't. Many elements of the classic Modernist interior are landmarked by the city. Even the curtains.

So, instead, it seems that Major Food Group decided to "Oceans 11" this bitch, which is to say they took the plot of something classic, tweaked the script a little, brought in some new actors, and spent an incredible amount of money on production. The end result is something that's familiar if you've seen the original, but also different. Something that is great in its own right. Something that makes me want to smoke.

Why does The Grill make me want to return to that old bad habit of my youth? Part of it definitely comes from the fact that every element of this place has

been designed to transport you back to a time before we had "good science" or a real understanding of "heart disease." But really, it's because every meal I have had here has ended with me feeling like some sort of legend from the past. Like a modern day Sammy Davis Jr. in a world full of Don Cheadles. The food is excellent, the service is perfect, and the entire experience is curated from the moment they open the door for you to the moment you leave. The prices? They are ridiculous. But that's not the point.

The point is that The Grill is a place that gives me that feeling of doing something pleasurable but irresponsible. And I think that's something we could all use from time to time. Lord knows we are living in a new era. You're probably gonna need a smoke.

### Tuna Ravigote

An excellent, light way to start a meal that will certainly be mostly ridiculous excess from here forward.



### The Seagram Crab Cake

This is The Grill's crab cake, which looks not at all like a crab cake and actually has no bread crumbs in it. Or anything else really. It's just crab meat topped with a thin layer of potato, and it's amazing.



### Avocado Crab Louie

How do you take the classic King of Salads and update it for current day tastes? Put in some avocado. It works.



### **Pasta A La Presse**

Ever seen a duck presse? It's this f\*cked up contraption the French invented a few centuries ago to slowly crush the every last molecule of a bird down to the point at which you are actually consuming its soul. Here The Grill uses one to make juice out of some guinea fowl and aromatics and toss it in fresh pasta. Turns out the life force of poultry tastes great over noodles.



### **Scottish Salmon in Chartreuse Sauce**

More on this shortly, but in our experience, the best things at The Grill actually tend to be the things that aren't steak. This salmon is certainly a good example.



Photos: Noah Deveraux

### **Ham Steak**

The best thing on the menu. The meat is sweet and tender, served with ginger and pineapple and a side of Don Ho.



### **Steaks**

They will tell you that The Grill is a steakhouse, and it is. They have amazing cuts of beef, and you can even choose one directly from the waiter's hand. We enjoyed the NY Strip we had, and you will too. But we just liked the other things on this menu more, and would suggest you spend your time there as well.

### **Prime Rib**

A huge, four-inch thick slab of meat, served with the bone on the side. If we're eating prime rib, we're doing it at 4 Charles Prime Rib. You should too.

### **Honey Mustard Duckling**

A duck breast cut into medium rare slices like a piece of steak. It's better than the steaks.

### **Cheeseburger**

Only on the lunch menu, and good but not great. Even though the bun, tomato, and onion makes this resemble an everything bagel, it's an otherwise a simple burger built to showcase quality of the meat. That's either a good thing or a bad thing, depending on how you like 'em.

### **Grasshopper**

A mint chocolate chip mousse that looks like modern art. Also a must order.



# THE NEW YORKER

## THE GRILL: The New Guard of the Four Seasons

---

By Nicholas Niarchos  
The New Yorker  
July 3, 2017

The supreme fiction of the old Four Seasons restaurant was that it would last forever—that this vessel of modernism, encased in walnut and Carrara marble, would sail into the mists of time and emerge unchanged in hundreds of years, businessmen still grinning behind brazenly pink skyscrapers of cotton candy. But a few years ago the space was acquired by the property developer Aby Rosen; last year, the old crew got the boot (they're opening a new Four Seasons nearby, in November), and Rosen ushered in Mario Carbone and his team to take the helm. The shudder could be felt all the way up to Central Park North—what would this downtown ruffian make of one of uptown's favorite haunts?

The Grill occupies what was formerly known as the Grill Room, where, as Graydon Carter once put it, “the mandarins of commerce and the arts” preferred to eat. The Pool Room, which Carter compared to Siberia, will reopen as the Pool in the fall. Rosen has filled the place with works from his extensive art collection (one regular at the old spot, Henry Kissinger, might be tickled to see the Warhol portrait of Vladimir Lenin in the bathroom), and Philip Johnson's interior has been beautifully restored by the architect Annabelle Selldorf.

The new Grill feels darker and more polished: polished wood, polished silver, polished people. The Old Guard is gone, replaced by a younger, slicker clientele, all open collars and dark suits. As one former habitu  of Studio 54 remarked the other night, “That table looks like it's occupied entirely by a modelling agency.” Here, too, are bow-tie-bedecked waiters who'll gush about the “cornucopia” of options at a buffet table (Continental ham, pickled sardines, goose terrine) and barmen trained in Vegas who'll give you every last detail about your drink (Exhibit A: the frozen Martini, which is for some reason frozen for forty-eight hours in a crystal decanter).

**“EVEN NOSTALGISTS CAN AGREE  
THAT MARIO CARBONE’S ITERATION  
HAS INSTITUTIONAL POTENTIAL.”**

Even nostalgists will agree that the new iteration has institutional potential. The food—which at the old spot was good but felt a little beside the point—is undeniably delicious. From a bread basket brimming with puffy pretzel bread to the Filet Peconic, filet mignon slathered in oysters, the menu is decadent, delightful, and wildly expensive. A particular standout is the mushroom omelette, prepared tableside, in which morels, trumpets, and truffles hustle and cluster with flavor. The other night, an Amish ham steak was perhaps a tad too chewy, but otherwise it was hard to fault Carbone's contemporary play on the type of nineteen-fifties American Continental food that earned the Four Seasons its first stripes. The only thing that's missing is that cotton candy: let us hope that when the Pool opens they'll have it on the menu. (Entr es: \$38-\$72.)

## THE GRILL Is the City's Only Four-Star Ode to the Past

By Ryan Sutton  
Eater  
August 1, 2017

I will never forget the day Julian Niccolini, the silver-haired owner of the old The Four Seasons in Midtown, personally served me in the landmark Grill Room, the institution that invented the power lunch.

Philip Johnson's bead curtains sparkled in the sunlight. Rudy Giuliani — who had not yet transformed into a spitfire caricature of himself on cable news shows — was quietly holding court just a few tables away. Niccolini noticed that my companion and I were sharing one bowl of asparagus soup. He offered to split it, removed it from our table, then returned in no time with two bowls of asparagus soup. How kind. A few weeks later I looked at my receipt, and saw that I had been charged for three bowls of asparagus soup.

After tax and tip, I ended up spending around \$60. On soup.

Even nostalgists will agree that the new iteration has institutional potential. The food—which at the old spot was good but felt a little beside the point—is undeniably delicious. From a bread basket brimming with puffy pretzel bread to the Filet Peconic, filet mignon slathered in oysters, the menu is decadent, delightful, and wildly expensive. A particular standout is the mushroom omelette, prepared tableside, in which morels, trumpets, and truffles hustle and cluster with flavor. The other night, an Amish ham steak was perhaps a tad too chewy, but otherwise it was hard to fault Carbone's contemporary play on the type of nineteen-fifties American Continental food that earned the Four Seasons its first stripes. The only thing that's missing is that cotton candy: let us hope that when the Pool opens they'll have it on the menu. (Entrées: \$38-\$72.)

"There has never been a restaurant better keyed to the tempo of Manhattan than the Four Seasons," New York Times critic Craig Claiborne wrote of the newly opened venue in 1959. The Grill Room, together with the adjoining Pool Room, was the crown jewel in the empire of the legendary Joe Baum, a trendsetting restaurateur who, here in the Seagram building, would seek to convince stateside gastronomes that seasonal American cuisine, buffeted by tableside, a la minute preparations, could command as much respect as fancy French fare.

By the time I made a series of three visits in 2008, Claiborne's statement only held true in the sense that there were few other establishments better geared toward shaking down diners in a way that evoked the excess of a capitalist system that was on the verge of its biggest crash since the Great Depression. Niccolini and Alex Von Bidder lost their lease in 2016, the same year the former plead guilty to misdemeanor assault stemming from charges of sexual abuse. That July, The Four Seasons took its final bow.

# "THERE IS NO RESTAURANT BETTER KEYED TO THE TEMPO OF MANHATTAN RIGHT NOW THAN THE GRILL."

Nearly a year and \$30 million worth of renovations later, The Grill Room has transformed into an energetic and exhilarating chophouse, The Grill, while the adjoining Pool Room, a sedate seafood spot that I'll review this fall, has become The Pool. Fans of aristocratic continuity take solace: You will still spend a ton of money here. But now, you will eat well.

The new operators are Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone — two chefs with a reputation for charging a lot in their immersive, theatrical restaurants — and business partner Jeff Zalaznick, scion of a powerful finance family. The late Baum, one of the original gangstas of dinner-as-show, couldn't have picked a better trio himself.

If the Grill, in 2008, was a lunchroom for the rich, it has become, in 2017, a four-star a la carte throwback. It shows off a style of meaty midcentury indulgences and warm, avuncular, let-me-tell-you-another-story-about-JFK hospitality that, given the means, I'd partake of twice a week or more. A theme restaurant for the wealthy, but one that puts everyone under a spell that they belong here, on this stage, where it's always 1950s Manhattan, rain or shine.



Buffet chefs donning ten-gallon toques arrange chilled crawfish platters made with housemade Old Bay — a sweeter, more New Orleans analogue to shrimp cocktail. In a vast kitchen, cooks braise endives with black truffles

while in the dining room, waiters in Tom Ford tuxedos use a \$10,000 tableside torture device to crush poultry parts into the base of a sauce whose notes of blood, salt, and cherrywood recalls the juices that collect at the bottom of a cutting board after a good night of hunting. This is ladled over a tangle of yellow egg noodles in a gold rimmed bowl. It is pure luxury.

Despite all the renovations, the space — mahogany panels, curtains that undulate like a perpetual motion machine, and Richard Lippold's bronze rods, hanging above the bar in way that evokes the old Manhattan skyline — looks pretty much the same. It takes cash to stay gorgeous over the decades.

Making food that actually tastes good takes even more cash. Earlier in July I dropped by The Grill and ordered a vichyssoise heavily fortified with caviar (\$98) and mock turtle soup forged from tripe and chiles (\$19)

So nearly ten years after I accidentally spent too much on a single soup at The Grill, I ended up spending about \$150 after tax and tip on two bowls of soup. Raise a glass to Claiborne; there's no restaurant better keyed to the tempo of Manhattan right now than The Grill. It is a self-referential institution that is almost too perfect for a city perennially obsessed with itself, and perhaps newly obsessed with the past, a city whose choice of red meat is increasingly prime rib, a city whose gastronomes sometimes prefer a \$100 a la carte dish to an \$100 prix-fixe, a city where plush dining rooms are coming back after a decade of stripped-down gastronomy, a city where the locus of dinner-as-theater is moving away from open kitchens and back to the dining room, where, in the case of The Grill, an open flame nearly sings your eyebrows in a tableside display for cherries flambee.

The Grill is gastro escapism in these Trumpian times, a restaurant that whisks you back to when JFK was president, to a time when the United States, not Germany or France, was the leader of the free world, to a time when people didn't really wonder whether California does the best avo toast. Here, vegetables and grains come with butter, cream, and crab. Asparagus, the so-called king of vegetables, isn't cold-pressed or served raw, but creamed into a soup and served underneath a pastry dome. This gently bitter, gently sweet indulgence is known as Jack's pie and is named after a certain U.S. president who might've sampled it here during a birthday celebration.



The genius of Carbone and Torrisi is that they're not elevating or refining the overpriced, underwhelming Four Seasons that members of the Momofuku generation largely ignored. They're reimagining an era of restaurants that came and went before many of us were born, an era many of us associate with fictional, hard-drinking advertising executives, an era when well-heeled patrons, during the apogee of what Henry Luce deemed The American Century, traveled to The Four Seasons to experience a uniquely stateside style of fine dining, one whose internationalist tendencies were more of a hat tip than a kowtow to European traditions.

Those patrons, old menus show, would come to sample black cherry soup, calf brains en brioche, ham mousse stuffed into a whole peach, and perhaps most famously, wild mushrooms, which contemporary waiters, in their obligatory tableside speeches, remind you were not in great supply until the Four Seasons debuted. If that sounds like an overly staged setup for the the mushroom omelet, consider the following: The egg isn't so much the main event as it is a loose binder for a pack of earthy maitakes, spongy morels, nutty chanterelles, as well as a few slivers of that preserved black truffle. I sampled this dish twice and both times it was like trying wild mushrooms again for the first time. It is spectacular.

Equally spectacular is the caviar vichyssoise. I don't typically recommend fish roe at restaurants because it's a pure product play: Chefs open a can of roe and mark it up. At The Grill, a waiter is quick to tell me the Latin name of the roe (baerri). Like any good baerri, it rolls around the palate like a marble until a flick of the tongue crushes it into an intense and lingering maritime oil. It is the flavor of Osetra times ten, until a clean shot of potato and leek soup cleanses the palate for more.

That's \$100 soup I'd splurge for again.

If caviar that costs as much as a one-way Acela ticket still seems a bit too, well, European, I can recommend with no less fervor the Amish hamsteak, a supermarket staple of my youth that generally constituted an iridescent slice of precooked pork slathered in maple syrup. It was awesome. The Grill's version is more awesome.

The kitchen takes a fat slice of heritage pork, injects it with ham brine, cooks it, smokes it, slathers it in pineapple glaze, caramelizes it in the hearth, and fans out the slices on a gold-rimmed plate with slices of pickled pineapple. At one level, the dish is magical because of its elevation of an old suburban supper. But even if you've never tried hamsteak, a dish found on about zero New York restaurant menus, it still works because of the execution; the silky fattiness, gentle smoke, distinct sweetness, and electric acidity simultaneously qualifies it as the city's best pork chop and a remarkable act of Mid-Atlantic cooking translated into haute barbecue by way of an extraordinarily fancy restaurant in New York.

That hamsteak, as it turns out, is from an old Four Seasons menu, one from 1964 that I came across online. There's something energizing in knowing that a preparation, or at least a version on it, is what somebody's wealthy grandparents might've sampled, once upon a time.

The same perhaps could be said about a few other items from that old menu, available now: Like cherrystones in pepper vinaigrette served as lightly poached littlenecks in housemade tabasco. Or lamb steak in "susu curry," reborn as three chops doused in a light turmeric-cumin curry and a dense mint jelly.

And the “heart of the prime rib,” from those Lyndon Johnson days, is a wet-aged juicy cut, minus the prized deckle. That’s a disappointment at first, until the kitchen brings a deviled bone, a thin layer of soft, intensely beefy flesh rolled in Montreal-style seasoning that you pick up and eat: No more disappointment.

It would be easy to dismiss all this as plagiarism of the past, but I like to think of it as akin to the work of Quentin Tarantino, who takes a collective mass of cinematic pulp — from World War II spy flicks to Westerns — lifts the material from its source, and transforms it, sometimes quite minimally, into visual poetry like *Inglorious Basterds* and *Kill Bill II*. It is the culinary equivalent of found food, and quite frankly it’s probably twice as delicious if you don’t get bogged down by the references and just eat.

Critics, myself included, almost exclusively award four stars to tasting-menu restaurants for a simple, and quite frankly logical reason: The lack of choice means fewer misses and longer menus allow for the occasional failures inherent in ambitious cooking. But so the story goes that I’ve never had an experience that wasn’t four stars at The Grill.

Order crab is the best advice I can give. It can be Dungeness in a lemony Louis salad, the meat hidden among Bibb lettuce leaves. It can be blue crab in gumbo, sporting gentler oceanic aromas. And it plays a breathtaking supporting role in Neptune’s Crown, which is Dover sole fanned into a pinwheel, dressed with a pile of sweet prawns, shredded blue crab, and best of all, a red chowder-style butter sauce that’s a dead ringer for the tomato bread that used to begin the \$50 tastings at the old Torrisi, now closed. The single Dover sole, by contrast, costs \$89.

A less expensive gem is the Cajun snapper (\$37), fragrant with cumin and pepper, as well as what might be the city’s best canard (\$41): The dry-aged bird is as tender as a filet while the skin exhibits the texture of a campfire toasted marshmallow.

For dessert, try anything, from a minty, mousse-y grasshopper pie to a banana éclair, to a pile of Jersey peaches garnished with a coconut cream worth the price of your entire dinner, which will likely run somewhere in the ballpark of \$400 for two. Claiborne reported that a meal for two would cost \$40 in 1959, which sounds like a bargain until you do the inflation math and realize that works out to about \$337 in today’s dollars. Dinner here never was cheap, and never will be.

So there you have it. The Grill. It is the city’s only four-star a la carte restaurant. It is the city’s only four-star chophouse.

The Grill is a rebirth of an institution whose most important meal has switched from lunch — the domain of those powerful enough to leave work for a few hours — to dinner, the arena for those of us who actually work at work. It is a museum to modernist design that happens to serve some of Manhattan’s best food. At the moment, this is as close you get can to a perfect New York restaurant. May we all be rich enough to eat here more often.



Photos: Gary He

# The New York Times

## The Red Sauce Juggernaut

By Jeff Gordinier  
New York Times  
March 18, 2014

In the beginning it was all about smallness and stealth.

Late in 2009 they opened a lace-curtained wisp of a deli on Mulberry Street called Torrisi Italian Specialties. Months later, they quietly began offering an affordable but game-changing tasting menu.

Gradually they shifted the sandwich-making over to Parm, a few steps away, where they gave old-school meatball heroes and ice cream cake a stylish revamp. And last year their mission — think of it as the Italian-American Gastronomic Recovery Project — reached its apotheosis with Carbone, a Greenwich Village boom-boom room in which the massive platters of food and the animated tableside patter seemed like a new form of downtown street theater.

But as the three men behind this restaurant company, Major Food Group, sat down one recent afternoon at their newest grotto, the tiny ZZ's Clam Bar in Greenwich Village, they made something abundantly clear: big is the new small. With a blast of the brio that has come to be seen as a hallmark of their style, they unspooled a blueprint for metropolitan domination.

"This is the year of Major Food," said Jeff Zalaznick, flanked by his partners, the chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi. "This is an explosive year. All the things that we've been working toward are coming to fruition."

Plenty of restaurateurs are building empires, many of them spanning the globe. But so far these men, all in their early 30s, are confining their colossus-creation to the city that dazzled them when they were children — and they are doing so with distinctively New York style (a fondness for red sauce and raw oysters) and swagger.

In the early summer, with the opening of the 187-room Ludlow Hotel on the Lower East Side, they will break away from Italian food and (thanks to Mr. Torrisi's training in classic French cooking) hatch a roughed-up Gallic bistro called Dirty French. On the other side of town, at the foot of the High Line and inside a new Renzo Piano-designed building complex that will house the Whitney Museum of American Art, they will introduce a spot focused on the light, healthful cuisine of the Italian and American coasts.

Through 2014 and beyond, the team wants to expand Parm, which now exists only on Mulberry Street and at Yankee Stadium, into a citywide Shake Shack-style franchise. If all goes as planned in coming months, Parns will be popping up on the Upper West Side, in Battery Park City and in Brooklyn: one in Williamsburg and the other across from Barclays Center.



Photo: Ashley Gilbertson/The New York Times

Meanwhile, the three have teamed up with Melissa Weller, a veteran of Per Se and Roberta's whose homemade bagels turned into a sensation at Smorgasburg, to create a bakery and restaurant with a focus on smoked fish, blintzes and yeasty New York City staples (bagels, bear claws, Danishes, challah, marble rye) in a still-to-be-determined space downtown.

"It's kind of going to be our version of Barney Greengrass," said Mr. Zalaznick, who compared the deal with Ms. Weller to a Silicon Valley incubator model. "The bagels sparked this. We ate these bagels and we said, 'We want to do business with this person.'"

Clearly, they want to do business, period. Their ambition and cockiness call to mind another five-boroughs group, the Beastie Boys, who strove to merge art, style and commerce without sacrificing street credibility. To Sean MacPherson, whose hotel will showcase Dirty French, both the Beasties and the Carbone team are "conceptualists" who have used rapping or cooking as a way to express something about how it feels to be in New York.

While "they absolutely know what delicious is," said Ed Levine, the founder of the food-focused site Serious Eats, who has known Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrisi for years, they're also "curious about the world in a way that many chefs are not." Theirs is a vision not just about food but about the way it is integrated into the history of the city.

"We really believe in a sky's-the-limit mentality," Mr. Torrisi said. "We don't put caps on anything."

But as with other chefs who have made the leap from hands-on craft to arms-outstretched entrepreneurship, the "First We Take Manhattan" strategy is bound to prompt a number of questions.

"How do you go from being indie-chef darlings to restaurateurs-managers?" Mr. Levine asked. Can they maintain quality control and keep themselves from being stretched too thin? Can they grow big without inciting the ire of the food cognoscenti who loved them when they were small?

For all the acclaim that their cooking has received, there's something about the brash, V.I.P.-pleasing nature of the Major Food juggernaut that makes some people bristle — especially online commenters who snipe about everything from the high prices at Carbone (where veal Parmesan costs \$54) and ZZ's Clam Bar (where a single plate of carpaccio with sea urchin and caviar goes for \$105) to the imposingly large gentleman who can be found standing sentinel outside ZZ's with a clipboard.

The symbolism of that sentry “sends a message,” Mr. Levine said — one that is “at odds with the people that I know.”

That man, the partners counter, is not a bouncer. “There’s a difference between a bouncer and a doorman,” Mr. Zalaznick said. “The man who stands outside is not there to keep people out. He’s there so that the people inside of here are not constantly being disturbed.”

With only 14 seats in the place, and only about 250 square feet of space, a “flow of traffic” through the door would shatter the mood, he said, but that does not stop some people on the outside from interpreting the fellow’s presence as a sign of velvet-rope hauteur. A minor furor last year involving Adam Platt, the New York magazine restaurant critic, who said he was asked to leave ZZ’s in the middle of a meal, didn’t help lessen impressions of hubris. The partners have declined to comment on the incident.

As for the prices at Carbone and ZZ’s, Mr. Carbone stood in the Carbone kitchen and pointed to a huge veal chop that was coming off the fire and being smothered with ink-dark Marsala sauce. Price: \$52.

“Can I make a veal Marsala that costs \$35? Absolutely,” he said. “But it won’t look like that.”

Serving first-rate ingredients with an excess of gusto doesn’t come cheap; much of ZZ’s seafood is shipped directly from the Tsukiji fish market in Tokyo, or comes straight from East Coast docks.

“Nobody bats an eye about it at Masa,” he said.

To get a sense of what’s at stake when a boutique-size company starts to bloom into a brand, it helps to walk around Carbone with its chef about a half-hour before the restaurant opens for dinner. How fresh fruit is arranged in bowls, how the candles are placed to cast a glow on bottles of rum, whether a hand-painted Deruta bread plate has too prominent a chip — it seems as if there is no detail that escapes Mr. Carbone’s attention.

“I’m perpetually checking on things,” he said on a recent Tuesday evening. “The music level is a huge pet peeve of mine. Ask anyone here. I drive everyone crazy with that.”

He wanted Bobby Darin’s “Beyond the Sea” to be loud enough to be an assertive element of character in the room, but not so loud that customers could not hear one another talk.

As the dining rooms filled and orders began pouring in, Mr. Carbone stood looking at the printed-out ticket for each table, barking out the names of dishes to his team and inspecting nearly every plate. When a cook was slicing a steak in straight lines, Mr. Carbone advised him to make it look more angular and accidental. “Not so linear, William,” he said.

That sort of meticulousness tends to be what distinguishes a great chef from a decent cook. On most nights you can still find Mr. Torrisi in the cramped cave of a kitchen underneath his namesake restaurant, carefully forming and seasoning quenelles of raw tuna with two spoons for his imaginative and delicious spin on vitello tonnato. Next January that kitchen will get an upgrade: The team plans to close Torrisi for renovations.

“When I walk in here, I just disappear,” he said. “It’s where I go to be myself.”



Photos: Ashley Gilbertson/The New York Times

But with the growth that lies ahead, disappearing may be a trickier prospect. Will that focus waver when Mr. Torrisi is dividing his time between Torrisi Italian Specialties and Dirty French? All three men see that worry as a misunderstanding of the way that many kitchens operate.

When he’s away from the restaurant, Mr. Torrisi said, “I get asked that question all the time: ‘If you’re here, who’s in the kitchen?’ Very talented young protégés.”

He went on: “That’s the biggest misconception of being a chef: If you’re not behind the stove, your restaurant’s worse.”

Or as Mr. Carbone put it, “Do you think the C.E.O. of Bank of America is watching your checking account right now?”

The way they see it, expanding the business is a crucial way of keeping people from leaving the business.

“If you’re not growing, there’s no way you can keep the best talent,” Mr. Zalaznick said.

Mr. Torrisi added, “Because they’re ambitious and they want to move, too.”

If there’s a unifying motif in the work of the Carbone-Torrisi team, it’s a compulsion to rediscover and rescue culinary treasures that may otherwise pass into perilous dormancy: the Italian deli, the boisterous red-sauce joint, the bagel shop.

“New York, for us, is everything,” Mr. Zalaznick said. “It’s our lives. It’s not a theme. It’s what we grew up with.”

For that reason, the threesome fought hard to be selected to build the restaurant at the High Line. To them, the resurrection of the elevated park echoed their philosophy of “taking something that had basically been left for dead and bringing it back to life, back to glory,” Mr. Zalaznick said.

Click to a blog like Jeremiah’s Vanishing New York, though, and you may get the impression that Major Food is forcing out ancient, authentic, downtown grit (such as Rocco, the sleepy old-school restaurant whose space Carbone took over) to make room for gentrified gloss.

“Leave it alone and it’s going to go away,” Mr. Carbone said. “You’re not going to have the Colosseum to look at if someone doesn’t fix it.”

They see their efforts as a way to preserve and elevate each restaurant space, instead of letting it vanish in a landscape dominated by generic chain stores. As Mr. Zalanick said: “What’s it going to become? A Chase? A Duane Reade?”

In the end, there’s nothing more New York than the messiness of change: that endless tango between chaos and renewal. For all their attention to detail, these three savor that sense of mixing it up and making things happen. And at Carbone, in particular, they like to see a feast come to a close with a tablecloth trail of debris.

“At the end of the night it becomes a real mess, orange peels and nuts everywhere,” Mr. Carbone said. “It’s festive, it’s nostalgic. It makes me very happy.”



Photos: Ashley Gilbertson/The New York Times

# The New York Times

## The Four Seasons Space Gets a New, Younger Face

By Jeff Gordinier  
New York Times  
July 24, 2015

A bastion of ritualized, old-guard dining in New York City is about to be taken over by three brash young men who were born decades after it opened.

The space that houses the Four Seasons, a restaurant on East 52nd Street that has symbolized Manhattan power and elegance for more than half a century, is set next year to become a stage for the creative cooking and stylized showmanship of the men behind scene-making downtown restaurants like Carbone, Santina and Dirty French.

Those men — the chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi and their business partner, Jeff Zalaznick, all in their 30s — say they have signed a contract with Aby J. Rosen, who owns the Seagram Building, where the Four Seasons has been a fixture since 1959. On Thursday morning, the four met in a conference room at the Lever House, which is also owned by Mr. Rosen's company, RFR Holding, to talk about their plans.

"The idea is to restore and reinvigorate the greatest restaurant space that's ever existed," Mr. Zalaznick said. Their restaurant will not be called the Four Seasons; a new name has yet to be chosen.

The future of the Four Seasons, and its current quarters in a sleek landmark of modernist architecture, has been a source of debate and concern around New York for months, after Mr. Rosen made it clear that he wanted the current owners, Julian Niccolini and Alex von Bidder, to move out when their lease expires at the end of July 2016. Mr. Niccolini and Mr. von Bidder have said they are scouting out a new location downtown.

Even though the Carbone-Torrisi team can boast of considerable success and experience, the arrival of such newcomers may come across as a jarring shift in tone for power-lunch regulars, many of them in their 70s or 80s, who have grown accustomed to nibbling on salmon in the Grill Room. The new operators, who made their name by opening a NoLIta sandwich shop just five and a half years ago, are known for their flash and swagger. And Mr. Rosen, the landlord, stirred up a bitter battle with architectural preservationists last year when he pushed to have a Picasso curtain removed from the premises, and proposed other changes to the interior.



Photos: Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

But the four insisted on Thursday that their intention was to return the space to the glory of its 1959 debut, not to dismantle or alter rooms that are already protected by landmark status.

"We are not desecrating," Mr. Rosen said, alluding to critics who have cast him as a threat to the integrity of the chambers, designed by the architect Philip Johnson. "I think we are respecting and celebrating." Mr. Rosen spoke of upgrading features like the lighting and the leather upholstery, all as a way of bringing "a fresh look to it."

"We're putting our money behind it, and it's going to cost a lot of money to get there," said Mr. Rosen, who would not specify how large the investment would be. But he stressed that any changes would be cosmetic, saying, "You won't walk in there and say, 'What the hell has happened here?'"

The partners want to inject a wave of new energy into an environment where, Mr. Rosen suggested, ambitious gastronomy had become an afterthought. "It's not a museum," Mr. Carbone said. "It's a living, breathing thing that's all about innovation."

Mr. Rosen will be a business partner and a co-owner of the restaurant with Mr. Carbone, Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Zalaznick, who operate under the name Major Food Group. Mr. Zalaznick did not provide the specific terms of the lease but said it included a "fair market rent." (Mr. Rosen said last year that he wanted to triple the rent for the current Four Seasons, to about \$3 million a year — a sum one of the current owners, Mr. von Bidder, said was "not doable.")

Presiding over lunch on Friday, the other owner, Mr. Niccolini, would not comment on the deal. “Not even one sentence,” said the normally ebullient restaurateur. “It is a first,” he added.

Once he and Mr. von Bidder have moved out next summer, the new team says it will sweep into the space with hopes of sprucing it up and reopening it in a matter of months. It is planning three separate menus and experiences: one for the Grill Room, another for the Pool Room and a third for the space that now holds Brasserie, a more informal restaurant in another part of the building.

There are no plans to do away with the customary power lunch that has drawn influential figures to the Grill Room on a daily basis for decades. But the restaurateurs face the challenge of trying to attract a younger crowd while not alienating the die-hards or neglecting their special requests.

“We’ll make them that salad,” Mr. Zalaznick said. “We’re not trying to upset the standard. We’re trying to improve it.”

Mr. Rosen first got to know the men in Major Food Group when he was a customer at Carbone. He said he was impressed by their innovative cooking, “democratic” style of hospitality and disciplined business management. He was also intrigued by their philosophy, which has often involved digging into culinary history (such as the surge of red-sauce-and-meatballs Italian-American fare in the 1950s) and finding new ways to resurrect it.

“That was the reason to bring them into the venture, because they have the same kind of historical perspective,” Mr. Rosen said.

Clearly the most striking aspect of the news, though, is the changing-of-the-guard aspect of the restaurateurs’ youth, which might strike some observers as a gamble.

“What would their audience be — young and hip and all that?” said Joe Armstrong, a former publisher of magazines including Rolling Stone and Saveur, and a longtime Four Seasons patron. “Is this going to be like ‘Risky Business’ — the parents are away and the kids are going to go wild?”

But he began to sound excited about the idea of new blood being introduced to the midday hobnobbing. “Trying to put a new energy into it sounds like a smart thing,” he said.

Michael Whiteman, president of the Baum & Whiteman restaurant consulting company, which he started with Joe Baum, an original force behind the Four Seasons, described the Torrissi team as “the darlings of the media and the restaurant public at the moment.”

“They’ve never done anything of this size and specific gravity, so one has to raise the question of whether they’re up to it,” Mr. Whiteman said.

He said a crucial way to make the transition work is to focus, as Mr. Niccolini and Mr. von Bidder did, on catering to the egos of regulars.

“I would have at least one and probably two people on duty at all times who know who all the faces are,” Mr. Whiteman said. “If they’re going to come back, these are people who need to be recognized. I’d underline the word need. They need to be recognized. If they’re not, their nose gets out of joint.”

The ascent of Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrissi, both 35, has been fast and heady. After working in top kitchens around the city, they drew attention in 2010 with Torrissi Italian Specialties, a jewel box of a sandwich shop on Mulberry Street that turned, after the sun went down, into a tasting-menu showcase

for their more refined culinary aspirations. Their multicourse dinners, conceived as a modernized and finessed spin on the Italian-American cuisine they had grown up on, won acclaim for being both ambitious and affordable.

Neither of the chefs hails from a fancy background. Mr. Carbone was raised in Queens, and Mr. Torrissi in the Westchester County village of Dobbs Ferry. Both first dined at the Four Seasons only over the last decade or so.

They and Mr. Zalaznick, 31, have been unapologetic about their appetite for expansion, and like Mr. Rosen, they do not shy away from ruffling feathers.

“You know, the fear of change — that’s what makes people so nervous,” Mr. Rosen said. “These guys, there’s no fear of change.”

Nor is there a fear of making money. With spots like Carbone and the tiny, doorman-shielded ZZ’s Clam Bar in the West Village, they have made no secret of their willingness to cater to a big-spending clientele, with big prices. There is a spinoff of Carbone in Hong Kong, and another on the way in Las Vegas. Their most casual enterprise, Parm, has been replicating at a rapid pace, with outposts from Battery Park City to the Upper West Side, and the chain appears poised to grow into a red-sauce analogue to Shake Shack.

And the three are far from blind to the going-to-the-big-game aspect of their next conquest.

“This is it,” Mr. Carbone said. “When you connect the dots backward, it feels like it was all practice for this. This is the Madison Square Garden of food.”



# The New York Times

## A Little Old, a Little New for the Four Seasons Space

By Jeff Gordinier  
New York Times  
May 17, 2016

Ever since the news broke last year that the grand Midtown space housing the Four Seasons restaurant would be taken over by the three young men behind brassy places like Carbone and Dirty French, one question has loomed above all: Will they preserve the clubby, reliable comforts of the original or strike off in a bold new direction?

The answer: both.

As envisioned by the chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi and their business partner, Jeff Zalaznick, the space on the ground floor of the Seagram Building will become a twinned tribute: The restaurant's Grill Room will celebrate the virtues of looking back, and the Pool Room will harness the thrill of moving forward.

The current tenants, the restaurateurs Alex von Bidder and Julian Niccolini, will move out in July and hope to re-establish the Four Seasons in a new location. The Carbone-Torrisi crew expects its restaurant, as yet unnamed, to open toward the end of the year.

For the Grill Room, where the well heeled and connected have long held their power lunches, Mr. Carbone is plunging into a library of menus from the earliest phase of the restaurant, which opened in 1959, hoping to recreate many of the vintage dishes.

"I'm really just doing the first decade," he said in an interview at Carbone. "I don't know how much interest I have beyond that. I want to be playing in the J.F.K. world. He's my muse."

Mr. Carbone and his two partners, whose restaurant company is called the Major Food Group, want the tone of the room to be masculine, meat-embracing and signified by the brisk confidence of the Kennedy years. Mr. Zalaznick described it as "a true American grill."

A few steps away in the Pool Room, however, Mr. Torrisi will oversee a different vision: a shrine to newness. He said the room would have a more feminine feel, a menu revolving around vegetables and seafood, and service that would not shrink from tableside extravagance.



Photos: Benjamin Norman/The New York Times

"Nothing will reference what has happened in the past," Mr. Torrisi said. "I want this to be the No. 1 room in New York and in America where you go to celebrate."

He and the others said they would make no major design changes to the rooms; the Seagram Building, a touchstone of modernist architecture, has a thicket of landmark protections that discourage them. The landlord, Aby J. Rosen, lost a battle last year to make changes to the restaurant's interior.

"Basically, if it's attached to the building and you can't pick it up and move it, it's landmarked," Mr. Carbone said, adding, "We don't feel handcuffed because you can't change the greatest restaurant space ever built."

What they mostly have in mind, they said, is a thorough cleaning of a space that has endured decades of wear and tear. They say they will tweak minor design elements like chairs and tableware, but haven't settled on the details.

Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrisi, who first made a name for themselves as chefs at the tiny (and now closed) Torrisi Italian Specialties on Mulberry Street, said the stark bifurcation of the two rooms' menus would reflect the differences in their personalities. Mr. Torrisi likes to wing it, coming up with new dishes by improvising with ingredients. Mr. Carbone prefers to stick to a traditional template.

"I could never work the way he does," Mr. Carbone said. "I personally like to handcuff myself to things. I won't do it if it's not on the menu."

To that end, Mr. Carbone has spent hours investigating reams of vintage Four Seasons menus on file at the New York Public Library. In them he has encountered some unfamiliar dishes that offer few clues about how they were made. Sometimes, in a search for details, he consults with Mimi Sheraton, the former New York Times restaurant critic, who has a deep memory of meals at the Four Seasons.

The research has led far beyond New York. For years, the Four Seasons menu featured an appetizer simply called "coriander prosciutto." Unsure what the dish entailed, the Major Food partners asked La Quercia, a company in Iowa

that specializes in cured meats, to develop prosciutto involving coriander.

Another menu curio: stroganoff with rare beef. “The ‘rare’ part of it gets us all going,” Mr. Zalaznick said.

Mr. Carbone aims to honor the dish by creating a stroganoff that is familiar enough for people to recognize, yet also elicits the reaction “Wow, that’s the best version of that dish I’ve ever had,” he said.

Old menus allude to something called “fancy cake,” a confection conjured up by Albert Kumin, the Four Seasons’ original, Swiss-born pastry chef. Mr. Kumin is now in his 90s and living in Vermont. So Mr. Carbone, Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Zalaznick plan a pilgrimage there to question him about the cake’s provenance.

They are also making a research voyage to Switzerland because the restaurant’s first chef, Albert Stockli, came from there, and they want to commune with the roots of his cooking. “We’re going to Switzerland just to feel that,” Mr. Zalaznick said.

They have hired a craftsman in Mexico City to construct huge, elaborate guéridons, or trolleys, that will be used in the Pool Room for the tableside presentation of certain seafood dishes.

For a third space in the Seagram Building, which previously housed Brasserie, the team hopes to foster a loose, festive atmosphere. The partners have brought in Peter Marino, an esteemed architect known for regularly dressing like a leather-clad biker, to redesign everything in the room, including plates, chairs and server uniforms.

One form of luxury they will not provide is a tasting menu. Although they drew raves for their New York-themed marathon of plates at Torrisi Italian Specialties, they have decided that tasting menus, often considered a necessity for projecting a chef’s ambition, are an impediment to pleasure.

“We did it for a moment in time, and it was amazing,” Mr. Carbone said, “but it taught us a lot about what we never want to do again.



★ ★ ★

# The New York Times

## A Red-Sauce Joint Steals the Show

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
June 4, 2013

At Carbone, they don't ask if you've dined with them before. Even if you haven't, the answer would still be yes. This is supposed to be the Italian restaurant where you celebrated your birthday before anyone told you that chicken scarpariello isn't Italian.

This being 2013, and the two chefs, Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, being former lieutenants of Mario Batali and Daniel Boulud, Carbone is infinitely more self-conscious than those old restaurants. It is a fancy red-sauce joint in Greenwich Village as directed by Quentin Tarantino, bringing back the punch-in-the-guts thrills of a genre that everybody else sees as uncultured and a little embarrassing, while exposing the sophistication that was always lurking there. Carbone has a technical prowess that can make you giddy; a lust for excess that can, at times, make you a little queasy; and an instinct for sheer entertainment that makes a lot of other restaurants seem like earnest, unimaginative drones.

There are, in the Tarantino style, fanboy film allusions: the tile floor from "The Godfather," the narrow passageway into the back dining room that makes you feel like Ray Liotta handshake-tipping his way into the Copacabana.

There are the songs that make you think, "Oh, no," followed by "I forgot how great this is," as people with open bottles of Gaja on the table drum their fingers to "We Open in Venice."

Like Tarantino's love letters to pulpy exploitation films, Carbone affectionately picks up the clichés of its genre, twirls them, then hurls them at your head. Our captain wears a B-movie smile and a tuxedo in a shade of maroon last seen at Liberace's estate sale. Bearing a hollowed-out wheel of Parmesan, he stabs a nugget of cheese and slides it on to my plate. It tastes young, milky and uninteresting, but next come papery slices of smoky and complex aged country ham, Kentucky serving as a stunt double for Parma, and a stack of "grandma bread," a no-cheese Sicilian pizza with oregano and a shadowy, sweet pulp of tomato sauce. Both make me smile.

More unbidden genre tropes are on the way: tart giardiniera in oil, amazing garlic bread, fried ribbons of dough under powdered sugar, suave fig grappa, and delicate house-made limoncello in a bottle furry with frost. I don't love every one of these extras, but I love the way they make me abandon any hope of quiet moderation.

Nearly the entire menu at Carbone is a quotation, starting with the \$50 veal parm, which is larger than some fancy brick-oven pizzas and looks like one, too, with ovals of browned buffalo mozzarella and a bright red, sum-



Photo: Daniel Krieger for The New York Times

mer-fresh, barely cooked tomato sauce. Served with a fried shaft of bone, it's a shock-and-awe dish, and the most shocking thing about it is that there is no real revisionism here; it is a veal parm, the way you always hoped it would be.

More often, the old tropes get an injection of technique that acts like a syringe of epinephrine plunged into the heart. The two-and-a-half pound lobster fra diavolo is both brash and polished, the huge portion galvanized by Calabrian chiles and soothed by Cognac. No shrimp scampi has been handled as gently or luxuriously as Carbone's chorus line of langoustines, claws extended, bodies split and slick with butter that implies garlic without coming right out and saying it.

Concentrated shellfish stock is the foundation a zuppa di pesce so deeply fragrant, you know it's coming before it's on the table.

I wish the clam broth that infuses linguine vongole had the same intensity. But other plates of what Carbone calls "macaroni" are remarkable. Knuckles of tortellini stuffed with whipped sheep's milk ricotta are a show of zero-gravity delicacy while elbows of rigatoni are forceful and substantial, their tomato sauce unabashedly spicy and slyly buttery.

There are also, in this movie, some lapses in taste and judgment. Fried broccoli rabe is locked inside some of the heaviest, greasiest batter I've ever tasted. Carbone's tiramisù, a wedge of layer cake with mascarpone between Marsala-soaked spongecake, is too wet and too boozy, a case where the middlebrow original is better than the highbrow makeover.

Strangest of all is something called Chinese chicken, which tastes as if Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Carbone were trying to recreate something from Chinatown Night at their college cafeterias. But old Italian-American restaurants generally have at least one dish on the menu that nobody orders. Maybe this soy-and-sesame-seed nonentity is supposed to be another in-joke, although it would be funnier if, when you ordered it, your captain said, "We just sold out."

They could get a laugh out of it, too. Carbone's captains are character actors who have mastered the jokey, swaggering, slightly bossy style that was a New York specialty before waiters began to have the blandly pleasant manners of the young people who carry Bibles and ring doorbells on Saturday mornings. There is a flash of three-card monte below the surface, as these men sell you on meatballs with your pasta or promise that the lemon cheesecake is "the best you'll ever have in your life." They aren't lying about the cheesecake, though.

And the most talented among them can improvise dialogue while grating creamy ricotta salata over a Caesar salad that is just as sharp with anchovies as you could wish. One night a star of romantic comedies was sharing one appetizer and one main course with her male date. When the date left the table, the captain leaned in.

Captain: Nice catch.

Star: Excuse me?

Captain: I said that's a good-looking young man you're with.

Star: (Raucous laughter.)

This kind of thing is funny only if you agree to play along. And I'm not ready to play along with all of Carbone's casting decisions: currently all the captains, typically the most highly tipped employees, are men.

But I admire nearly all the other choices that Mr. Torrisi, Mr. Carbone and their business partner, Jeff Zalaznick, have made. Many American restaurants are trying to reinvent fine dining by looking abroad. Carbone is mining the best elements of homegrown American style of service and cuisine that flourished when men in ties and women in heels, woozy from a final shot of sambuca, wobbled to the sidewalk clutching doggy bags.

We didn't know how good we had it. Carbone is here to remind us.

181 Thompson Street (Bleecker Street), (212) 254-3000, carbonenewyork.com

**ATMOSPHERE** Both formal and fun, in a way only upscale joints can be.

**SERVICE** Are these genuine old-school Italian waiters, actors playing a role or both?

**SOUND LEVEL** Like everything else, slightly heightened.

**RECOMMENDED** Carpaccio piemontese, scampi alla scampi, posillipo pan roast, Caesar salad alla ZZ, tortellini al ragù, spicy rigatoni vodka, bass vin rosso, lobster fra diavolo, double lamb chop, cherry pepper ribs, lemon cheesecake, carrot cake.

**DRINKS AND WINE** Period cocktails (stingers, mai tais) are smartly updated; the list of French, Italian and American wines is strong, though there are no bottles under \$60.

**PRICES** Antipasti and other starters, \$14 to \$38; pastas, \$19 to \$31; main courses, \$30 to \$52 and up.

**OPEN** Daily for dinner.

**RESERVATIONS** Accepted.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS** Dining rooms and accessible restroom are on street level.



Photos: Daniel Krieger for The New York Times

# Bloomberg



## Carbone's \$50 Veal Parm, Lobster, '50s Pop Rock: Review

By Ryan Sutton  
Bloomberg  
April 16, 2013

Your \$400 date at Carbone doesn't begin with anything fancy. No caviar, no foie gras.

Instead, your waiter appears in a red Zac Posen tuxedo, looking and sounding like Joe Pesci in "My Cousin Vinny." He pierces a chunk of parmesan with a blade and lays it on your plate. Then come tomato-softened grandma bread and smoky American prosciutto.

And there it is, all the components of a ham-and-cheese sandwich at a hammed up joint where 1950s rock pipes through the speakers, where the art is curated by Vito Schnabel and the red saucery can cost almost as much as a meal at Jean-Georges.

This all comes courtesy of the team behind Torrisi, a small tasting-menu venue that proved we'll pay as much for the best Italian-American food as we will for the finest French fare.

Carbone, in the dark and clubby space that was once Rocco, is Torrisi's a la carte analogue. Getting in is just as tough and with good reason: This Greenwich Village spot is spectacular.

Veal parm, which commands \$12 as a deli sandwich, is a \$50 chop at Carbone. Nostalgia may be free but first-rate veal costs.

Still, Carbone embraces the culinary yesteryear. Servers upsell you with perfectly porky, off-the-menu "meat-a-balls."

Listing the specials takes three minutes; tossing Caesar salad tableside even longer. That salad costs \$17 and it's flawless: cool, parmesan-slicked lettuce, anchovy fillets and buttery croutons.

**Scottish Langoustines** • Scampi, \$38, swaps out bland shrimp for Scottish langoustines, which become silky sponges for white wine and garlic butter. Carabineros, a regal variety of prawns rarely seen in New York, somehow pack the color and flavor of concentrated shellfish stock. Cost: \$64.

Order the \$48 per-person antipasti, a tasting of seven or eight dishes that lays down the luxury hard. Fresh mozzarella is anointed with firm sturgeon caviar. A terrine of foie gras appears with chives on top: "Liver and onions," quips the waiter.

Fluke becomes Le Bernardin-worthy as a chaud-froid combo of raw flesh and charred fin, all drenched in basil oil. Sweet sea urchin tops baked clams like seaside whipped cream.



Photos: Philip Lewis/Bloomberg

**Pepper Bliss** • The young Carbone is already one of our city's finest seafood spots. Posillipo is code for Manhattan shellfish chowder, pure red-pepper-and-Worcestershire bliss. "Stracciatella" tastes like a ramp-spiked riff on the best part of any fish shack: the sweet crab meat that gets stuck at the bottom of a plastic butter ramekin. You greedily eat it with a spoon.

All that fat calls for an unusually tannic sparkler (Camillo Donati, \$15), or perhaps a Jay-Z-style "Black Label" Gavi, in all its aromatic, \$26-by-the glass glory. Torrisi types frustrated by that restaurant's American-only wines can rejoice in Carbone's \$200 Barolos and other Italian extravagances.

I might make do with a Godme Pere et Fils Champagne (\$85) and pair the bubbles with an \$8750 lobster; the tender flesh becomes an agent for a fra diavolo sauce whose clean red pepper and brandy flavors would merit Michelin-stars in any era, 1952 or now.

That crustacean clocks in at 2 1/2 pounds. This is studied over-indulgence, an ode to the gigantic proteins of post-war America. The \$140 mixed grill, billed for two, feeds four. Included: Two whole squabs (appropriately livery), two giant dry-aged lamb chops (powerfully musky), fennel-coated pork ribs (getting full), and sweetbread skewers (make them stop!). And juicy boar sausage, sampled eight hours later from a doggy bag.

**Veal Marsala** • Other restaurants hand out parting gifts. Carbone hands out leftovers. Charcoal-grilled veal marsala (\$52) tastes even better out of the fridge at midnight, when all the mushroom sauce gels around the fatty meat.

Pastas are Carbone's weak spot. The noodles are reliably cooked but lack a wow factor. Only rigatoni alla vodka, the bane of banquet halls, becomes majestic, with enough Calabrian chilies, tomatoes and butter to make you wonder whether this is how Buffalo wings should be made.

Out comes the marsala-spiked tiramisu (\$12). Then fried dough strips appear. And gratis bottles of all-you-can-drink grappa. And limoncello. Look at your bill and have another "complimentary" digestif.

### The Bloomberg Questions:

Price: Easily over \$150 per person.

Sound Level: Hustling and bustling, about 75 decibels.

Date Place: Yes.

Inside Tip: T-bone comes with black truffle beef tartare.

Special Feature: Best deal is the \$29 Chinese chicken.

Back on my own dime? Absolutely.



Photo: Mete Ozeren

## The Torrissi Boys Go Old-School With Carbone

New York Magazine  
August 27, 2012

For two very busy chef-restaurateurs, Mario Carbone and Rich Torrissi have been spending a lot of time dining out lately, all in the name of research. After exploring the legacy of the Italian-American table, both low (at Parm) and high (Torrissi Italian Specialties), the avid students of their oft-maligned ancestral cuisine, along with partner Jeff Zalaznick, have zeroed in on another underrated archetype—the slightly upscale mid-century Italian-American restaurant—and taken on the task of reinvigorating it. Call it their latest red-sauce revival, and expect to see it late this fall at Carbone, the trio's remake of the 90-year-old Rocco Restaurant on Thompson Street.

For Torrissi and Carbone, Rocco, and a handful of old-school relics still scattered around the boroughs, represents a vanishing breed of Italian restaurant: one sanctified by its regulars, and cherished not so much for its dated food as for a certain ambience and a distinctive style of participatory service. “We’re paying tribute to what we call ‘moves,’” says Carbone. What’s a move? When the waiter at Il Mulino in the Village attacks your table with freebie plates of sautéed zucchini, chunks of Parmesan, slices of salami, and garlicky bruschetta practically before you’ve had a chance to sit down, that is a move. Certain tableside maneuvers like presenting the customer with a raw T-bone for inspection before it’s grilled is considered a pretty good move. The Scalinatella waiter who stands majestically before the table and rattles off 25 specials without breaking a sweat? Classic move. And the guy at menuless Rao’s who pulls up a chair, turns it around backward, sits down, and says, “Okay, let’s talk about what’s for dinner”? That guy is a move genius. “He’s really the one creating, orchestrating, and improvising your particular experience,” explains Carbone. All great Italian restaurants of this ilk have a signature move.

To learn from the masters, the trio ate everywhere from East Harlem to Ozone Park. “We took some things from all of them,” says Zalaznick. Other than linguine with clams or chicken scarpariello (both of which you’ll find at Carbone, along with foie gras Veneziana, octopus pizzaiola, and whole maraschino duck), the common denominator has to be the patter, that lyrical recitation of specials and customizable options that makes the customer feel like Tony Soprano celebrating an acquittal. “There’s a word for it,” says Carbone. “A piacere, which means as you like it, or to your taste or pleasure.” Zalaznick demonstrates: “We can do lobster—we can do it grilled, we can do it stuffed, we can do it fra diavola.” This is not wholly intended as shtick. “The idea of a piacere is fundamental to this concept,” he says. So, too, are nostalgic trappings like captains in bow ties and dinner jackets, tablecloths (perhaps checkered), and, yes, lots and lots of red sauce. “We’re canning a thousand pounds of tomatoes for the cellar right now,” says Carbone.



## Carbone

By Jay Cheshes  
Time Out New York  
March 4, 2013

The Italian-American supper clubs immortalized in mob movies and sepia-toned photos were never as dreamy as they seemed. And the red-sauce classics still served behind curtained windows at clubby holdouts like Il Mulino and Rao's are rarely as inspiring as our memories of them. The young guns behind Carbone, though, have moved beyond sentimentality in their homage to these restaurants by flipping the whole genre onto its head.

The new spot, from tag-team chefs Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, is a Godfather hangout on steroids, more fantastical set piece than history-bound throwback. Like Torrisi and Parm, their earlier projects together, it's a hyped-up spin on a vanishing form, a restaurant where, bread sticks to bowties, everything looks, tastes and feels like much more of itself.

Under brass chandeliers, on navy walls, hangs brash modern art on old-school Italianate themes, curated, like the food here, by a downtown tastemaker (Julian Schnabel's son Vito). The waiters, a seasoned crew plucked from powerhouse dining rooms all throughout the city, have the smooth steps and cool banter of celluloid pros. But Zac Posen designed their wide-lapelled burgundy tuxes. And the moneyed swells blowing their bankrolls in the entry-level front room or more sedate VIP inner sanctum—out back near the kitchen—aren't capos or dons but young bankers and food-obsessed hipsters.

Whether you know a guy who knows a guy or simply scored your seat on OpenTable, you'll feel like an insider as you pass under the antique neon sign hanging above the door, left over from Rocco, the 90-year-old joint this new hot spot replaced. Those swarming waiters ply every table with complimentary extras, swooping in with a hollowed cheese, big as a drum, stuffed with sharp chianti-soaked Parmesan nuggets (aged up the block at Murray's), with smoky whispers of Broadbent ham carved from a haunch on a dining room pedestal.

The enormous menu, which opens as wide as The New York Times, reads like an encyclopedia of red-checked classics. But co-chefs Torrisi and Carbone have made such dramatic improvements, you'll barely recognize anything. You've never had a Caesar salad like their tableside masterpiece, a beautifully dressed, nuanced variation on the classic, amplified with warm garlic-bread croutons, two types of anchovies and three types of cheese.

You may have already heard about the restaurant's exorbitant prices—that salad will set you back \$17—but there's real value in the top-shelf raw materials and gargantuan servings, and in the unbridled excess of the whole dining experience.



Photo: Filip Wolak

An antipasti selection priced like a meal, at \$49 per person and portioned accordingly, offers an excellent overview of what this kitchen can do. Order it at your peril, though. The coursed-out seven-plate sampler—a sort of appetizer tasting menu—is so substantial, you may not make a dent in your entrée. A recent selection—the mix changes daily—featured sea urchin so fresh it arrived in its spindly shell, and warm just-made mozzarella under an extravagant dollop of Petrossian caviar. There was foie gras too, velvety mousse topped like Venetian calves' liver in a trio of onions (pickled red, grilled green and raw chives).

Even going a less extravagant route—starting with the exceptional baked clams, say, or meaty grilled octopus—there's not a meal to be eaten at Carbone that's not over-the-top. Pastas are so across-the-board rich and intense, they're best split in half as a shared middle course. The rigatoni alla vodka is like a Gucci edition of the overexposed Italian-American standard, its exceptional house-made maccheroni drenched in spicy cream and sweet melted onions.

If you've ordered like this—hard to resist with so many good things to choose from—you may be starting to panic by now, with *carni* on the way. The \$50 veal Parmesan is almost too big for its plate—a pitch-perfect mix of tender meat and crispy crust, of gooey cheese and bright tomato topping. There might also be beautifully caramelized cherry-pepper ribs on the table. Take them home with you for a day-after lunch.

You'll need to save space for at least a small taste of the can't-miss desserts, on enticing display on a tray near the door. Carrot cake with ginger icing and candied walnuts is a delicious, moist, towering stunner. The tiramisu is also spectacular, no relation at all to the usual goopy mess, a tightly constructed six layers of house-made ladyfingers and whipped mascarpone finished with Nutella ganache and crisp cookie crumbles.

You'll be glad to find bottles of house-infused limoncello and grappa on the table—a luxury offered to everyone at no extra charge. Linger as long as you like, soak up the scene. You're going to need some time to recover.

### Vitals

**Eat this:** Caesar salad, baked clams, antipasti tasting, rigatoni alla vodka, veal Parmesan, tiramisu

**Drink this:** Bar whiz Thomas Waugh's dazzling riffs on cocktail standbys (each \$15) include an extremely refreshing rye collins with fresh-pressed celery juice and a rosemary sprig garnish. Though the monster wine list skews extra-pricey, the sommelier can find something decent within your range, like an off-menu Guttarolo Primitivo, a beautifully balanced light red (\$65).

**Conversation piece:** The art in the two dining rooms is divided along generational lines. The front room is hung with new art stars (Dan Colen, Terence Koh, the Bruce High Quality Foundation), the back with longer-established types (Julian Schnabel, Ron Gorchov, Francesco Clemente), all from New York.

# The New York Times

## A New Italian Spot? You've Been There Before

By Jeff Gordinier  
New York Times  
March 4, 2013

For Italian-Americans, it was the moment when the meatballs got big.

We speak of the 1950s, when at least some of the thousands of immigrants who had poured into New York City from impoverished regions of Italy finally began to see the postwar fruits of their sacrifice. Prosperity was within reach, and they expected their meal at the neighborhood restaurant to express that.

"You're seeing more protein at the table now, because they can afford it," said the chef Mario Carbone, who on Friday plans to open a restaurant, Carbone, that pays tribute to that booming, transformational time. "They're becoming more American. They're embracing what it means to be American. They're like: 'I'm going to have protein for days. I'm going to show off. We're going to have meatballs tonight, and they're huge!'"

At their restaurants Parm and Torrisi Italian Specialties, Mr. Carbone, his fellow chef Rich Torrisi and their business partner, Jeff Zalaznick, have in recent years helped New Yorkers shake off any snobby quibbles about "authenticity" and rediscover the pleasures of classic red-sauce cuisine. Carbone will get rolling on Thompson Street in Greenwich Village, in a space that used to house Rocco, which specialized in that kind of fare for nearly a century. Just about every element — the menu, the music, the uniforms, the décor and even the servers' banter with customers — will be engineered to conjure up the feeling of a lively night downtown, circa 1958.

"It's midcentury, Italian-American fine dining," Mr. Carbone said.

Then again, you might say it's the middle of the last century as interpreted by chic players from the early part of this one: the contemporary art on the walls of the three rooms will be curated by Vito Schnabel, a son of the painter and film director Julian Schnabel, and the servers will wear vintage-style vests and tuxedos conceived by the designer Zac Posen.

The food, too, will get a 21st-century makeover. As Mr. Zalaznick pointed out, Italian-American fare is "still around, but hasn't been given the love and care that it deserves."

"When you look at the menu at this restaurant," he said, "it's going to look very familiar, which is the goal."

So, yes, there will be linguine with clams, and lobster fra diavolo, and Caesar salad, and various permutations of piccata, Marsala and scarpariello. "You could place your order right now, because you know the menu," Mr. Carbone said.



Photo: Fred R. Conrad for The New York Times

What you won't get is the sort of experimental-gastronomy bait-and-switch that many adventurous eaters have become familiar with. You won't, for instance, order the linguine and clams and get a winkingly referential food sculpture that looks like tendrils of algae shooting out of a volcano of shellfish powder. You will get a traditional rendition of linguine and clams, but one that Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrisi have spent months fussing over.

"We talked about linguine and clams for, like, a year," Mr. Zalaznick said.

The Carbone version involves the meat and juice of baby clams from South Carolina, along with razor clams and Montauk littlenecks, sweet-onion soubise, and the house-dried oregano that Mr. Carbone called "the heartbeat of this restaurant." Ask for the dish, and the service captain will be prompted to ask you, with maybe a touch of formality, whether you prefer it white or pink.

Indeed, the mode of service at Carbone will spring from the notion of "a piacere," or "as you like it." Customers won't merely choose dishes, Mr. Zalaznick said; they'll engage in a friendly sparring match with servers to make sure each course is custom tailored. "It's giving the power back to the diner," he said. "The way everything has gone with tasting menus, pulling the power away from the guest — we're trying to give it back."

(A separate place the team is creating a few doors down, the Lobster Club, is not scheduled to open for at least six weeks. It will focus on club sandwiches during the day, and cocktails and seafood at night.)

At Carbone, such is their devotion to capturing the look and style of another era that they've even gone to the mattresses, to quote "The Godfather." During a pivotal scene in that film, Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, guns down a rival and a shady cop in a restaurant in the Bronx. That movie scene happened to be flashing by on TV one day as Mr. Zalaznick was wondering what the floor at Carbone should look like. He noticed the black-and-white tile floor on the screen. Bingo.

"We ended up having somebody make it for us," he said.

Then again, if the Carbone crew manages to summon up that spirit of midcentury, big-meatball abundance, it's unlikely anyone will pay attention to the floor.

"The table should be covered with food," Mr. Carbone said. "If we do this right, you should not be able to see the cloth."



## The New Power Lunch

By Alan Richman

GQ

October 14, 2013

Only once was my career the topic of a New York power lunch, and the meal ended badly. Over coffee, the editor-in-chief of a magazine where I worked told me that due to budget cuts, my contract was being halved.

The NY power lunch has long reigned as an ingrained and intriguing ritual favored by corporate and government leaders of New York. Such meals are hosted by moguls, magnates, and more often by persons possessing a modicum of influence plus an imposing expense account. It is attended by colleagues they wish to impress, celebrities they want to show off, and, in my case, noteworthy employees on the way out.

It is also highly ritualistic. The New York power lunch is somewhat like the junior high school cafeteria lunch, where the best tables go to the coolest kids. At the Four Seasons Restaurant, the mecca of the New York power lunch, the powerful preen as the guardian of the Grill Room, Julian Niccolini, sweeps them past corporate inferiors to their place of privilege, a booth.

When I asked Niccolini how important fine dining was to the power lunch, he replied, "Forget the food."

I suspect the end is near for the power lunch as we know it today. The Four Seasons will endure, a fortress of classicism. A vital aspect of the traditional power lunch is the setting, and The Four Seasons to me is the most beautiful restaurant in America, its décor both august and enduring. (The people who eat there would probably describe themselves in the same way.) But the days when Henry Kissinger and Barbara Walters held sway over New York from their booths is coming to a close.

As long as I can remember, the power lunch has been a midtown phenomenon. Even as recreational dining seismically shifted from the Upper East Side and midtown to Brooklyn and downtown, lunch stayed put. Recently, one of the most impressive and popular new restaurants, Carbone, located just off Houston Street, inaugurated lunch service. This suggests that the power lunch is being redefined. And like so much else in this city, it is on its way downtown.

Carbone is close to Silicon Alley, the concentration of dotcom and new media companies that begins in the Flatiron area and travels south. The downtown publishing industry is in the vicinity, as is New York University, which apparently has plenty of superbly paid staffers capable of supporting such a pricey restaurant. (Let's not forget Jacob Lew, currently secretary of the treasury, who was paid \$840,339 during the 02-03 academic year, according to the NYU student newspaper.)



Photo: Evan Sung

The other restaurant that might well transform the power lunch is Del Posto, located on 10th Ave. and 16th St. It is not near public transportation, but people who go to power lunches do not take public transportation. Del Posto is close to the fashion houses and galleries of the Meatpacking District and Chelsea, to Barry Diller's IAC/InterActiveCorp, and to Google New York, headquarters of the corporation's North American sales. All that's required is for Google staffers to cease their endless consumption of free food provided at the office, step out into the sunshine, and avail themselves of the glamorous world of New York dining.

Del Posto is executive chef Mark Ladner's beautifully restrained take on classic Italian food, while Carbone is a seemingly riotous but in fact quite authentic play on Italian-American food by co-chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi. (Carbone worked under Ladner at both Lupa and Del Posto.) Italian food has never been central to the power lunch, although Italian maître d's, with their unparalleled finesse, have been preeminent.

Trattoria Dell'Arte, near Carnegie Hall, had a significant run, attributable to its emphasis on light seafood and vegetable antipasti. (A friend of mine who dabbled in power lunching far more than I ever did told me she walked in with Jodie Foster and was hugged by Sting.) Il Cantinori, in the West Village, also prospered. It was beloved by Condé Nast editors and executives in the nineties, not so much for its power as for its pasta. Il Cantinori was one of the city's essential Tuscan restaurants, specializing in grilled meats and Cabernet-based Italian wines. Such dining is not quite so stylish anymore.

The power lunch was always about recognition, what Niccolini refers to as "continuity." By that he means that it is not enough for the all-powerful customer to be recognized, he must be acquainted with the person who greets him. I suspect all that will fade in the newer-style power-lunch spots—it will take an extraordinary host to spot the Google executive in his sweatshirt or the hedge fund manager in his flip-flops and jeans.

In years to come, the power lunch is likely to evolve into more of a dining experience, which is what everyone seeks in New York these days. Restaurants today are less about ambience and polish and more about chefs and their food. Carbone and Del Posto exquisitely fill that prerequisite.

Walk into Carbone and you will be greeted by a young woman who radiates sweetness. She will not know you. You will not know her. She led me to a table in the front room that was just like every other table in the front room. All were equal, none the best, not a classic power-lunch set-up. The back room, cozy, cuddly, and intimate, exudes a sense of privilege. Power lunches

have been about being seen, but perhaps that also is about to change.

The Carbone waiters are dressed in maroon tuxedos, somewhat like the one Ryan Gosling wore at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. They speak in calculatingly cutesy Italian-American patois. Many of their sentences begin, “Ya know...” Once you reply, they confirm with a “Ya got it.” (The word “you” is practically unknown to them.) The female waiters wear a variation on the theme of maroon, but I haven’t been served by one, so I don’t know if they also speak a lost language last heard a half-century ago. I like the waiters at Carbone. They’re very good at what they do. But I am not amused by their cartoonish language skills.

The floors at Carbone are black-and-white tile, very Bronx. There are brilliant flower arrangements in the front room. The bread plates are colorful tourist pottery. (They’re started to chip, as tourist pottery inevitably does.) Almost every Italian-American restaurant in New York is past its prime, as dispirited and broken down as Al Pacino at the conclusion of *The Godfather: Part II*. Carbone is bright, shiny, and uplifting. The food is very expensive, not a problem for power lunchers, although even they might balk at \$85 for lobster fra diavolo. While Italian-American food has the image of being goopy and disproportionately heavy, it isn’t that way here.

The garlic bread is moderate in heft but vigorous in flavor, exactly right. The tortellini with ragù is a tour de force of Italian-American delicacy. The pasta rings are stuffed with sheep’s milk ricotta and sit atop a creamy, pale, old-fashioned red sauce made with beef, veal, pork and lardo. Every cook working in Little Italy should be required by law to sample it. The Caprese salad, routine elsewhere, here consists of basil-flecked heirloom tomatoes in olive oil with a side of warm, fresh mozzarella. I would think no restaurant could pull off just-made mozzarella, but if this is simply mozzarella warmed up, it fooled me.

Veal parmigiana, the signature dish, was shared by three of us. It was rounded off and cut into wedges using a pizza slicer. The beet salad is a beauty, the mushroom pasta unexpectedly subtle, the gently pan-crisped halibut totally modern, served with a scattering of vegetables, including fragile squash-blossom leaves. Usually squash blossoms are stuffed with cheese and possess the heft of bocce balls.

Del Posto is owned by Mario, Joe, and Lidia—you know who I mean. It has never been beloved for its décor, which is gold-hued, dark-paneled, and softly lit. Walk in and you are greeted by a young woman who radiates friendliness. She does not know you. You do not know her. She knew me, but only because we used to work together. The dining room is filled with nooks and crannies, nice for a romantic dinner, perhaps even okay for a new-age power lunch. There’s also an abundance of open space.

Del Posto is one of the best Italian restaurants in the country. As opposed to Carbone, its lunch is ridiculously underpriced, starting at \$39 for a three-course meal. The menu options are complicated, and the supplements within the menus extensive. That’s a bit of a problem. It’s fine for bargain hunters and gastronomes, but people working out multi-million dollar power-lunch deals do not wish to be distracted by ten-dollar decisions.

The genius of Ladner is that he can pull off subtle twists on Italian classics, a lot harder than you might think. The lobster starter (\$10 supplement) consists of three chilled lumps in a cool, summery ragù. The beef tartare

(\$15 supplement) is dry-aged rib-eye, with a hint of truffle. Sometimes his touches involve garnishes, as is the case with the agnolotti, which comes with a scattering of unlikely vegetables—edamame and chanterelle mushrooms. Sometimes it’s a play on sauce, the light tuna sauce in a typical vitello tonnato replaced by a shockingly intense version made with tuna and veal.

Wild salmon, softly poached in olive oil, is served with everything, and I barely exaggerate. The dish, from Abruzzo and unknown to me, is known as *Le Virtù*. Under the salmon is an unlikely collection of foodstuffs—tiny meatballs, chunks of pork, macaroni, dozens more. The waiter, in describing the dish, also mentioned virgins, but not as an ingredient. Spiced duck with figs is wonderfully sweet and savory, and lamb tail came in an astoundingly concentrated tomato sauce that was apparently a salsa. With Ladner, no dish is simple, yet nothing tastes manipulated.

Both places have excellent wine lists. (Del Posto’s is enormous, too much to handle at lunch.) In a battle of comparable \$65 Italian whites, Del Posto’s 2010 Suavia Monte Carbonare Soave Classico was superior to Carbone’s 2010 Gini La Frosca Soave Classico.

Del Posto has a piano player. Carbone plays fifties and sixties music, from Julius LaRosa’s 1953 *Eh Cumpari* to Solomon Burke’s 1962 version of *Cry to Me*. The piano music is soothing. The old songs are captivating.

Carbone is a seriously entertaining restaurant with excellent food and Del Posto is a seriously great restaurant with even better food. I hope my editors take note. I’d be proud to lose a job at either one.



Photo: Evan Sung

# Bloomberg

★ ★ ★

## ZZ's Clam Bar Serves \$105 Carpaccio, \$1.50 Clams: Food

By Ryan Sutton  
Bloomberg  
September 25, 2013

The classic New York clam shack, with its pale beer, red-stained Dixie plates and bivalves on the half-shell, has generally resisted the forces that make everything in this city unaffordable.

Until ZZ's Clam Bar arrived in Manhattan's Greenwich Village this summer. It's among our most expensive restaurants.

Torrisi Italian Specialties, brought to us by the people behind ZZ's, serves an eight-to-ten-course menu for \$100.

ZZ's sells a single plate of beef carpaccio for \$105.

Good thing it's great beef: a posh Italian variety called Chianina that yields to my tongue its ethereal flavor and fineness.

There's caviar too. While other high-end spots charge \$100 and up for 30 grams of sturgeon roe, ZZ's tops that beef with 45 grams of Petrossian. It starts with a sucker punch of brine and ends with a bracing metallic finish.

The chefs further anoint the carpaccio with Santa Barbara sea urchin plus two or three silky raw langoustines that could fetch \$30 by themselves.

**Real Deal** • So call it a deal, because this carpaccio alla Abramovich, which feeds two, might easily command \$175 instead of \$105.

ZZ's offers no rice, no formal bread service, no soups, no chowders, no hot entrees. Cynics will say this means you'll go broke before you get full, which is true.

The place is also an antidote to those three- and four-hour tasting menus dominating the upper echelons of modern fine dining. Most of my repasts at the Clam Bar lasted under two hours.

ZZ's looks like a studio apartment equipped with seating for 12 at four tables, all of them taken. So you opt for the counter. Jazz is playing softly in the background. The room is lit by a dim chandelier, little oil lamps and, occasionally, a blowtorch. The fiery tool belongs to a Rasputin-bearded barman in white tuxedo who's burning a stick of cinnamon for a coconut cocktail that costs \$20.

**Drink Master** • You acquiesce to that fee because the bartender, Thomas Waugh, is mixing New York's best drinks. The tippie is presented in a whole coconut shell. A straw allows you to simultaneously imbibe the strong rum and inhale the fragrant spice.



Photo: Ryan Sutton for Bloomberg

How about a margarita? Waugh gives us blanco tequila shaken with watermelon (not too sweet) and Serrano chili (more vegetal than spicy). I drank it with my heady amuse bouche, a silver-dollar-size piece of warm potato bread topped with littlenecks, razor clams, oregano and garlic.

You might follow that up with uni on salty, malty bread (\$30), to which ZZ's adds stinging mustard oil.

Even better is tuna on olive bread (\$17), a mash of lean bluefin, chili and EVOO.

The piquant flavors and subtle heat make it a compact improvement on the traditional Nicoise salad. Best of all these carb-based dishes is trout roe toast (\$22), with firm fish eggs enrobed in truffle honey and shaved summer truffles. This is how you turn pedestrian "red caviar" into a fancy, aromatic three-Michelin-star affair.

**Brown Butter** • The hits keep on coming. There are scallops drenched in brown butter (practically dessert), lightly-seared golden eye snapper topped with kaffir lime and strawberries (just a few bites for \$44) and fatty kanpachi with Chinese-style broccoli and oyster sauce (\$27).

There are misses too. Clam and lobster ceviches both pack enough acid to wash any flavor out of the expensive shellfish. And at these prices, the servers ought to replace utensils between courses.

No knife necessary for the \$56 tuna carpaccio with foie gras, evoking the famous Le Bernardin pairing. Sorry, ZZ's is better. The shaved duck liver melts like ice cream over the soft tuna, sweet scallops, sweeter razor clams and ultra-rich bone marrow. It's a brilliant surf-and-turf.

At least the clams are only \$1.50 a pop (when the market allows). The littlenecks are briny. The top necks are tender. Both are fleshy, pink and go perfectly with a cocktail sauce chaser. That's one way to enjoy a Champagne setting on a beer budget.

### The Bloomberg Questions:

Price: \$150-\$200 per person, as much as, say, 15 East.

Sound Level: Usually reasonable (65-70 decibels).

Date Place: Yes, but have a spending plan.

Inside Tip: Short wines-by-the-glass list; Champagne (Pierre Moncuit) starts at \$20 the glass.

Special Feature: Excellent orange sherbet (\$10).

Back on my own dime? For cocktails and clams.

# The New York Times

## At ZZ's Clam Bar, Seafood Shares the Stage With Cocktails

By Glenn Collins  
New York Times  
June 18, 2013

You might think that the new ZZ's Clam Bar, with its refined seafood presentations and its reservations-only haute menu, is the anti-Umberto's Clam House. But Rich Torrissi and Mario Carbone will set you straight on that one.

"We are celebrating the clam house concept in our own way," said Mr. Torrissi, referring to Umberto's, that temple to bivalve mollusks bathed in red clam sauce on Mulberry Street in Little Italy, half a mile to the south of ZZ's location in Greenwich Village.

Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Guests at a preview of the new ZZ's Clam Bar.

So, that celebration began on Monday night when Mr. Torrissi, Mr. Carbone and their partner, Jeff Zalaznick, welcomed guests into ZZ's for a friends-and-family dinner before the restaurant opened to the public on Tuesday for dinner.

This is now the fifth New York restaurant in which the Torrissi fellows have celebrated Italian-American cuisine (including their Parm sandwich shop at Yankee Stadium), and they have, so far, been praised by critics for their invention and the culinary degree of difficulty.

A rather exuberant but nevertheless diminutive crowd of 12 (i.e., the entire capacity of the restaurant) was seated under a vintage crystalline chandelier in ZZ's, a restaurant that is as much a raw bar as a cocktail bar. Diners ordered precisely prepared, formally composed food and drinks showcased in a glitzed-up, once-abandoned storefront.

"It's our own universe, our version of a clam bar the way we'd want it to be," said Mr. Zalaznick, who supplied his nickname to the establishment ("those Z's in Zalaznick," he explained).

The new 200-square-foot restaurant is five doors to the south of the Torrissi group's restaurant Carbone on Thompson Street.

"I was just out in Montauk, and a clam bar there meant feet in sandals – and a picnic table," said Liza Mandell, a Manhattan advertising buyer, as she sampled the kanpachi tartare from Japan with broccoli and oyster sauce. "This is really unexpected. So intimate."

ZZ's offered its guests a menu of carpaccio, ceviche, crudo, tartare and seared fish. Small plates ranged in price from \$18 to \$50 (the latter when caviar was on the plate), and the menu also included a lobster, coconut and chili ceviche; a chianina beef, sea urchin and caviar carpaccio, and seared live



Photo: Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

scallops with Sicilian pistachios and brown butter.

The entire staff of ZZ's totaled one cook (Mr. Torrissi), one server (Will Nazar, who happens to be the general manager), and one chief bartender – Thomas Waugh, the drinks wrangler at Carbone, formerly of Death & Co.

Michelle V. Agins/The New York Times

Preparing the apricot cocktail at ZZ's Clam Bar.

Ben Brown, a corporate real estate salesman from Manhattan, sampled "Smoke," a cocktail of Islay Scotch, grenadine and curry leaf. "Who ever thought Scotch could be refreshing?" he wondered. And ordered another.

At Carbone Mr. Waugh had tweaked cocktail classics, but at ZZ's he was encouraged to go off the reservation. "I've never had permission before to just have free rein," the bearded Mr. Waugh said happily, jacketed in a white tuxedo blazer with shimmery gold buttons and gold bow tie, that gave him the gravitas of a cruise-ship admiral.

Mr. Waugh's ingredient-focused menu offered 11 original cocktails, priced from \$18 to \$20, including "Coffee" (Angostura Rum, Crème de Cacao and Campari) and "Blueberry" (5 Island Rum, Preserves and egg white). Guests lounged on black-tufted leather banquettes or sat on reclaimed classic ballroom armchairs. The guests' merriment echoed off the room's exposed original raw brick, its vintage 1950s wallpapers and a tin-ceiling wainscoting.

Mr. Torrissi was asked why his team went on such an eccentric quest to establish this elegant, boozy, fishy little dream space. "We are crazy about high-end raw fish," he said. "And obsessed with cocktails."

# The New York Times

★ ★

## Dirty French on the Lower East Side

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
December 9, 2014

A new restaurant from the chefs Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone and their partner Jeff Zalaznick tiptoed onto the Lower East Side in September, demurely announcing its name with two eight-foot-high neon signs in peep-show pink. DIRTY, says one. FRENCH, reads the other.

Diners who have reservations for Dirty French, secured with a credit card and a gentle warning of a modest \$50-a-person cancellation fee, will find a dining room inside the Ludlow hotel that is decorated with a few shoestring-budget items, like a wall-length antique carnival mirror shipped from France. A few weeks ago, the partners had the artist Rashid Johnson, a frequent guest, throw oozing slicks of wax blended with West African black soap against the mirror's glass. (Around the same time, one of Mr. Johnson's wax-and-soap works sold at auction for just under \$200,000.) Across from the mirror, over the bar, is a wide French flag that Julian Schnabel splotched with ink. Down on the tiled floor, in another humble little gesture, servers lope around in squeaky-fresh limited edition Air Jordans from the '80s, some of which probably cost more than I paid for my first car.

Ever since Carbone and its neighbor, ZZ's Clam Bar, came along, swagger and money have been to Torrisi-Carbone-Zalaznick establishments what blinking lights and sitars are to Sixth Street's Curry Row. If the word for flaunting cash and art-world connections like this doesn't occur to you immediately, look at the strutting crowd of ceramic roosters that Mr. Zalaznick spray-painted in screaming pink: Dirty French is one cocky restaurant.

It can also be an immensely enjoyable one. That sounds contradictory, but the same self-confidence that can get on your nerves also allows this crew to mess around with French cuisine with a hugely energizing lack of respect. In unnatural crossbreeding experiments, they force bistro cooking to mate with haute cuisine. To make dinner less stuffy and formal, they bring back stuffy formalities like cut-glass wine carafes and frilly oyster plates. They smudge the pages of Escoffier with strange foreign spices. It may sound like run-of-the-mill fusion, but it is a top-to-bottom remix, and nearly every weird mongrel idea leads in the direction of more flavor or more fun.



Photos: Daniel Krieger for The New York Times

Chefs more deferential to custom may not have ditched the hallowed basket of levain or baguette à l'ancienne in favor of a flatbread inspired by the mahjeb Mr. Torrisi ate, one loaf after another, in a North African neighborhood of Paris. It's no innovation, this bread, just pita dough griddled in plenty of olive oil, buried under Provençal herbs and sent out with a snowbank of fromage blanc, but people tore it up with greedy, greasy fingers at every table, mine included.

Not that the chefs hide their training. (Mr. Torrisi worked for years under Daniel Boulud and takes the lead in this kitchen.) The mille-feuille is a technical showstopper, an accordion of ribbon-thin king trumpet mushroom stems folded over and over. It looks like pastry but pulls apart like buttered noodles, and when you drag them through a pool of green curry, the scene shifts to Thailand. It's a disorienting dish, and makes your head spin in a wonderful way.

The restaurant creates a parallel world where French pastry turns into Thai curry; it's as if the chefs have imagined an alternative history in which the leading kitchens of France turned left instead of right several decades ago. What if nouvelle cuisine had embraced maximalism instead of minimalism, full-frontal abandon instead of lean precision? And what if, instead of teaching Americans to make puff pastry, the country's chefs had taken cooking lessons from the rest of the French-speaking world?

For one thing, they might have come up with Dirty French's glorious lamb carpaccio. Brushed with a slow-burning raz al hanout oil, sprinkled with tart

sumac powder and fresh herbs, dotted with sheep's milk yogurt and preserved lemon and wheels of roasted eggplant, the slices of lamb loin are saddled with as much flavor as they can reasonably be asked to carry.

Or, though this probably needed a push from the roast-chicken gold rush started at the NoMad, they might have hit upon Dirty French's \$72 poultry feast. First to arrive is the sneakily rich (translation: you can't see the foie gras) white meat in mustard-herb sauce. Then the bird's hindquarters show up on a cutting board. They've been soaked in a Vietnamese marinade of soy, fish sauce and lemon grass, slowly cooked in melted chicken fat (oh yes they have), then grilled and freshened up with lime zest. The chicken comes with crepes, irrelevantly; just pick up a drumstick and get to work on that burnished skin.

The chefs have an instinct for the right kind of too much, but some dishes trip into the wrong kind. A deeply aromatic and fairly traditional bouillabaisse was thick with octopus, mussels, monkfish and one small, whole, wonderful red mullet. Cuttlefish ink took the broth to the outer edge of intensity, but the medicinal taste of fresh marjoram in some spoonfuls went beyond it. And while duck heart kebabs unloaded at the table added brawn to a frisée and lardons salad, the blast of mustard in the dressing was an excessive use of force.

A programmatic rollout of the formula — Something Clearly French Under Heaps of Post-Colonial Exotica — doesn't guarantee a sprinkling of magical pixie dust on every plate. Baked clams seemed perplexed by their thick jackets of almonds and Ethiopian spices, and so was I. A beautifully cooked trout meunière was speckled with sesame seeds and herbs, a mix that came across as an oddly neutered za'atar.

Still, you can eat extraordinarily well by calling your shots and rolling with the loose, genial decadence of the place. The mood is set when a server comes over and says, in as laid-back a tone as anyone can manage while lugging an enormous 19th-century sterling silver punch bowl filled with ice, "I wanted to let you have a look at tonight's oysters." Oysters: Why not? It continues when Lelañea Fulton, who assembled a wine list that is all French, and fun for all kinds of budgets, shows up dressed like one of Charlie's Angels working undercover as a sommelier. Old Châteauneuf-du-Pape? Sure.

It goes on through dessert, under the assured hand of the pastry chef Heather Bertinetti, who gracefully threads her way through the French-exotic conceit with a delicately architectural coconut-passionfruit Napoleon and a very short but very good pineapple tarte Tatin, rum-raisin ice cream on top.

Mr. Torrisi, Mr. Carbone and Mr. Zalaznick, cautious and retiring as ever, plan to open three original restaurants next year while continuing to build new Parm locations. The question is whether this will leave them the energy to keep refining their mongrel bistro on Ludlow Street while rolling out its breakfast and lunch menus in the coming months. Dirty French needs time to grow into its ideas, and maybe to grow out of a few of them.

## Dirty French

★ ★

180 Ludlow Street (East Houston Street), Lower East Side; 212-254-3000; [dirtyfrench.com](http://dirtyfrench.com)

**ATMOSPHERE** Timbered ceilings, tiled floors and almost enough contemporary art to start a gallery.

**SERVICE** Aims for and often achieves a mix of downtown chill and uptown attentiveness.

**SOUND LEVEL** Progressively louder as the '80s playlist veers from obscure jazz and funk into pandering karaoke classics.

**RECOMMENDED DISHES** Mille-feuille of mushrooms; salmon maison; carpaccio of lamb; terrine of foie gras; bouillabaisse noire; lamb saddle boulangère; duck à l'orange; chicken and crepes; lemon tart; pineapple tarte Tatin.

**DRINKS AND WINE** Cocktails, often incorporating tropical flavors, are very sound. The wine list roams knowledgeably around France, with many affordable bottles, though the triple-digit prices climb vertiginously.

**PRICES** Appetizers, \$12 to \$24; entrees, \$25 to \$36.

**OPEN** Monday to Saturday for dinner.

**RESERVATIONS** Accepted, with an irritating cancellation fee of \$50 a person.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS** The dining room is on street level; accessible restrooms in the basement are reached by an elevator

**WHAT THE STARS MEAN** Ratings range from zero to four stars and reflect the reviewer's reaction primarily to food, with ambience, service and price taken into consideration.



# EATER



## Dirty French Offers 80s-Era Excess for a 2014 Crowd

By Ryan Sutton  
Eater  
November 4, 2014

Dirty French, to borrow the smooth language of coarse pâté, is a fatty restaurant wrapped around a farce of svelte downtown diners. So let's start off with some cote de boeuf Q&A. How big is the steak? It's so big our waiter pushes two tables together to serve it. What does it come with? A side of dry-aged beef fat and mushroom carpaccio. How intense is the lardo? It's so rich that we cleanse our palates not with wine but with butter-laden pommes puree, which is like drinking a double espresso to come down from an eight ball and a can of Four Loko. Now you know.

How does it all taste? Bite into the beef and a peppery crust gives way to a crimson, silky interior. The Niman Ranch cow is aged for 60 days, imparting a level of tenderness that allows the steak to be served rare; try that temperature with a lesser cut and it would be all sinew and chew. The flavor is clean and sweet, the tell-tale sign of a proper grass-feeding. Want more tang? Take that fungi and fat carpaccio and drape it over the beef; the funk is so intense I ask if the chefs slipped a little blue cheese in there. They did not.

How much does it cost? The smallest cut was \$167, which works out to over \$200 after tax and tip. It is one of the city's spendiest steaks, not surprising because Dirty French, located in the Lower East Side's Ludlow Hotel, is brought to us by the team behind Torrisi and Carbone, two of the city's best and most expensive Italian-American restaurants.

Dirty French calls itself a "bistro," which is about as accurate as calling Sofia Coppola's rock-and-roll narrated Marie Antoinette a true account of the 18th century matriarch. It is rather a globally-minded Gallic chophouse and seafood emporium, with nods to India, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and thanks to Cajun-spiced porgy, Creole Country. If Keith McNally's lovely Cherche Midi is a hat tip to the old ways of fancypants French dining, with its cheese soufflés, frog legs, and île flottantes, Dirty is a look toward the diverse and diaspora-fueled future of high-end French fare. It is also one of the fall's finest openings.

Torrisi roasts Island Creek oysters over coals and tops them with parsley



Photos: Daniel Krieger

butter for an easy umami high. Lamb carpaccio, dotted with figs, sheep's yogurt, and mint, boasts the gossamer texture of tissue paper but still packs a mighty musk. Humble baked clams, sweetened with almonds and spiked with a smattering of Berbere spices, sport a lingering brine more characteristic of the regal sea urchin.

And then there is the mille-feuille. It contains no phyllo. Chef Rich Torrisi slices royal trumpet mushrooms on a mandoline, presses the leaves of fungi into a mold, roasts them, and finishes the vegetarian terrine with bright green curry. It's as delicate and buttery as baklava — until the coconut and coriander of the verdant sauce kick everything into overdrive. Jean-Georges Vongerichten, one of the original gangsters of global French fusion, should be jealous as it's the type of dish that wouldn't be out of place at his three-Michelin-starred flagship.

It's also the type of \$17 snack you'd like to eat every day — something you could at a proper bistro, which this is not. Dirty French is still largely for those who reserve in advance. Partner Jeff Zalaznick tells me he'll be able to accommodate more walk-ins when things settle down and that he'll debut a full menu at the bar in 2015. For now, the good news is you won't be alone when you take that 11 pm reservation. Close to midnight on Thursday, there's a Ferrari parked in front and Dirty French is packed with well-dressed folks drinking \$16 cocktails or good Champagne (there are five bottles under \$100). That means that unless everyone here is unemployed — unlikely given the prices — a select group of New Yorkers is going to wake up for

work six hours later hungover and smelling like old lamb.

Those are good problems to have. Dirty French, after all, could stand on its own as a high-end cocktail bar thanks to Thomas Waugh, who's put together a list of original potables that match the global spirit of Torrisi's cooking while still tasting good. He softens the blow of Irish whiskey with creme de banane; he amps up the spice of bourbon with ancho chile and cinnamon; he tames the power of tequila with the tang of yogurt and lime.

That last creation is what you drink with the lamb saddle, essentially the same "mutton chop" you get at Keens except this one is cheaper (\$38 vs. \$51) and more expertly seasoned. The heavy dose of cumin and gamy punch gives it that signature armpit flavor that some of us crave and, damn, the rare flesh practically rips apart with the ease of sashimi.

Does that lamb linger heavy in the mouth? This is where you take a big sip of the bouillabaisse noir to regain your constitution. What makes the soup grand is its use of octopus to mimic the gelatinous eel in the traditional Marseille preparation, as well as the addition of nutty rouget to evoke the heady flavors of the Mediterranean.

Feeling bloody? Torrisi transforms duck a l'orange, after a few turns on the rotisserie, into a study in silky fat, irony-meat and crispy skin. But even better is the \$72 chicken for two, which deserves credit for making the \$200 steak seem cheap by comparison. Torrisi roasts the breast and finishes it in mustard sauce and foie gras fat. He then marinates the thighs in fish sauce, kaffir, and lemongrass before slowly confiting them into fall apart bliss. Wicked stuff. Dab some house-made harissa onto the meat, wrap it all up in flour pancakes, and there's your Peking Chicken, an excellent ode to nearby Chinatown.

Heather Bertinetti's desserts are competent — from the respectable lemon tart to the very good ice creams to the forgettable beignets. But the real sweet treats are Waugh's cocktails. And the leftovers. Around 2 am on Saturday I take Dirty's killer flatbread and use it as a taco shell for some lamb saddle, fat-caramelized potatoes, and curried rice pilaf (\$12). There you go. Red meat with starch three ways. It ain't dessert, but it sure is bananas.



# The New York Times

★ ★

## Santina in the Meatpacking District

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
April 25, 2015

The calendar said January when Santina opened early this year. The temperature outside hovered just above freezing. That said January, too.

But almost nothing inside did. Santina's new glass-box building sits under the High Line like an unwisely located greenhouse, but oranges grew on the branches of a little tree, potted palms sat in the corners, heliconia and other tropical flowers gushed from glazed urns above the bar. Servers wore jelly-bean-colored polo shirts and slim-waisted chinos, like Dean Martin reaching for his 9-iron at Pebble Beach.

People were sharing fritto misto, as crisp and fresh as any in town, and pulling apart multicolored bouquets of crunchy raw vegetables radiating from bowls of chipped ice. They were sipping cocktails through straws stuck into pineapple mugs, as if on a Waikiki honeymoon. Even when the front doors opened, the building is so painstakingly designed by the architect Renzo Piano (with the firm Beyer Blinder Belle) that its vestibule kept the cold winds of the meatpacking district from invading the dining room.

Inside Santina, it was summer in January. It's summer there now, and unless the landlord turns off the heat, it will still be summer when Christmas gets here.

Almost all the food at Santina pulses with the bright, refreshing flavors we crave in hot weather and, it turns out, in other months, too: jolts of chiles, sparks of citrus. Fresh herbs are tossed around frequently and enthusiastically. Chives, mint and basil turn a wonderfully gentle tomato-free minestrone garden-green; Thai basil leaves are flattened over the mint-and-parsley salsa verde applied to a juicy, sweet grilled porgy; tortellini sorrentina (delicate eggy pasta sheets stuffed with soft sheep's milk ricotta) are surrounded by raw marinara sauce and some olive oil mixed liberally with, what else, fresh herbs. Individually, none of Santina's tricks are really new, but the kitchen throws them all together in ways that are fun, energizing and mood-altering.

Santina comes to us from Mario Carbone, Rich Torrisi and Jeff Zalaznick, busy restaurateurs who somehow find the time to endow each place they



Photos: Jason Pomerantz for The New York Times

open with the thematic complexity of a Paul Thomas Anderson movie. The food, they have said, is coastal Italian, in part because the corner of Washington and Gansevoort Streets where the restaurant sits used to be shoreline.

The three restaurateurs take their concepts further than anybody else in New York, though. They have elaborated the coastal-seafood notion to the point of seeing Santina as a seafood restaurant in an Italian beach town somewhere, maybe along the Italian Riviera during the 1950s or '60s. This gets them to the palm trees and the servers' resort-wear costumes. It also inspires a hilarious playlist, mixing sambas and cha-chas (Remember how the same Perez Prado tune pursued Marcello Mastroianni in "La Dolce Vita" wherever he went, even at the seaside village by Fiumicino?) and period Italian pop tunes from singers including Fred Buscaglione, the gangster impersonator who always seemed to get gunned down by a vengeful woman in the last verse.

Mr. Carbone, who leads the kitchen with Dan Haar, the chef de cuisine, has said that the restaurant is named after his Sicilian grandmother. But Liguria plays a bigger role in the kitchen, providing pistou and the chickpea pancake, called a cecina, crisp on top with a soft white underbelly, ready to be spread with crushed, exuberantly seasoned avocados or an excellent salad of tiny shrimp or cold cubes of raw tuna humming with herbs and Calabrian chiles.

The Carbone-Torrisi-Zalaznick team doesn't let its themes get in the way of a fun idea, though. The bartenders stock plenty of Italian aperitifs for their excellent run of cocktails, but they also let their grass skirts sway to the ukulele strains of tiki drinks in concoctions like the pineapple-and-banana-

flavored Manganelli punch. While Italian seafood dominates the main courses, the grilled chicken comes in a sensational robust guajillo sauce that is as Ligurian as Rand Paul.

These are not the kinds of two-ingredient recipes that you would throw together when it's too hot to cook. It's fairly complex stuff, and occasionally a heavy hand gets the better of the kitchen and the summer sun turns oppressive. Blue crab meat with spaghetti became mired in an oily glop of tomato sauce, and excess pork fat dragged down a bowl of warm rice salad tossed with guanciale and heaps of black pepper. Sea bass Agrigento, though cooked just right and buoyed by herbs and orange sections, sank under suffocating amounts of red peppers.

Josh Ber's desserts, on the other hand, almost seem underthought. Filling three cannoli with cream in the Italian-flag colors — green pistachio, white coconut and red maraschino cherry — is a cute idea, but the pastry tubes are limp. So is the tart shell that's filled with a pond of dark, rich pudding to make a chocolate diplomatico; it's thin without being crisp. All the desserts are gluten-free, a worthwhile goal, but the substitutions entail more sacrifice than they probably should. The meringue puff topped with lime custard is very good, but it could use company.

By the end of the meal, though, if the noise ricocheting off the glass walls hasn't gotten to you, you're likely to be in a frame of mind that isn't much bothered by limp pastry. Most of the food, particularly toward the top of the menu, is charming and playful in a way that's hard to fight. The rice-salad concept applied to shrimp zingara is a lively, spicy hit. Beyond seafood, Santina has a very winning way with vegetables. Even when it stoops to using seasonal produce, it gives them a warm-weather brightness. Butternut squash discs, lightly scorched to char and soften their edges, get a topping of cracked pink peppercorns, pumpkinseeds and honey agrodolce that almost turns them into candy. Even the kale and sunchoke salad, with pomegranate capsules strewn around like buckshot, tastes cheerful.

Santina's eternal sunshine is a kind of rebuke to dogmatic seasonality. It feels like an answer from Mr. Carbone, Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Zalaznick to the wintry Scandinavian visions that are now in fashion; to the chefs whose bleak, gnarled plates of sunchoke look like scenery left over from one of Ingmar Bergman's gloomier excursions. If the people at Santina ever meet Death on the beach, they're ready to kick sand on his blanket and challenge him to a game of volleyball.

## Santina

★ ★

Critic's Pick

820 Washington Street, (Gansevoort Street) Meatpacking District

**ATMOSPHERE** A modern glass-and-steel box filled with palm trees and a beachside mood; wear your nicest flip-flops.**SERVICE** Aims for and often achieves a mix of downtown chill and uptown attentiveness.

**SOUND LEVEL** Oppressive at peak capacity.

**RECOMMENDED DISHES** Cecina; giardinia crudité; squash carpaccio; radish and salmon; house anchovies; minestrone; shrimp zingara; guajillo chicken; swordfish dogana; eggplant sesame; spicy potatoes; grapefruit Italian ice.

**DRINKS AND WINE** Built on fruits and aperitifs, the cocktails are liquid vacations. The wine list, imaginative and often affordable, shows that refreshing bottles don't have to be monotonous.**PRICES** Appetizers, \$12 to \$24; entrees, \$25 to \$36.

**PRICE** \$\$\$ (expensive)

**RESERVATIONS** Accepted. A fee of \$30 a person may be charged for cancellations after noon on the day of a reservation.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS** The dining room and accessible restrooms are on sidewalk level.

**WHAT THE STARS MEAN** Ratings range from zero to four stars. Zero is poor, fair or satisfactory. One star, good. Two stars, very good. Three stars, excellent. Four stars, extraordinary.



Photos: Jason Pomerantz for The New York Times

★ ★ ★

## Italian delight Santina is the hottest new spot in town

Steve Cuozzo  
New York Post  
April 16, 2015

Design is destiny. Santina is a glass-box folly so festive, it nudges timid diners outside their predictable-Italian comfort boxes. Chilies! Yogurt! Scorching red-pepper rings on top of lubriciously olive-oiled, black-and-white anchovies!

Santina, from Major Food Group partners Mario Carbone (who's in charge of Santina's kitchen), Rich Torrisi and Jeff Zalaznick, earns its High Line Park aura. Architect Renzo Piano's instant-landmark glass shell beneath the trestle is only the start. Thomas Schlessler and Design Bureaux's quasi-tropical interior mingles Murano glass chandeliers and palm trees; raging libidos mingle at the four-sided bar.

Ladies should break out their Lilly Pulitzer finest: Blue-and-orange umbrellas at alfresco tables suggest more a Latin place in a made-up Miami than an Italian one in what's fancifully called "the former coast of Manhattan."

Carbone's good-times menu might be "coastal Italian," but it belongs more to his imagination than to the Boot. Don't worry about authenticity, though, but about your ears. Santina is raucous even by MPD standards, especially if you're near a whooping, same-sex table of four or more. But the sweet waitstaff soften the hard edges.

Unlike the team's Italian-American theme at cheaper Parm and pricier Carbone, Santina's sunny and playful menu bears whiffs of North Africa and Provence. (Mains are \$24 to \$29, most items in four starter categories are \$11 to \$19.) Fish and vegetables are also supposed to reference the "neighborhood's history." Take that with a jumbo grain of Trapani salt.

A must: thin, plancha-griddled chickpea pancakes called cecina. You may choose several different toppings. I liked sensuously spiced lamb tartare better than Calabrian tuna mashed to tapenade-like jelly. But the pancake's so good, I'd have it with peanut butter and jelly.

"I've never had so much fun with vegetables," our waitress gushed over squash carpaccio. It's merely wonderful: paper-thin rounds of butternut and delicata squash finished with pumpkin seeds, crunchy pink peppercorns and dabs of whipped mascarpone cheese. Slightly sweet brown-butter vinaigrette lends a unifying, distantly fruity note.

Although Carbone's menu mostly laughs off the old playbook, he reminds you how well he can do it. Almond pesto vividly green-tints minestrone formulated with rare, herbal passion and thick with royal trumpet mushrooms,

zucchini, chickpeas and shaved pecorino. Tortellini filled with sheep's milk ricotta belie their familiar appearance. Gossamer on the tongue, they're coated in pesto that mellows the acidic note of marinara sauce.

Dried peperoncini lent a fra diavolo-level heat to shrimp zingara ("gypsy") — toothsome, short-grain rice tossed with rock shrimp, olives and capers. If you want extra notes, there are spicy salsa verde and oniony tomato so-frito on every table. Use them sparingly — the guys next to us squirted and doused dish after dish into oblivion.

The kitchen's exuberance sometimes gets ahead of itself. "Is this supposed to be Indian?" my table mused of guajillo chicken. No, but an overdose of eggplant yogurt could fool us. Main elements can be needlessly hidden, such as skinless bass adrift in red-pepper Agrigento stew. But nothing got in the way of grilled, butterflied squab as unctuously rich as liver.

As happens at so many fine new restaurants, the bubble bursts with desserts like clunky hazelnut orange cake. I'll take Parm's famous tricolor spumoni cake any day over Santina's tricolor cannoli, which are less crisp than doughy.

We want a happier ending in a place built mainly for fun. But it won't keep me from coming back to the party.



Photos: Stefano Giovannini



Photo: Renzo Piano Building Workshop and Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners

## Parks and Rigatoni: Torrissi Team to Open New High Line Restaurant

New York Magazine  
November 29, 2012

Forget Frisbee and Shakespeare. “The No. 1 activity that people do when they go to a park is eat,” says Robert Hammond, who, as co-founder and executive director of Friends of the High Line, knows whereof he speaks. Benefiting from being born in the post-Brooklyn Flea era of food vendors and culinarily overseen by a veteran of the Yale Sustainable Food Project, the High Line has never lacked for good grub, be it locavore ice pops or boutique frankfurters. Last summer, Terroir wine bar opened a lovely seasonal outpost with Hudson River views. But the biggest development in High Line food, and perhaps in park concessions in general, is taking shape inside a Renzo Piano glass box adjacent the forthcoming Whitney Museum at the High Line’s southern tip: a full-service Italian neighborhood restaurant operated by Major Food Group, the team behind Torrissi Italian Specialties and Parm.

Partners Mario Carbone, Rich Torrissi, and Jeff Zalaznick were among more than twenty applicants who submitted proposals last winter, and little by little, via tastings and presentations, the field narrowed. “It felt like a giant tournament,” says Carbone. Their selection means more to the rapidly expanding company than a new West Side location, though. “It wasn’t just ‘Let’s open Parm in the meatpacking [district],’” says Zalaznick. “The High Line represents a lot of the things that we love about New York. It’s an unbelievable place that these guys found and brought back to life, an incredible piece of the future New York that represents its past.”

That bridge is not unlike what co-chefs Carbone and Torrissi have engineered at their Mulberry Street fiefdom, where local food traditions inform their progressive menus. Although the partners have yet to finalize dishes, design, or even a name, they’ve determined that when the 100-plus-seat spot opens in late 2013 or early 2014, it will serve their style of New York Italian-American food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and that the price range will fall somewhere between their two existing restaurants (in the meantime, they’re busy constructing two new projects on Thompson Street, Carbone and the Lobster Club).

The goal, according to Hammond, is to be accessible, appeal to the locals, and, most crucially, help fund the park’s \$5 million annual operating budget. He sees a parallel between the chefs and the park’s original design team. “They’re at a great point in their career trajectory,” he says. “Their passion for the project is just palpable. And it helps that there are two of them.”

## NYC's most exciting new restaurant is a carb-lover's dream

Steve Cuozzo  
New York Post  
December 15, 2015

Sadelle's is the most charming new, big-league restaurant in many a moon. After a long drought that saw a torrent of same-old Italian, French and American openings, this dual-personality brasserie from the Major Food Group (Carbone, Santina and Dirty French) is bracingly different.

With so much else on their plates — opening more Parm branches and planning their takeover of the Four Seasons next year — it's a wonder that chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi and partner Jeff Zalaznick had time to launch a taco stand, much less a gorgeous, Jewish-influenced, slightly Russian noshing-hall in the heart of seen-it-all Soho.

Although Sadelle's (463 West Broadway, 212-254-3000) opened around Labor Day, it only just started dinner service, and its festive spirit is made for the holiday season. business to a new next-door restaurant called Parm, and began rethinking the flagship.

In an effort to free up the space to allow for the more high-tone service needed by the chef's tasting menu, the deli counter and tables were removed—but not the shelving lined with Progresso and Polly-O containers. And while they kept the four-course menu, they added a far more elaborate version, whose inspiration goes way beyond the Italian-American genre.

So, what do they hope diners take away from the new experience? "I want people to walk away with an understanding—even if they've never met me, Rich or Jeff—of who we are, where we're from, what we're passionate about, what our viewpoint is," says Carbone, who met daily with his partners to comb through books such as William Grimes' "Appetite City" and the rare books division at the New York Public Library to research their artful new menu. "There's a lot of playfulness there, but it's also very serious food," he adds.

By day, it's a jolly breakfasting/brunching/lunching hall. Families and young couples pig out at an endless communal table on the ground floor of the three-level, brick-framed space, which is anchored by an imposing, glass-box bakery station.

Scottish salmon's the thinnest-sliced, saltiest specimen in captivity.

Matzo ball soup — "Jewish penicillin" — is closer to Oxycontin: Seductively silken chicken slices and dill-seasoned broth blunt any pain.

But the big news is the return of the increasingly scarce, real-enchilada New York City bagel.

Today, the Jewish staple with a near-Freudian hold on eaters of all faiths is often dumbed down — and oversized, in the words of my friend and ultimate bagel authority Mimi Sheraton, to "a rubber tire."



Photos: Zandy Mangold/NYP

Most places botch or skip the boiling needed to make the dough properly chewy and the skin uniformly crisp. Sadelle's master baker Melissa Weller plops her bagels in a simmering kettle before finishing them in the rotating Fish oven that is the restaurant's centerpiece. The yeasty aroma precedes them across the floor as a fellow intones "hot bagels!" en route to a front retail counter.

Romance takes over at night. The communal table turns into a sexy, seat-less fantasy of crystal and flickering candelabra. Lady Gaga wafts in like an apparition and heads to a rendezvous with friends upstairs. But the food remains the star.

Irresistible pepper-honey bread is worthy of the pedestal on which it arrives. It keynotes chef de cuisine Deegan McClung's dinner menu, which Zalaznick calls "like a brasserie with a few Russian influences."

There are predictably pricey caviar options and plausibly Russian entrees like chicken brined and marinated in paprika oil. But I doubt they use much Sichuan oil along the Volga to fire up tuna tartare the way McClung does, or spicy mustard to lend a piquant note to veal pelmeni.

A few items — beet salad, "Russian potatoes" — are ordinary, but the only real letdown is dessert. There are only one or two each night, including marvelous spiced ginger Bundt cake that's pitch-perfect for the holidays.

Zalaznick explains, "We wanted to focus on the bread." But he noted, "there might be more options in the future."

Let's hope the future comes soon. A night as much fun as Sadelle's can be wants a sweet ending, too.

## Sadelle's

By Andrew Steinthal  
The Infatuation

For whatever reason, the idea of Jewish appetizing hasn't evolved much over time. With the exception of Russ & Daughters finally opening a dining room, bagels, lox, eggs and babka are generally still eaten at places that have been around for generations. And a lot of the time that place is grandma's living room. Not anymore. Now we have Sadelle's, and holy sh\*t it is incredible.

Welcome to West Broadway Reform, Temple Of Hot Bagels. Sadelle's is a modern day synagogue you don't need to be Jewish to belong to, as long as you're down to pray to the God Of Smoked Salmon.

The restaurant comes from Major Food Group (the guys behind Carbone, Dirty French, and Santina) and as we've grown accustomed to seeing, when they open a new place, they go big. It's a production. And that's very much the case at Sadelle's: bagels and smoked fish are served on grand towers usually reserved for lobster and caviar. The staff wears throwback baking outfits and chant "Hot Bagels" in unison every time a new batch hits the pegs. The tables are set with the Laguiole cutlery and Le Creuset plates you've probably seen on someone's wedding registry. And in the middle of it all is the bagel-making facility, enclosed in glass as if it were the fish tank housing the biggest, most impressive sharks at the aquarium.

Jewish appetizing in this city has certainly never been this flashy, but it's also never been this good.

The space is huge, and split up into a sit down restaurant and a take-out bakery where you can get bagels and babka to-go. Yes, the lines at the take-out area during prime time are long, but good luck finding an excellent bagel joint in NYC where you won't have to wait 20 minutes at noon on Saturday. It comes with the territory, and it's one of the few things New Yorkers seem totally fine with lining up for. If you're eating in the restaurant, make a reservation, or come on a weekday.

The restaurant section offers a bigger menu, which includes everything from eggs to blintzes to turkey sandwiches to what may be the best French toast in New York City. The dishes are expensive - \$17 for an egg sandwich is particularly crazy - but most of them are so good that we're willing to deal with the inflated prices.

Barney Greengrass, for the first time in like 90 years, you've got some competition. Someone send him a fax to let him know.



### Babka

A thick chocolate casing protecting a spongy, gooey chocolate sponge cake, Sadelle's babka can only be described effectively using emojis ????.



### Bagel Sandwich

It's a small sandwich, but one that packs all kinds of heat. The house smoked salmon is perfect, and while the bagel size has been called into question, we were impressed with the overall complexion: spongy insides, crisp shells, and an ideal level of bread moisture. Get the Everything 2.0 bagel (pictured above: sesame seeds, poppy seeds, dehydrated garlic, salt, PLUS fennel seeds and caraway seeds), the Salt & Pepper bagel, or the Pumpernickel Everything. There's even a gluten free bagel for those who get down like that.



### Sadelle's Tower

You come to Sadelle's, you get a tower. That's how you do. Every tower comes with unlimited bagels, just make sure you ask them not to toast them. Interestingly, and unlike many purist bagel shops, Sadelle's definitely likes to toast their bagels. We're not complaining, but considering their bagels come out hot, toasting is unnecessary. Make sure your platter has whitefish salad on it. Sadelle's whitefish is dreamy.



**Classic Egg Sandwich**

This is about as good as an egg sandwich can possibly be. Fried eggs, bacon, and muenster on toast for \$17? WORTH IT. OK, maybe not, but still, this is a damn good egg sandwich.



**Cheese Blintzes**

Satisfying cheese wraps. Get involved.



**French Toast**

It's a small sandwich, but one that packs all kinds of heat. The house smoked salmon is perfect, and while the bagel size has been called into question, we were impressed with the overall complexion: spongy insides, crisp shells, and an ideal level of bread moisture. Get the Everything 2.0 bagel (pictured above: sesame seeds, poppy seeds, dehydrated garlic, salt, PLUS fennel seeds and caraway seeds), the Salt & Pepper bagel, or the Pumpernickel Everything. There's even a gluten free bagel for those who get down like that.



**Matzoh Ball Soup**

Never underestimate the power of the Carbone fellas' balls. In this case, it's the ones made of matzoh. Soup gets a solid B+. Grandma would be proud.



**LEO**

And the hits keep coming. The Sadelle's version of scrambled eggs with onion topped with house smoked salmon is so much better than everyone else's it's simply unfair. Order it.



**Turkey & Roast Beef Double Decker Sandwich**

You've been to Parm, right? These guys know a thing or two about making a sandwich.



**Grilled Cheese**

All you need to do is take one look at that messy cheese sandwich situation to know it belongs in your stomach.



Photos: Brent Herrig/The New York Times

## The New York Times

### The Top 10 Restaurant Dishes of 2015

---

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
December 14, 2015

These are the 10 dishes of 2015 that I can't stop thinking about. They're the tastes that I ate with the most intense pleasure and that left the most vivid impressions. They do not necessarily represent the year's finest achievements in the culinary arts. Then again, maybe they do.

---

#### Sticky buns at Sadelle's

Buttered, yielding whorls of brioche dough are capped by a brown-sugar glaze that is, yes, adherent, but won't extract loose fillings. This sticky bun is such an improvement on the old standard that when I tasted it, I was almost overcome with gratitude for Melissa Weller, Sadelle's baker. I'll thank her by listing this unassuming pastry at the top of my favorite dishes of the year, even though I haven't reviewed Sadelle's yet.

# The New York Times

★ ★

## No Disrespect for the Meatball Hero

Red-sauce reformation on Mulberry Street

By Pete Wells  
New York Times  
January 24, 2012

IF the meatball parmigiana hero were a Southern dish, scholars from Chapel Hill, N.C., to Tallahassee, Fla., would hold academic conferences every six months just to talk about it.

If it were a Florentine dish, the Four Seasons would have it on the menu for \$95, or \$55 without white truffles.

But it is an Italian-American dish. It is at home on Wooster Street in New Haven, Atwells Avenue in Providence and Salem Street in Boston. It cannot be ordered at any restaurant that uses a truffle shaver. The closest thing to an academic symposium in its honor would be the lectures on the Food Network given by Prof. Giada De Laurentiis.

Italian-American cuisine is not beloved by the arbiters of good taste, who celebrate risotto alla Milanese but ignore baked ziti, garlic bread, spaghetti and meatballs and lobster fra diavolo.

"We've certainly moved, as a nation, beyond those dishes," the food columnist Josh Ozersky declared on Time.com last year.

In that case, I would like somebody to explain why my mind keeps drifting back to the meatball parmigiana hero at Parm. Like most things at Parm, which opened on Mulberry Street in November, it is prepared by cooks wearing white paper hats and is set before you in a red plastic basket. And, like most things at Parm, it is completely faithful to your memories while being much, much better than you remembered.

At first, the sandwich exhibits nothing out of the ordinary. The tomato sauce, simple and summery, just seems to have been made by a good cook. The mozzarella and torn leaves of basil are fresh, which isn't unheard of. The seeded roll is completely normal. The meatballs are not normal. For starters, they are not balls, they are patties. Anyone who has ever taken a bite of a meatball hero and watched one of the meatballs launch into orbit will recognize at once the significance of this deviation. Patties stay put.

**"...IT IS COMPLETELY FAITHFUL TO YOUR MEMORIES WHILE BEING MUCH, MUCH BETTER THAN YOU REMEMBERED."**

Most sub-shop meatballs are as hard as a 15-minute egg. The patties at Parm are not. Your teeth fall right through them.

And when they do, you find something else that isn't normal: the meat is juicy and rosy pink on the inside, the color of a perfectly cooked pork chop. The meatballs, made from veal, beef and sweet Italian sausage, are pink because they were braised at 180 degrees in a CVap low-temperature cooker for 40 minutes. They were braised at 180 degrees because Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, the chefs behind Parm, studied fancy-restaurant techniques under chefs like Andrew Carmellini, Mario Batali and Wylie Dufresne.

But the meatballs are sitting on a hero roll because Mr. Torrisi and Mr. Carbone are Italian-Americans who, once they had a restaurant of their own, decided to cook what is a kind of soul food for them and for millions of other Americans, even those with no Italian ancestors.

This hybrid cuisine was created by immigrants who were, overwhelmingly, born in Southern Italy, at a time when the region was rural, overpopulated and desperately poor. More recently, when chefs and food writers studied authentic Italian food, they tended to travel to the wealthier north.

Italian-American cooking, a bastardized cuisine with roots in an out-of-fashion region, was doubly uncool. Mr. Carbone, in a phone interview, said that



Photo: Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times

when he was working at Babbo, “The sense I got was that the food of Italy was legitimate food, and the food Rich and I grew up eating was this weird thing we shouldn’t talk about.”

Parm is essentially an expanded rendition of the lunch operation that the two chefs used to run at their first restaurant, Torrissi Italian Specialties, next door. (That restaurant now focuses all its energy on its prix fixe tasting menus.)

Parm makes former Torrissi lunch standards like heroes and a marvelous array of vegetable side dishes. But the menu has grown to include, for instance, baked clams. Briny and just-cooked beneath crumbs of sesame breadsticks, they are like the meatballs in that all their divergences from the original are improvements.

That’s the case with the fried calamari, too. Very small, very sweet and absolutely tender, they share their basket with two kinds of fried hot peppers that keep the squid from overstaying its welcome, as it sometimes can.

With other recipes, Mr. Torrissi and Mr. Carbone do not tweak the original. They throw it under the bus. You may know pizza knots as the cold, lumpish chew toys that let pizzerias unload their stale dough. The warm pizza knots at Parm levitate, held down in their basket, it seems, only by a veil of grated cheese.

The turkey sandwich at the old Torrissi persuaded many people, for the first time in their lives, to eat turkey more than once a year. It reappears at Parm (there would have been a riot had it not) served, as before, on a round semolina roll or on a hero. For the first time, it’s also on the menu as a platter, with a choice of baked ziti or salad on the side.

The platters help Parm make its bid as a spot for dinner as well as for lunch. On that score, there is also a series of nightly specials, like a chopped steak on Tuesday to rival the one at Peter Luger and a zuppa di pesce on Friday.

But even a clever cocktail list doesn’t quite succeed in making Parm as enticing by night as it is by day. At all hours, tables are set with paper place mat menus dominated by sandwiches. The whole mood of the place, in fact, isn’t especially attuned to the sense of theater New Yorkers like their restaurants to provide after dark.

The old Torrissi managed to have it both ways. The shelves stocked with bags of pistachios and boxes of pasta looked utilitarian in the daylight and romantic when the votive candles were lighted. Parm has cartoony kitchen wallpaper and haphazard lighting that throws parts of the dining room into pools of shadow, and not the sexy kind.

Would a few candles stuck into straw-covered Chianti flasks be pushing the joke too far? Maybe, but Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrissi aren’t afraid to embrace a good cliché. Recall those chefs and food writers telling us that pasta is its own course, not a side dish, when you’re enjoying a springy cube of baked ziti with your chicken francese at Parm.

Who cares what they do in Bologna? This is Mulberry Street.



Photo: Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times

## Parm

★ ★

248 Mulberry Street (Prince Street), Little Italy; (212) 965-0955, [piginahat.com](http://piginahat.com).

**ATMOSPHERE** An Italian-American lunch counter with tables, where the short-order cooks in white paper hats happen to have trained in some of Manhattan’s best restaurants.

**SERVICE** As smiling and professional as one could ask of a place where nearly everything is served in a plastic basket.

**SOUND LEVEL** The speakers, which seem to be pulling in some AM station from 1969, aren’t particularly loud.

**RECOMMENDED DISHES** Pizza knots, salami and eggs, giardinia pickles, cauliflower, baked clams, calamari, eggplant parm platter, meatball parm hero, turkey on a roll, Saratoga club, zeppole, zuppa di pesce (Fridays only).

**WINE AND DRINKS** A small handful of American wines by the bottle for \$40 to \$65, which feels high for a sandwich shop, though most are sold by the glass. There’s McSorley’s on draft and Schaefer in a can, for old times’ sake. Best of all may be the cocktails (\$12).

**PRICE RANGE** Appetizers and sides, \$5 to \$12; sandwiches and platters, \$8 to \$15; nightly specials, \$25.

**HOURS** Sunday to Wednesday, 11 a.m. to midnight; Thursday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

**RESERVATIONS** Not accepted.

**WHAT THE STARS MEAN** Ratings range from zero to four stars and reflect the reviewer’s reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration.

**“MEMORIZE THESE NAMES NOW, NYC:  
THEY’LL BE ON THE LIPS OF TASTEMAKERS  
FOR YEARS TO COME.”**



★ ★ ★ ★

## Restaurant Review: Parm

A second hit from the duo behind Torrissi Italian Specialties

Jay Cheshes  
Time Out New York  
December 26, 2011

Rich Torrissi and Mario Carbone started small with their first project together, a sandwich shop that opened in 2009, serving hoagies by day and tasting menus by night. But Torrissi Italian Specialties, that low-key debut, blew up in a flash, its inventive riffs on Italian-American classics catapulting the young chefs onto the national stage. Soon there were glossy magazine profiles, restaurant awards and long lines out the door. It wasn't long before they outgrew their very small space.

When your first restaurant goes platinum, all eyes are trained on your next project. Torrissi and Carbone unspooled theirs in two parts, turning their original venue into a serious restaurant (all tasting menus, all the time) and moving its casual half into the vacant spot next door. Parm, that new cozy annex, is the Italian-American deli the daytime Torrissi strived to be, with more sandwiches and sides, new starters and mains, and a full-service bar with house wines and cocktails.

The decor pays kitschy homage to the old-school venues that inspired this cooking, with wallpaper from the 1950s, neon, Formica and red swivel barstools. But while the menu reads as well-worn as the space, the food is new and exciting, prepared by grease-spattered cooks in white paper caps who happen to have high-end restaurant résumés. (Torrissi and Carbone worked together at Café Boulud.)

As at Torrissi, the co-owner chefs offer dramatic improvements on the food they grew up on, without sacrificing the integrity of the original dishes. Instead of the chopped bivalves and soaked breading that still pass for baked clams in some quarters, Parm does the dish as everyone ought to—with tender littlenecks just cooked through in their shells, fragrant with garlic, butter, white wine and lemon; and crispy from bread crumbs made from



Photo: Lizz Kuehl

sesame bread sticks. The garlic bread too is the platonic ideal, slathered in a compound butter of roasted garlic, powdered tomato and house-dried oregano. Order it “deluxe,” with a side of fruity tomato sauce and house-made ricotta.

Fried calamari, served in a plastic basket, is light and crispy like the best fritto misto, tenderized from a soak in seltzer before being dusted in rice flour. And their baked ziti, a far cry from the casserole mush of so many suburban suppers, is perfect al dente baked pasta in sweet marinara with crispy bits around the edges (from searing portions to order on all sides on the flattop). Add on the optional meat gravy, a delicious slow-simmered mix of ground beef, veal and pork.

These dishes and the hugely popular sandwiches once served next door make up the regular menu at Parm, available daily at lunch and dinner. The new venue does brisk takeout business, too, selling the city's best chicken Parmesan and Italian-deli-meat hoagies to go from a corner of the bar.

After 6pm nightly, you'll also find the restaurant's version of a blue-plate special, a single substantial entrée for each day of the week—and by far the priciest thing here, at \$25 apiece. On Wednesdays, there are big, beautiful pork chops, shoulder meat from heritage-breed pigs rubbed in dry pizza

spices and topped with a chunky ragù of hot peppers, tomatoes and onions. And on Friday night, the aromas of zuppa di pesce fill the narrow dining room—fragrant with soffritto cooked low and slow, and shrimp stock reduced with tomato and chili into a rich, nuanced elixir. Though the zuppa stands by itself, the gently poached mussels, clams, squid, shrimp and scallops added just before service make this soup a feast.

Dessert, which Torrissi used to limit to Little Italy rainbow cookies, now includes warm yeasty jelly doughnuts and a supersized slice of Carvel-style ice-cream cake, layering house-made pistachio, strawberry and chocolate gelato in between chocolate crunchies.

All of this—the playful updates, the cultish crowds—feels familiar. As with David Chang, whose empire was built on the shoulders of ramen, Torrissi and Carbone have shown us that their humble deli debut was just the beginning of a full-court press on the city. A Parm branch, perhaps the first of many, is already open at Yankee Stadium, and a new project is in development a few blocks away in the old Rocco Ristorante space. Memorize these names now, NYC: They'll be on the lips of tastemakers for years to come.

### Vitals

Eat this: Baked clams, garlic bread “deluxe,” fried calamari, baked ziti, zuppa di pesce, ice-cream cake

Drink this: The nostalgic cocktails include a classic Negroni with an earthy vegetal note from beet-infused gin, and a sort of spiked root-beer float with ginger beer, Root liquor and a touch of vanilla (both \$12). Though the house wine comes in straw-lined chianti bottles, it's not old-fashioned swill but a food-friendly sangiovese blend made especially for the restaurant by Palmina in California (\$12 a glass).

Sit here: The tables, squeezed into the back of the cramped dining room, aren't terribly comfortable. For more room and better views—of the open kitchen on one side and Mulberry Street out the window—grab a stool at the bar.

Conversation piece: The neon sign of a cartoon squid on roller skates that hangs near the entrance was designed for the restaurant by the graffiti artist Marco, whose work adorns walls across lower Manhattan. When the lit stoplight is green, that means the restaurant has calamari in stock.



Photos: Lizz Kuehl

# Bloomberg



## World's Best \$9 Hamburger Comes From Parm

By Ryan Sutton  
Bloomberg  
August 29, 2012

You can get one of New York's best burgers at Parm, though you won't see burger listed anywhere on the menu.

Never mind that the patty isn't all beef. The French-trained chefs toss in veal, sausage, cheese and breadcrumbs.

The toppings are milky mozzarella and tangy marinara. No watery tomatoes, no iceberg lettuce.

The misleading name of the sandwich is "meatball parm." But I know a burger when I bite into one. And this one bears no relation whatsoever to the product sold at McDonalds (MCD) or Wendy's. (WEN)

Parm's patty sits flat inside a sesame bun. The meat, pink as a plastic flamingo, collapses silkily in the mouth.

The cost of this perfect burger is \$9. That's about \$10 less than the going rate for lesser creations around New York.

The messy, two-handed affair is meant to be consumed on a spinning stool while Billy Joel pumps through the sound system. The Yankees are clobbering the Rangers on the flat screen TV and you're sucking a frozen scorpion through a bar straw. The mix of vodka, lemon juice and prosecco is like an Italian ice, plus buzz.

**Cheap Dough** · Such red saucery is the norm at this little gastro-diner in Manhattan's Soho district, a brilliant sophomore effort by chefs Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone. The duo's neighboring and namesake flagship, Torrisi, is proof that great Italian-American cuisine can command the same wallet-burning prices as fancy French fare: Dinner for two after wine pairings, tax and tip runs \$300-\$600.

Parm, with most dishes under \$15, happily offers just opposite—cheap, checkered-tablecloth food that can be good in its own right.

Take pizza knots, typically a lead lump of hot bread and rancid garlic. Parm lightens up the dough, tossing it in onion powder, tomato powder, oregano and chili. They taste like ultimate Combos.

B&G peppers (\$6), the official pickle of Long Island's South Shore, are deep fried and stuffed with rice and provolone. The result is a gooey, spicy, stinky riff on jalapeno poppers.

That same incendiary condiment reappears on raw clams. Buffalo cucumbers, with blue cheese and RedHot vinaigrette coating the cool cukes (\$6),



Photo: Philip Lewis/Bloomberg

would please Paula Deen.

**Zeppo Marks** · Grade A+ zeppoles are doused in sugar and have a toothsome satisfying yeastiness.

Fried calamari is a must. The mix of tender squid, verdant cubanelles and tabasco aioli is a paragon of flavor clarity. The \$12 dish feeds three; it's reassuring that in the age of individual appetizers, there are still cheap starters at good restaurants that can nourish a family.

And that's partly the lure of Parm. A number of the heartier preparations belong to the Mission Chinese school of portion control, where food is served in quantities providing next-day leftover lunches.

For nine bucks, you'll get one of the best turkey sandwiches, with a concentrated poultry punch and a sweet honey glaze. It has enough meat to feed 1.5 sumo wrestlers.

Or for \$17 there's the sausage and peppers platter, which includes a side of killer baked ziti. Those who finish it should get a plaque on the wall. The noodles are al dente, the Bolognese is laden with beefy aromatics, the marinara is tart and the burnt exterior is a heartwarming sign that Carbone and Torrisi know when grandma's tradition should trump technique.

**Not Comfy** · Too bad the chefs couldn't invest in a few more creature comforts. Only the genetically well-cushioned will find Parm's hard seats comfortable. And the lack of proper sound-proofing means that screaming children (or misbehaving adults) can raise the decibel count to ear-piercing levels.

As at Torrisi, wine remains the Achilles heel of Parm, with room temperature reds poured into five-and-dime stems.

Stick with the scorpinos, or pair an Ommegang ale with your fried chicken cacciatore—a \$25 blue plate special only available on Mondays. A yogurt marinade keeps the bird exceedingly tender; black-pepper flour imparts world-class crunch.

Even better is the Tuesday-night Salisbury steak. Unlike Swanson, Parm uses Worcestershire-bathed, dry-aged ribeye, which is why the creamy chopped beef boasts an upscale mineral tang. And it's served on rye with provolone.

That's a hamburger to me.

# NEW YORK



Photo: Hannah Mattix

## The Underground Gourmet's 2012 Cheap List

New York Magazine

July 16, 2012

Imagine for some reason that you've never tasted or even heard of chicken cacciatore, baked ziti, fried calamari, meat gravy, mozzarella sticks, pizza knots, and pork chops pizzaiola. Let's pretend this is because you were raised by wolves in some lonely hinterland without an Olive Garden. Then imagine stumbling upon Parm one day. "What do you call this sensational new cuisine?" you inquire in canine-accented English. "And what is this glorious substance you refer to as red sauce?" To which Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone, the classically French-trained but Italian-American-obsessed co-chefs, shrug and reply: "It's just the stuff we grew up with." That's not far from what it's like to eat at Parm for the first time. Practically every dish tastes like a new and improved version of itself. The turkey in the turkey hero, you've undoubtedly heard, is preternaturally moist. That perfectly crisp calamari is as light and fresh as a Ladurée macaron. The mozzarella sticks are an entirely separate species of mozzarella stick. Our favorite platter is the chicken francese, a dish that food writer John Mariani has called one of the "real clichés of Italian-American cookery." Here it tastes familiar, granted, but also transcendent, as if prepared by a Brooklyn nonna who did a stage at Del Posto.

What to Get: Spicy rabe, \$6, plus chicken francese with baked ziti, \$17; total: \$23.

# NEW YORK

## Coming Attraction: Would You Like a Little Cheese On That?

The Radically Reinventive Chefs of Torrissi Italian Specialties  
Reveal Their Plans for Parm

Robin Raisfeld & Rob Patronite  
New York Magazine  
April 3, 2011

It's no small feat to garner a devout following and a James Beard nomination for Best New Restaurant by proudly proclaiming your love for ingredients like canned California olives and Progresso bread crumbs. But that's in part what Mario Carbone and Rich Torrissi, the French-trained, roots-reclaiming chef-partners behind Torrissi Italian Specialties—sub shop by day, inspired Italian-American prix fixe by night—have done. Next up: an expansion on the theme called Parm, a larger adjacent space that will, come summer, house an open kitchen, about 35 seats, and—the partners hope—a full bar serving riffs on classic cocktails. (That should give the masses waiting for tables at T.I.S. something to do besides shoot flames from their eyes at those lingering over their rainbow cookies.) It's not just a matter of adding more seats, though; with Parm, Torrissi and Carbone are giving each of their distinctive concepts its own address, and their clientele some breathing room. "We have two clearly delineated types of customers," says Carbone, speaking of the frenetic lunch crowd. "They either want to sit and relax or they want to get back to their office, and we're really not making either one of them happy." How exactly will Parm do that? By expanding on Torrissi's existing lunch menu with hot appetizers and hot plates, instituting table service for both lunch and dinner, and relegating all takeout transactions to a window up front. "It'll be like the old pizzerias, like Stromboli on St. Marks," says Carbone. During recipe development, Torrissi regulars can expect to sample trial versions of new dishes destined for the Parm menu—sandwich additions like chicken francese, a mid-century invention described by food writer John Mariani as "one of the real clichés of Italian-American cookery," and meatball, based on a three-meat Carbone-family recipe. Nine or so options will come on a roll, a hero, or a platter, the last served with that iceberg assemblage lovingly referred to in Italian-American enclaves as Sunday salad (a "holiday salad" is a meat-and-cheese-festooned upgrade). Hot-plate dinner specials likewise celebrate the oft-maligned, much-loved foods of the chefs' youths, from pork-chop pizzaiola to chicken cacciatore. "We love that stuff, we love that style, but we want it to taste good," says Carbone. The partners' approach to Parm's design is just as retro. "We want it to look like your uncle's

**"IT'S NO SMALL FEAT TO GARNER  
A DEVOUT FOLLOWING AND A  
JAMES BEARD NOMINATION  
FOR BEST NEW RESTAURANT..."**

basement bar," says Torrissi—provided your uncle was partial to wood wainscoting, cushioned diner-style stools, and lots of neon signage. Family memories are also entwined in another delicacy that speaks to the chefs' souls and sends Proustian shivers up and down their spines: the Carvel ice-cream cake, to be reinterpreted at Parm by new pastry chef Pam Yung, a veteran of Roberta's and Tailor, who will also upgrade the desserts next door. And speaking of Torrissi Italian Specialties, changes are afoot there as well. Once Parm opens, Carbone and Torrissi will renovate the flagship to make it more comfortable and launch a lunchtime version of the dinner prix fixe. They're even tinkering with a longer, more leisurely tasting menu of ten to twelve courses, and entertaining the notion of taking reservations for that option. Almost against their will, says Torrissi, "it's turning into a real restaurant."

Hot-plate dinner specials likewise celebrate the oft-maligned, much-loved foods of the chefs' youths, from pork-chop pizzaiola to chicken cacciatore. "We love that stuff, we love that style, but we want it to taste good," says Carbone. The partners' approach to Parm's design is just as retro. "We want it to look like your uncle's basement bar," says Torrissi—provided your uncle was partial to wood wainscoting, cushioned diner-style stools, and lots of neon signage. Family memories are also entwined in another delicacy that speaks to the chefs' souls and sends Proustian shivers up and down their spines: the Carvel ice-cream cake, to be reinterpreted at Parm by new pastry chef Pam Yung, a veteran of Roberta's and Tailor, who will also upgrade the desserts next door. And speaking of Torrissi Italian Specialties, changes are afoot there as well. Once Parm opens, Carbone and Torrissi will renovate the flagship to make it more comfortable and launch a lunchtime version of the dinner prix fixe. They're even tinkering with a longer, more leisurely tasting menu of ten to twelve courses, and entertaining the notion of taking reservations for that option. Almost against their will, says Torrissi, "it's turning into a real restaurant."



Photo: Danny Kim

# NEW YORK POST

## New Yankee Spot To Relish

Andy Wang  
New York Post  
July 21, 2011

Hot downtown chefs Rich Torrissi and Mario Carbone are taking their talents to Yankee Stadium.

In a gourmet twist, the men behind Torrissi Italian Specialties are opening their new Parm sandwich stand at the Bronx stadium on Friday.

"It's surreal," Torrissi said. "From our vantage point in the Great Hall, we can see all the banners honoring the Yankee greats -- including my childhood hero, Don Mattingly."

The stand, being unveiled about a month before the chefs and partner Jeff Zalaznick open their Parm sandwich shop next to Torrissi on Mulberry Street, will offer their famed turkey sandwich and debut a meatball offering.

"For a small restaurant group, we have a lot on our plates," Zalaznick said. "We're probably the first restaurant of our size to do something like this. It's a totally new market, who we hope will have an equal appreciation for our sandwiches."

Offering sandwiches in a stadium filled with 50,000-plus fans is indeed a step up from quirky deli/restaurant hybrid Torrissi in Little Italy, which sells about 200 to 300 sandwiches a day and turns into a 26-seat, no-reservations, prix fixe restaurant at night.

But the Yankee deal is hardly out of left field. Torrissi opened about a year and a half ago and quickly became a darling of the downtown food scene, attracting customers like actor/comedian Aziz Ansari, who tweeted about his love for their turkey and chicken parmesan sandwiches.

In addition to opening Parm and having an eye on further expansion, the trio's Major Food Group is curating a section of September's San Gennaro festival.

**"PROBABLY THE FIRST RESTAURANT OF OUR SIZE TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS."**



“MR. CARBONE AND MR. TORRISI ARE IN A BURST OF CREATIVE EXCELLENCE, AND REINVENTING THEMSELVES DAILY.”

## The New York Times

★ ★

### Torrise Italian Specialties

By Sam Sifton  
New York Times  
June 8, 2010

THERE is one piece of framed art at Torrisi Italian Specialties, a tiny and terrific new restaurant on Mulberry Street at the very top of Little Italy. It is a large photograph of Billy Joel, a reproduction of a promotional still released with his album “The Stranger,” in 1977.

Mr. Joel wears a wide-shouldered suit of the age, with a loose tie and a pair of boxing gloves knotted around his shoulders. He is 28. He looks wistful, not unhappy, grown.

The image — propped on a shelf above an installation of plastic Italian-ice containers, set between shelved cans of peeled tomatoes and bottles of Manhattan Special espresso soda — serves as introduction to the loving, ironical heart of a restaurant that is unlike any other in Manhattan.

During the day, Torrisi is a sandwich shop modeled on those of the neighborhood old school. You can get a good chicken parm or an excellent turkey hero there, some flavorful contorni, a can of beer, a small bottle of Coke. The dishes are all smart upgrades on classics, beautifully cooked, humble Italian-American lunch fare for an era that respects the form.

At night, though, the room is transformed into a restaurant of around 20 seats, in which artists make work and customers consume it. The prix fixe for this is \$50. The food is still beautifully cooked, still aggressively Italian-American: the dried pastas and Progresso bread crumbs and other Little Italy grocery items stacked on shelves are not for show.

But the dishes are no longer humble. They are edible paintings, comestible short stories. It is strange and wonderful to eat them in the same place you were sitting before, eating a chicken parm.

The restaurant’s menu, written and executed by the owners and chefs, Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi, changes every day. It offers eight courses set over the classic Italian rhythm: antipasti into pasta, into protein, into dessert. Over the course of a number of meals, over a number of months, the restaurant shows itself to be towering in its ambition. Say what you like, Billy Joel could



Photo: Evan Sung for The New York Times

play the piano.

There is always warm, just-made mozzarella as a starter, sprinkled with salt and drizzled with olive oil, and rich garlic toast on which to place it: outrageously good beneath its garnish of dried tomato, its weight of olive oil.

There is always a little Italian ice to end the meal — tart grapefruit recently — and then a plate of classic Italian cookies and mini cannolis of the sort you can still get on Arthur Avenue in the Bronx or along Court Street in Brooklyn, only approximately 22 times better in quality here.

But the rest, save for the decision to have meat or fish for the entree, is dealers’ choice. A server will tell you so at the start of the meal, when she asks for your drink order: beer or wine only, off a concise all-American list, on top of housemade sparkling water or city-run tap.

(And no joke intended: perhaps a bottle of rosé? The Wölffer, from Long Island, works well in this weather.) The dance begins then, casual and rowdy, and you in the middle of it.

Corned tongue with cucumber and pickled garlic was one evening’s starter, along with salami toast spread thick with baccalà and cured lemon. Once there was a beach-foraged salad of sea beans and butter lettuce, cactus leaves and sea rocket, followed by pickled eggplant with fiery lamb sausage and a smoked-sable crostini with cod roe, crème fraîche and everything-bagel spices.

Another night, sweetbread Milanese made the scene: a gem on the plate, salty and rich, beside a soft dish of potatoes and egg scrambled with herbs, beside yet another of fresh ham with mustard and a hunk of Cheddar. A cucumber salad took us through to the pasta that evening, dressed in a dried scallop vinaigrette that seemed to come from a fantasy Italy, better even than the real one, farther south on Mulberry Street, closer to Chinatown.

The pasta course stays on the American end of the Italian-American spectrum. (All the ingredients at Torrissi are American grown or made.) You might get clams and spaghetti with a Tabasco sauce, brine and fire combined along the length of the noodles, or a soft sheep's-milk ricotta gnocchi, gnudi-like in texture, with lemony asparagus.

One night brought fusilli in an offal-rich duck ragù; another, a sweet ravioli with a tang of red wine vinegar and a low hum of salty chicken liver. The menu had it named for Caruso, the opera singer. You could have tasted it over the radio and wept.

The entrees are deceptively simple. The fish option might be skate Francese, buttery against the crisp skin of the fat wing, with a rushing undercurrent of lemon to match a throw of sweet sugar-snaps, a master class in fish-station technique. One evening there was tilefish carrying a load of blue-crab backfin meat, with small fried artichokes to amplify the richness of the meat.

Black bass came drenched in a Manhattan-style chowder broth on another night, with pilot crackers for texture and thickening. It tasted of the Fulton Street of Joseph Mitchell, up in his old hotel.

Meat options have included deviled chicken with a skin crisp enough almost to crackle, leavened by a swab of yogurt the texture of sour cream. And there was Long Island duck with broccoli rabe and a mulberry mustard — the fat beneath the skin rendered almost to the consistency of butter on its way to melting.

Most recently, there was a heritage pork chop, cooked crunchy and dark on the outside, soft and luscious within, beneath a tangle of vinegar-laced roast peppers. A roasted, glazed pork rib, fiery and bold, was placed on top as a garnish. Whatever the option, you'll be asking for your icy after, and will take it slow through the cookies.

The whole process takes roughly an hour, over bare wood tables, with paper napkins and wine out of water glasses. It is not fine dining, but it sure is fine.

No reservations are taken. The best strategy for a table is to go as a couple, either at 5:30 for the first service at 6, or on the hour thereafter, with the hope that you will be seated within 90 minutes. (Leave the number for your mobile phone and go get a cheap drink at the Spring Lounge, or an expensive one at Balthazar.) Larger groups should consult horoscopes and witch doctors for advice.

It sounds awful, the waiting. But Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrissi are in a burst of creative excellence, and reinventing themselves daily. Theirs is not the simple, pared-down Italian-American food of the Frankies restaurants — their cooking is too aggressively technical for that. But it is simpler than

the inventive, luxurious new-Italian fare of Michael White at Marea or Mark Ladner at Del Posto. It is reminiscent most of the spirit of Gabrielle Hamilton at Prune, and of the early days of David Chang at Momofuku Noodle Bar.

And how long can that last? The Torrissi project as it stands surely must run its course, the way any performance does, the way any combination of kinetic energy and art must eventually fall off its axis. (What happens if the money gets tight? No one counts on the tears.) Presumably Mr. Carbone and Mr. Torrissi will cook this way until it gets boring, and then will do something else.

Which means the time to get to Torrissi Italian Specialties is now.

### Torrissi Italian Specialties

★ ★

250 Mulberry Street (Prince Street), Little Italy; (212) 965-0955, [piginahat.com](http://piginahat.com).

ATMOSPHERE Scenes from an Italian restaurant.

SOUND LEVEL Eighteen people and a middle-register soundtrack of '80s rock.

RECOMMENDED DISHES At lunch, turkey sandwich, chicken parm sandwich. At dinner, the menu changes daily.

WINE LIST Short, American and relatively inexpensive, with beers to match.

PRICE RANGE Lunch, \$3 to \$10. Dinner, \$50 prix fixe.

HOURS Lunch, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday. Dinner, 6 to 10 p.m. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday, to 11 p.m. Thursday to Saturday.

RESERVATIONS None accepted. Restaurant cannot accommodate parties larger than six.

CREDIT CARDS All major cards accepted.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS Restaurant is up a short, steep ramp and has a tightly packed dining room. Restroom is not accessible.

WHAT THE STARS MEAN Ratings range from zero to four stars and reflect the reviewer's reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

“IN THE REALM OF RED-SAUCE COOKING,  
IT’S NOTHING SHORT OF REVOLUTIONARY.”

NEW YORK

★★★★★

## Better Than Grandma

Red-Sauce Reformation on Mulberry Street

By Robin Raisfeld & Rob Patronite  
New York Magazine  
April 18, 2010

Although one-half of the Underground Gourmet grew up wallowing in the weekly feast known to Italian-Americans as Sunday supper—that all-you-can-eat orgy and sadomasochistic opportunity for the wooden-spoon-wielding family matriarch to show her love and try to kill you at the same time—nothing could have prepared us for dinner at Torrissi Italian Specialties. For one thing, the four-course, Sunday-supper-ish meal is served six nights a week—a feat that even Grandma in her prime couldn’t pull off. For another, after it’s all over, you won’t find yourself drifting off into a dyspeptic slumber on a plastic-wrapped couch in front of the television; instead, you’re compulsively checking the website for the next night’s menu.

Dinner at Torrissi, you see, is quite unlike any other Italian experience in town. It’s even, perplexingly for some, quite unlike lunch, when the handsome, grocery-store-style shop (salamis in the window, Progresso bread crumbs on the shelves) traffics in credible counter-service chicken parm and Italian combo heros, plus hefty slabs of lasagne or eggplant parm (all made as a kind of high-concept gimmick, with American ingredients and nary a hunk of Parmigiano-Reggiano or an imported San Marzano in sight). But then, at 6 p.m., the identity shifts, a culinary conversion that causes some confusion among potential customers dropping in for a turkey hero. Instead, they’re met with a chalkboard menu that lists the night’s prix fixe repast and a pyrotechnic kitchen with something to prove. At \$45, dinner’s a tremendous bargain, and a serious delight. In the realm of red-sauce cooking, it’s nothing short of revolutionary.

Partners Mario Carbone and Rich Torrissi might have Sunday gravy flowing through their veins, but what they are doing at this unassuming eighteen-seat joint is far more delicate, even daintier, than their ancestral inspiration. After formative years cooking for luminaries like Daniel Boulud and Mario Batali at places such as Café Boulud and Del Posto, they’re applying haute technique and the best local, seasonal ingredients they can find to the tired tropes of Italian-American cooking, taking an inventive, almost intellectual approach to the oft-derided cuisine. In a comfortably casual setting

(no reservations, no linen, no airs), they serve their meticulously tweaked Italian-American classics like a chef’s tasting at the French Laundry: as a progression of refined, carefully constructed small plates instead of a cavalcade of Little Italy-scale platters. And what’s more, they change the menu—five antipasti, a pasta, a choice of two entrées, a dessert sampler—every single night.

One happy constant, so far, has been the Lilliputian squares of garlic bread that begin each meal: Light and crisp, imbued with garlic and dappled with tomato powder and house-dried oregano, they’re more Spanish tapas than Mulberry Street standby. They accompany mozzarella that’s made to order, still warm, fairly oozing, and served in pillowy mounds ringed with good, fragrant olive oil from California. It’s the first salvo in a wave of antipasti that might also include something unexpected but geographically logical, like Chinatown long beans cut short, gently cooked, and mingled with breakfast radishes, mint, and chopped B&G hot cherry peppers straight from the jar. Or a Spanish-leaning eggplant rollatini, delicately crisp and filled with confited tuna belly flavored with paprika and topped with chopped red peppers. Custardy, barely scrambled eggs infused with green garlic are topped with



Photo: Hannah Whitaker/New York Magazine



Photo: Evan Sung for The New York Times

charred radicchio that's laced with an invigorating anchovy vinaigrette. And slices of grilled Parisi Bakery prosciutto bread swiped with parsley pesto and topped with a layer of creamy, pungent baccalà and bits of cured lemon might just be the last word on the subject of bruschette.

That's just round one. These antipasti, and others like it, arrive on saucer-size china that could have come from Grandma's cupboard, and are served family style, meaning you're meant to share portions that Jamie Oliver's target demo might consider puny. But each is a bright burst of flavor, just enough to sate, not stuff. That's good, as pasta comes next. A few recent examples: expertly cooked linguine with tender littleneck clams, baby pasta shells with calamari and pepperoni, and perfectly textured Greenmarket-ricotta gnocchi with ramps and grated Greenmarket Pecorino. It's the type of refined but satisfying primi—whether the pasta is purchased from venerable local purveyors like Caputo's and Raffetto's or made in-house—that's equal to any of the best upscale Italian kitchens in town.

The main course is typically a choice between a rotating roster of surf and turf. One night's Long Island tilefish is fresh and flaky, dressed with pickled green tomato and house-cured olives, and served alongside a crisp-edged potato galette. A Heritage pork chop is moist and meaty, crowned with zingy housemade vinegar peppers, and the "devil's chicken," Torrisi's riff on pollo alla diavola, eschews a blazing chile burn for a more complex, sweet-and-smoky flavor profile derived from a carefully calibrated mix of New Mexico chile peppers and offset by an underlying dollop of tangy New York State yogurt.

Italian ice (grapefruit one night, apple another) served in what looks like a paper pill dispenser makes a genius palate-cleanser and a sweet segue into a dessert plate that will change your mind about Italian desserts: mini-cannoli encasing Salvatore Bklyn ricotta in crisp pizzelles, lovely bourbon cream puffs, Milanos made from scratch. Even the ubiquitous rainbow cookies are a revelation, soft and nutty and slicked with chocolate. They're all baked by one of the two unfailingly gracious waitresses, who also, as it happens, puts together the wine list—a modest document that, like the kitchen, bypasses imports for domestics, largely from California and the Pacific Northwest. Personally, we find that the \$30 New Mexico bubbly goes great with everything and would make a welcome addition to Sunday supper tables anywhere.

# “...CHEFS RICH TORRISI AND MARIO CARBONE PLOTTED THE FUTURE OF THEIR LAVISHLY ACCLAIMED RESTAURANTS AND JUST MAYBE OF ITALIAN FOOD IN AMERICA.”

## The New York Times

### Cooking Up a Big Idea in Little Italy

---

Frank Bruni  
The New York Times  
April 27, 2011

On a recent morning in a Greenwich Village studio apartment with little natural light and minimal décor beyond a cactus and a bookcase crammed with volumes about food, the chefs Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone plotted the future of their lavishly acclaimed restaurant — and, just maybe, of Italian food in America.

They talked of scungilli. That’s an Italian word for snails. It refers in particular to the conchs and whelks that many Italian-Americans have encountered on their grandparents’ tables, probably among the seven fishes at Christmastime, possibly in a marinara sauce. Scungilli never quite rose to the level of delicacy and tended not to appear on American restaurant menus. But Torrisi had a thought. What about repackaging scungilli along the lines of escargots?

“They’re both, after all, snails,” he said, looking up from the laptop computer that he kept open so he could take notes, surf the Web and steal peeks at his inbox, which has been a daunting, glorious traffic jam ever since his and Carbone’s restaurant, Torrisi Italian Specialties, on the edge of Little Italy, took off last year. Carbone sat beside Torrisi on a black sectional; three of the restaurant’s cooks and one business manager squeezed in around them. It’s always a large group at these sessions, which have the bedraggled, brainstorming feel of college-exam cramming and happen one or two mornings a week in this apartment — Torrisi’s. Carbone rents a smaller studio a floor below.

Carbone listened and nodded. “I could see a perfect piece of scungilli on a toothpick,” he said, adding that there would be, in Gallic fashion, a pool of garlic butter nearby. The dish would not only elevate an Italian-American

staple; it would also nod to the sort of bistro fare long treasured in Manhattan. It would be a hybrid and a hyphenate, although he didn’t phrase it that way. Italian-French cuisine.

“Italian-Jewish” would be the term for a Passover-pegged riff on porchetta that the group deliberated at even greater length. Porchetta is a classic Italian pork roast, but they wondered aloud about substituting lamb. And, for a glaze, what about using Manischewitz, a semisweet kosher wine? Would the nuances be right?

“This might not ever see the light,” Carbone said.

“Boo!” countered a cook, Eli Kulp. “Stone him!”

The discussion, which lasted two hours, was a glimpse into what has made Torrisi and Carbone, each 31, the newest darlings of the New York culinary set and garnered their restaurant a string of accolades: honors from the Web site Eater.com and Time Out New York and a nomination from the James Beard Foundation, which will hold its annual awards ceremony on May 9, as one of the five best new restaurants nationwide. Although Torrisi Italian Specialties has just 25 seats and charges only \$50 for a fixed meal of at least seven small- and medium-size courses, it marshals the ambition of a much larger, fancier operation. To come up with one new dish, half a dozen talented people will worry it for hours on end, then hone it in kitchen trial after kitchen trial. The process is governed not by efficiency or profit margins but by a fierce and sometimes mischievous creative itch.

It’s governed too by Torrisi and Carbone’s desire to reflect, in one restaurant, and very often on one plate, the immigrant groups and cuisines historically concentrated in the broad patch of Lower Manhattan where the restaurant is located, including Chinatown, the Lower East Side and, of course, Little Italy. In addition to plenty of conventional dishes, they have done Italian-Chi-

nese fare. They have crossbred crostini with bagels. And without meaning to, they have raised some big, thorny questions about where Italian cooking in this city and country goes from here.

Now that Italian, more than French, has become the favored cuisine in upscale restaurants, will it experience an evolution similar to the one French cooking did a quarter century ago, when its hegemony was firm? Put more succinctly, will it be fused? Some chefs say that's an unsavory specter. Others say it's unnecessary — or even unworkable. Torrisi Italian Specialties suggests otherwise. And if you scout around a bit, it's not the only sign pointing in that uncertain, uncharted direction.

"Fusion" has become a naughty word, harboring connotations of gimmickry, but it remains an apt description of the commingling of traditions that became so fashionable in the wake of Wolfgang Puck's bold mash-ups of Asian, Mediterranean and Californian tropes in the '80s. And it's what happened with French cooking in America in the late '80s and the '90s, represented by three of its greatest New York practitioners: Jean-Georges Vongerichten, Daniel Boulud and Eric Ripert. All invited the ingredients and seasonings of other (especially Asian) lands into their kitchens.

As Vongerichten's empire grew, it became a fusion juggernaut, embodied in the Vong and Spice Market restaurants in New York and other cities. At Le Bernardin, Ripert's seafood temple in Midtown Manhattan, the menu morphed bit by bit into something of a world tour. In an unmistakably French vessel, you set out for Japan, Peru, Morocco and more.

But while French cooking grew more adventurous, Italian cooking was still proving itself, still trying to nudge many diners' impressions of it past red-checked tablecloths and red-sauce clichés. That was the challenge before chefs like Mario Batali, who didn't yoke themselves entirely to authenticity — at Babbo as far back as the late '90s, Batali put jalapeño on pasta and paired lamb chops with cumin-seasoned yogurt — but nonetheless preferred to explore the country's 20 regions and flex their Italian fluency than to speak in multiple tongues. Even today, Batali says, no chef in his generation "wants to be the one who brought cilantro or lemongrass into risotto."

But they all came of professional age before serious Italian restaurants multiplied as wildly as they did over the last decade, during which it seemed that one of every three serious restaurants to open in New York had a predominantly Italian menu. Two events last year underscored the ascendance of Italian cuisine in New York, the country's standard-bearer. Sam Sifton, *The New York Times's* restaurant critic, awarded four stars to Del Posto, of which Batali is a principal owner, bringing an Italian restaurant into the newspaper's French-dominated uppermost echelon. And Batali and his partners opened Eataly, a colossal Italian-cuisine department store, with restaurants, food counters and specialty groceries. New Yorkers and tourists mob it morning, noon and night. By the time the veteran food writer John F. Mariani published his book "How Italian Food Conquered the World" in March, the title seemed less a provocation than an overstatement. The world? Maybe not. America? Without any doubt.

It was the very pervasiveness of relatively straightforward Italian cooking



Photo: Rebecca Greenfield for *The New York Times*

that sent Torrisi and Carbone in a different direction. They met at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., in the late 1990s and later worked together and became good friends at Café Boulud on the Upper East Side, where the Italian-American chef Andrew Carmellini, under Boulud's distant supervision, did French fusion dishes. Both of them wanted their own place and a chance to serve food more reflective of their Italian-American heritage, and in the summer of 2009 they found a spot on Mulberry Street, Little Italy's thoroughfare, small enough that they could afford the rent and the renovation. They opened Torrisi Italian Specialties — they liked the sound of that surname better than the sound of the other, or than of both — in the very last days of December, but just at lunchtime and only as an Italian-American sandwich shop rigged for high-volume takeout. They needed time to ramp up. A fixed, multicourse nighttime menu of more intricately composed dishes didn't come along until the following March. When they first sketched it out, Carbone recalls, they automatically went to Italian regional food. "We went to a place that was comfortable."

But the more they thought about it, the less interesting it was. Their culinary mentors — including Batali, whom Carbone knew from working at Del Posto, Babbo and Lupa, another Batali standout — had already paid ample homage to the old country. Besides which, their own true culinary heritage, as children more of New York than of Italy, was an eclectic one.

At the public schools that Carbone attended in Queens, the cafeterias regularly served Jamaican beef patties. Torrisi, who grew up in the Westchester County suburbs, would frequently accompany his father, a Manhattan court officer, to work in Chinatown, whose restaurants kept him fed. As an adult, he says, "I kept going back to that area — I was drawn there." He would shop for food in Chinatown, and while doing that one day not long ago, he noticed signs for Mulberry Street in both English and Chinese.

"That really struck me: an iconic Italian street in Chinese characters," he says. "I thought: we need to play upon these things that happen in America." From that impulse, shared by Carbone, their restaurant's foray into Italian-Asian cuisine was born. They dressed sautéed broccoli rabe with dried scallops.

They prepared fried rice in which thinly shaved prosciutto replaced nuggets of pork. And they acknowledged the proximity of the famed Jewish delicatessens of the Lower East Side with an antipasto called crostini Russ-and-Daughters. Named for the renowned purveyors of Jewish appetizing, it layered smoked sturgeon and cream cheese on housemade bagel chips, then added accents like sesame seeds and poppy seeds.

They even found an Italianate assignment for the Jamaican beef patty — something, they note, that's incongruously served in a great many pizzerias. The patty is an envelope of pastry with seasoned ground meat inside, so they made squiggles of cavatelli from dough that included shortening, which the pastry would typically contain, and curry powder. For the shortening they used goat fat, in honor of the animal in Jamaican curries. And in a beef ragú to go over the cavatelli, they incorporated seasonings a patty might have: cardamom, cumin, coriander.

They weren't thinking about fusion per se. They were thinking about New York and approaching terroir, a French concept usually applied to the climate and natural harvest of a given area, in a new way. What ethnic foods had come to co-exist in, and define, the terroir of this city? The answer: Almost every kind. Their take on chicken fra diavolo gets some of its heat from sriracha, an Asian pepper blend. It sits on a slick of un-Italian yogurt.

I asked Carbone if he and Torrisi were pointing the way toward a chapter of Italian cooking defined by interethnic escapades. To my surprise, he winced, his response illuminating the widespread conviction among chefs that Italian cooking should never be overthought or overworked — that its spirit runs contrary to that and its fans wouldn't be pleased. "French food," he said, "is based off the chef. Italian food is based off the grandma." He added that his restaurant's dishes, in his belief, are fundamentally Italian in both their straightforward, uncluttered presentation and in their adherence to the Italian ethos that food should evoke the place where it's served.

Michael Tusk, who runs the revered Italian restaurant Quince in San Francisco, says that when he has steered acquaintances bound for Italy toward restaurants that incorporate molecular gastronomy in their dishes — Osteria Francescana in Modena, for example — they're sometimes disappointed. "People want a sense of comfort from Italian food," he says, adding that in his own cooking, "I can't veer too far away from what's reminiscent of classic dishes."

It can be argued that the cluster of flavors associated with Italian cooking is more specific — and less welcoming to interlopers — than the stocks, creams and butter of French cuisine. "Cilantro on Italian food?" says Michael White, who apprenticed for many years in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy before finding fame in Manhattan with his cooking at the restaurants Marea, Osteria Morini and Ai Fiori. "You'd never get there. It'd be sacrilegious."

Batali posits that there's less cause for Italian fusion than for French, because there's already such diversity in Italian regional cooking and such license to make tweaks. He says that while béarnaise sauce follows a nationally anointed script, "ragú Bolognese made by two sisters is not the same." In Italy, he adds, "the individual never had to toe the line so carefully, so they never felt they had to bust out."

Besides which, does Italian provide the same template for experimentation that French does? French, many chefs say, is less a larder with finite parameters than a foundation and set of rituals, to which a plethora of exotic flourishes can be added. Carmellini recalls that at Café Boulud, whose kitchen he ran from 1998 to 2005, he prepared bass with coconut milk, bamboo leaves, Kaffir lime. "The only thing that made it French was the technique: steaming the fish separately and pouring the broth over it tableside," he says. He can't think of an Italian analog, and doesn't know what the future of Italian fusion holds.

At Locanda Verde, an Italian restaurant he opened in TriBeCa in 2009, Carmellini has been serving a dish of farro and duck with Cajun seasonings. It has one foot in Italy and one in Louisiana and suggests that if Italian grains and noodles are treated as a canvas — the way pizza, a relatively isolated precinct of riotous Italian fusion, has been for decades — an array of other ethnic influences can provide the brush strokes.

Speaking of pasta and the South, the young chef at Panciuto, outside Chapel Hill, N.C., has concocted dishes like ravioli filled with creamed corn and pici (a sort of fat, hand-rolled spaghetti) tossed with fried green tomatoes. The chef, Aaron Vandemark, 33, says he sees an Italian-Southern kinship in the mutual exaltation of locality.

Emma Hearst, 24, the chef at Sorella, a two-year-old restaurant on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, does dishes that could be called Italian-Japanese (broccoli tempura dressed with Parmesan-like Grana Padano cheese) and Italian-Indonesian (a salad of Brussels sprouts and stracciatella cheese dressed with a Sambal chili vinaigrette). Although she started out sticking to more straightforward Piedmont fare, she says that as time went by, "I wanted to incorporate all of these fantastic flavors and ingredients that I've tasted around the world."

The success that Torrisi and Carbone have had is bound to encourage more of this. The dinnertime wait for a table at their restaurant, which doesn't take reservations, can stretch these days to two hours. They have been flown to Miami to cook, and even to Paris. Agents have come knocking, as have publishers and of course TV producers, who have no doubt taken note of their youth, good looks and geniality, all abundantly camera-ready. And hoteliers and established restaurateurs have approached them about translating what they're doing or expanding upon it in an additional restaurant, one with deeper pockets and more seats.

In time, they say, they may well explore much of that. Perhaps they will take over a flashier theater, maybe giving it Carbone's name. But for now they don't even have a publicist. They'd rather expand their repertory of dishes than commit the lineup so far to a cookbook, and they'd rather educate themselves than aim for "Iron Chef"-dom. Torrisi spent three weeks earlier this year touring and apprenticing in kitchens in Europe. Carbone, playing culinary anthropologist, combs eBay and the New York Public Library for old New York restaurant menus that might inspire fresh ideas.

"Torrisi has a chance of being one of the best restaurants in the country," Carbone says. "We're focused on that path." Their only expansion thus far is



Photo: Rebecca Greenfield for The New York Times

the recent acquisition of a larger space next door to their restaurant. They plan to move the supercasual sandwich part of the operation there, where it will grow to include composed dishes and be called Parm. Then the original space can operate as a sit-down restaurant with a multicourse tasting menu daytime and night.

When that happens, possibly in September, they hope to unveil a raft of new dishes. Hence the brainstorming. At the session when they discussed scungilli, they also touched on something Torrisi had been refining for months: a Chinese-style soup dumpling, but filled with Italian-American wedding soup.

They pondered a fanciful spin on arancini, which are fried Italian rice balls, with a turmeric-and saffron-seasoned mixture of rice, chicken and yogurt inside. And they talked about a duo or trio of Italian sausages molded, layered and sliced in a French style.

“An Italian sausage pâté,” Torrisi submitted.

“A salumi terrine,” Carbone chimed in.

They weren’t certain what to call it. But it combined two beloved strains of imported New York cooking, and they definitely liked the idea and sound of that.

**“...THE BEST RESTAURANT,  
POUND FOR POUND,  
IN THE CITY.”**

*NEW YORK*

★ ★ ★

**The Platt 101  
New York City's Best Restaurants**

Adam Platt  
New York Magazine  
December 26, 2011

**Torrisi  
Italian  
Specialties**

★ ★ ★



Photo: Pari Dukovic

Plenty of opinionated downtown gourmets consider Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi's perpetually mobbed retro Italian joint on Mulberry Street the best restaurant, pound for pound, in the city. After Torrisi's recent ambitious remodeling, they certainly have a case. The original restaurant has been transformed into an elegantly snug tasting room, where \$125 now buys you an ambitious, twenty-course menu, the highlights of which—Delmonico steak tartare, Chinese cashew chicken oysters, charred lamb ribs sweetened in Manischewitz—encompass the entire gastronomic history of New York City in twenty or so carefully considered bites.

# “A MASTERWORK BY TWO PASSIONATE, PERFECTIONIST COOKS AT THE HEIGHT OF THEIR CREATIVITY”

## FOOD & WINE

### Torrise Italian Specialties’

New York State of Mind

By David Kamp  
Food & Wine  
December 2011

Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone love everything about New York City, from Tiffany silver to bagels. As the chefs debut their reinvented Torrisi Italian Specialties and launch a new offshoot, Parm, they reveal the brilliant recipes that express their culinary view of the city.

Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone are side by side, spitballing ideas for new dishes. But the two young chefs are not shouting above the din of the kitchen in their tiny, two-year-old New York City restaurant, Torrisi Italian Specialties; rather, they are speaking sotto voce in the Brooke Russell Astor Reading Room in the Beaux-Arts main branch building of the New York Public Library. Torrisi and Carbone have been coming here frequently of late, poring over the library’s extensive historic-menu collection.

Carbone studies the massive, circa-1917 menu of Luchow’s, the German-American restaurant that used to sit east of Manhattan’s Union Square. “Broiled bear chop!” he stage-whispers.

Torrisi puzzles over the similar-vintage menu of Fleischmann’s, a workingman’s feeding spot on 11th Street that was owned by the same family that made Fleischmann’s Yeast. “Farmer’s chop suey,” he says. “Only in America.”

The chefs are looking not for recipes to replicate faithfully, but for inspiration: bits of New York culinary history that they can turn over in their minds and reprocess. For more than a year, they have been brainstorming, testing and tweaking dishes for a new menu they’ve taken to calling “the 2.0,” a gastronomic tour of New York City that runs \$125 a head and represents a great leap forward from what was already one of the most ecstatically received tasting menus of recent years. The 2.0, unveiled this fall, “shows us realizing our potential as chefs,” says Torrisi. It is a remarkable achievement, a masterpiece by two passionate, perfectionist cooks at the height of their creativity.

The backstory: Torrisi Italian Specialties was not quite half a year old when, in the spring of 2010, critics began gushing over its \$50 prix fixe meal. By day, the restaurant functioned as an Italian-American deli, offering ideally re-

alized versions of chicken-parm and eggplant-parm heroes—which served the dual purpose of allowing the chefs to acknowledge their paesano-boy roots and ensuring cash flow. By night, the space transformed into a 25-seat restaurant. The food remained unpretentious and Italian-American-inflected, yet it also showcased the haute training the chefs had received from such mentors as Andrew Carmellini (who employed both men at Café Boulud) and Mark Ladner of Del Posto.

A 1.0 meal at Torrisi began with a bowl of house-made mozzarella, still warm, served with garlic toasts. Then came dishes like a heritage pork chop slathered in bright-red vinegar peppers, or perhaps a skate wing in lemony Francese sauce: rigorous rewrites of red-sauce-joint classics, prepared using every tool and technique in a modern chef’s arsenal to bring out the flavor. Given the restaurant’s location on Mulberry Street—a Little Italy thoroughfare that has gentrified into Soho East—the food was not only clever and wonderful but also an act of cultural repatriation.

Now, as a result of success and the chefs’ restless imaginations, things have changed. The sandwich shop and explicitly Italian-American items have been off-loaded to a new restaurant next door, called Parm. “It’s exactly the



Photo: John Kernick



Photo: John Kernick

place you expect to find on Mulberry Street,” says Carbone. There, you can order fried calamari, garlic knots, a wider array of heroes and antipasti than were available before and one “nightly special” entrée. Meanwhile, Torrissi Italian Specialties, its name notwithstanding, has morphed into a full-time prix fixe restaurant where the food isn’t particularly Italian. The pew-like wooden benches remain, as do the shelf displays of Stella D’oro cookies, Progresso bread crumbs and Polly-O ricotta containers. The 1.0 menu is still available, and it still begins with the house-made mozzarella. But the bare tables are now covered in cloth, paper napkins have given way to linen and diners are presented with Tiffany oyster forks and Delmonico’s crockery that Carbone snapped up on eBay.

These enhancements have come in the service of the 2.0 menu, which starts with very small plates the chefs call “bites” and continues with around a dozen tasting courses that veer all over the five boroughs, temporally and ethnographically. Torrissi and Carbone have been building up to this feat of audacity since autumn of last year. At that point, the food on the 1.0 menu was already slipping away from Italian and reflecting the polyglot influences of the surrounding neighborhood and the city in general; a course of lamb tongue, for example, simultaneously spoke Yiddish (the lamb was corned and adorned with pickle slices) and Greek (the lamb was also shaved, gyro-style, and served with dollops of tzatziki amid the pickles).

So why not take this New York City mash-up idea all the way? In preparation for 2.0, Carbone delved into what he calls “how it used to be” books, such as William Grimes’s *Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York* and Judith Choate and James Canora’s *Dining at Delmonico’s: The Story of America’s Oldest Restaurant*. Torrissi, to up his kitchen game, staged for short stints with two of the most inventive chefs in the world: René Redzepi of Noma in Copenhagen and Heston Blumenthal of *The Fat Duck* in Berkshire, England. And there were many visits by both men to the Astor Reading Room, though the dishes these visits yielded are like nothing that the room’s namesake, society grande dame Brooke Astor, would have experienced at her clubby Upper East Side haunts.

Among the opening bites is a cigar-shaped gnocco fritto—an Italian fried-dough pocket—wrapped in smoked black cod and then dipped in the cod’s bright-orange roe (to simulate a cigar’s glow) and poppy seeds (to simulate ashes). “The flavor profile is very much like a New York bagel, the chew of the dough with smoked fish: Italy meets Jewish deli,” Carbone says. And the gnocco is plated on a vintage Stork Club ashtray—“so when you’re done,” he says, “you’re left with a dirty ashtray on the table.”

Another bite is an oyster pierced by a Tiffany fork, but it’s a chicken oyster: that nugget of dark meat that comes off either side of the bird’s lower backbone. Torrissi says, “We poach it in *beurre blanc* and dip it in a Chinese oyster sauce we make, then roll it in crushed cashews—”

Carbone cuts in: “—so it’s like street-cart cashews, but it’s also like chicken with cashews in a Chinese restaurant. And there’s a Delmonico’s reference, too, because Tiffany made flatware for Delmonico’s. That’s two New York institutions.”

Torrissi and Carbone, 32 and 31 years old, respectively, are like a songwriting team at their collaborative peak: in full flower, not yet sick of each other. They met while students at The Culinary Institute of America, lived as roommates for a spell and still reside in the same Greenwich Village apartment building. Spend a little time with them and you see how their dynamic works. Torrissi, muscular and intense, comes off like a poet-prizefighter, wrapped up in the intricacies of technique. Carbone, serene and bearded like Caravaggio’s Saint Francis, is more expansive, adept at contextualizing his partner’s torrents of thought.

Here’s the two of them discussing the 2.0 menu’s showpiece meat course, lamb chop Judea.

Carbone: “We wanted to do Roman food through a New York lens, and the New York lens is Lower East Side Jewish.”

Torrissi: “In Rome, they do lamb chops *scottadito*, grilled with a marinade, right? So I thought of a glaze with ‘house Manischewitz,’ because I like the flavor of Concord grapes—”

Carbone: “—which are grown in New York state. And Manischewitz is based right over the river in New Jersey.”

Torrissi: “But it’s my own Concord-grape reduction for the glaze, and then we spice a Pat LaFrieda shoulder chop with celery seed and coriander, coat it with crushed matzo from Streit’s and grill it hard and fast.”

Carbone: “And combine it with one of the most popular dishes from the old Jewish Ghetto in Rome, artichokes fried in extra-virgin olive oil with mint.”

Torrissi: “But we’re frying Jerusalem artichokes instead of regular artichokes—”

Carbone: “A kind of Jewish pun.”

Torrissi: “—in *schmaltz* instead of in olive oil. And we’re adding in shards of dried chicken skin, with fried mint leaves.”

Carbone: “Mint...Rome...mint jelly with lamb.”

## Smoking Hot Menu Inside the craziest, most exclusive dining experience in NYC where edible cigarettes are just the start

Carla Spartos  
New York Post  
May 8, 2012

Only in New York, kids, would you find a delicious tasting-menu inspired by, among other things, the Nuts4-Nuts cart, Chinese-American takeout, the signature dishes of Delmonico's, the Lemon Ice King of Corona, the knishes at Yonah Schimmel and Le Cirque maestro Sirio Maccioni's pasta primavera.

But a wild ride through the city's rich culinary landscape is just what serious talents Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi, along with partner Jeff Zalaznick, had in mind when they relaunched their groundbreaking Mulberry Street restaurant, Torrisi Italian Specialties, in December.

"The three of us are really proud of being native New Yorkers. When you grow up in New York City with a food passion, you're exposed to a lot, and the things that you love cross ethnicities," explains Carbone.

"I love a bagel with cream cheese as much as Jeff does, even though he's a New York Jew who grew up on the Upper East Side, and I'm from Queens. We're New Yorkers, and we grew up with these embedded New York food traditions."

A highlight of the relaunch is an ambitious 20-course chef's tasting menu filled with fantastic creations. Now, a new \$150 spring version has been introduced. It's a gastronomic parade featuring everything from an edible smoked sable "cigarette"—in homage to the Stork Club—to a painted Easter egg filled with lavender and vermouth sabayon, asparagus and "land caviar" (aka the Japanese delicacy known as tonburi), a nod to Jean-Georges Vongerichten's signature caviar egg.

The chef's tasting menu is also one of the toughest reservations to score in town—tables open 30 days in advance at 9 a.m., and routinely book up in minutes. (Call 212-965-0955 to reserve or to be placed on the waiting list; a \$65 four-course menu is also available.)

It's the latest step in the evolution of the restaurant—the duo launched an earlier version in December 2009 as an homage to the Italian-American delis of their youth, and soon drew lines out the door. Not long after, an affordable four-course dinner menu was added—a marriage of high- and low-brow genres that perfectly summed up Carbone and Torrisi's culinary sensibilities.

Their love of the city's Italian-American culinary heritage—a genre that had fallen out of favor with the rise of "authentic" and "regional" Italian fare—was clearly shared by many: Late last year, they moved the sandwich side of the

business to a new next-door restaurant called Parm, and began rethinking the flagship.

In an effort to free up the space to allow for the more high-tone service needed by the chef's tasting menu, the deli counter and tables were removed—but not the shelving lined with Progresso and Polly-O containers. And while they kept the four-course menu, they added a far more elaborate version, whose inspiration goes way beyond the Italian-American genre.

So, what do they hope diners take away from the new experience? "I want people to walk away with an understanding—even if they've never met me, Rich or Jeff—of who we are, where we're from, what we're passionate about, what our viewpoint is," says Carbone, who met daily with his partners to comb through books such as William Grimes' "Appetite City" and the rare books division at the New York Public Library to research their artful new menu. "There's a lot of playfulness there, but it's also very serious food," he adds.



Photo: Imogen Brown

This free-associative playfulness obviates any concern that Torrisi and Carbone, in their fascination with old-time New York City foodways (and the Gilded Age dining palace Delmonico's in particular), might get caught up in turning out leaden, historically faithful museum food. They have an homage to Oysters Rockefeller, but it's a bite called Oysters Rocafella, and its inspiration is not the Standard Oil magnate John D. Rockefeller but that latter-day New York entrepreneur Jay-Z, whose hip-hop label is called Roc-A-Fella Records. A freshly shucked oyster (a real one, not from a chicken) is presented on a bed of crushed ice interspersed with pieces of a smashed "Ace of Spades" Champagne bottle—"Ace of Spades" being the colloquial name for Armand de Brignac, Jay-Z's favorite brand of Champagne. The shellfish is topped with Champagne foam and served with frozen Champagne grapes.

There's a danger that all this flavor-layering and food-punning could get overwrought—more theme-park precious than fun or delicious. Torrisi says he, Carbone and their chef de cuisine, Eli Kulp, are secure enough in their friendship to call each other out on their excesses and half-cooked ideas. "Eli was busting us about the Oysters Rocafella, saying 'What, will there be Champagne bottles that flip open and play hip-hop at the table?' But you know what? You have to push the boundary too far to know what it is."

Torrisi and Carbone have already proved themselves to be shrewd boundary-pushers. The 2.0 menu represents another push, even further out there, but Torrisi is intent on his namesake restaurant becoming more than just the cool place to eat in 2012; he's aiming for a place in the Gotham pantheon. "I want it to be a classic New York restaurant," he says. "Not classic in the old-time sense, but embedded in the culture, like Babbo, Keens or Sparks."

### **Torrisi Italian Specialties: 2.0 Menu Dishes**

OYSTERS ROCAFELLA · Inspiration: Jay-Z

An homage to the Roc-A-Fella Records co-founder and Armand de Brignac Champagne fan, these oysters come topped with Champagne foam.

KNISHES AND CAVIAR · Inspiration: 1920s Caviar Service

Rich Torrisi and Mario Carbone treat their exquisite version of a potato knish as a kind of blini, topping it with fish roe, sour cream and dill.

CHICKEN "OYSTERS" · Inspiration: Chinese Takeout

At Torrisi, this elegant cashew chicken is made with a part of the bird called the oyster; each piece is served on a 100-year-old Tiffany oyster fork.

GRILLED LAMB CHOPS · Inspiration: NYC's Lower East Side

A mash-up of influences from Jewish neighborhoods in New York City and Rome, these chops are glazed with Manischewitz and coated with matzo.

# THE NEW 20-COURSE CHEF'S TASTING MENU AT TORRISI ITALIAN SPECIALTIES



**Torrisi owners Mario Carbone (left) and Rich Torrisi are native New Yorkers who are seriously excited about the city's culinary history.**

From **TORRISI** on Page 41

caviar" (a ka the Japanese delicacy known as tonburi), a nod to Jean-Georges Vongerichten's signature caviar egg.

The chef's tasting menu is also one of the toughest reservations to score in town — tables open 30 days in advance at 9 a.m., and routinely book up in minutes. (Call 212-965-0955 to reserve or to be placed on the waiting list; a \$65 four-course menu is also available.)

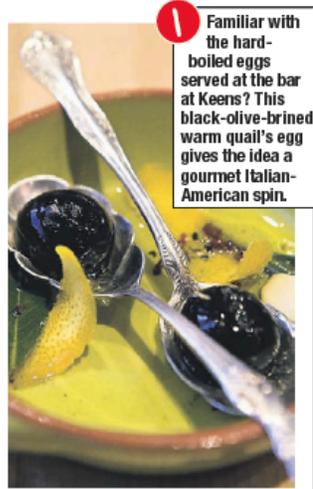
It's the latest step in the evolution of the restaurant — the duo launched an earlier version in December 2009 as an homage to the Italian-American delis of their youth, and soon drew lines out the door. Not long after, an affordable four-course dinner menu was added — a marriage of high- and low-brow genres that perfectly summed up Carbone and Torrisi's culinary sensibilities.

Their love of the city's Italian-American culinary heritage — a genre that had fallen out of favor with the rise of "authentic" and "regional" Italian fare — was clearly shared by many: Late last year, they moved the sandwich side of the business to a new next-door restaurant called Parm, and began rethinking the flagship.

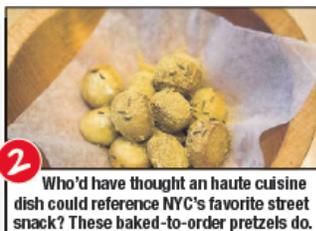
In an effort to free up the space to allow for the more high-tone service needed by the chef's tasting menu, the deli counter and tables were removed — but not the shelving lined with Progresso and Polly-O containers. And while they kept the four-course menu, they added a far more elaborate version, whose inspiration goes way beyond the Italian-American genre.

So, what do they hope diners take away from the new experience? "I want people to walk away with an understanding — even if they've never met me, Rich or Jeff — of who we are, where we're from, what we're passionate about, what our viewpoint is," says Carbone, who met daily with his partners to comb through books such as William Grimes' "Appetite City" and the rare books division at the New York Public Library to research their artful new menu. "There's a lot of playfulness there, but it's also very serious food," he adds.

Here, they take us on a tour of their crazy New York culinary vision.



**1** Familiar with the hard-boiled eggs served at the bar at Keens? This black-olive-brined warm quail's egg gives the idea a gourmet Italian-American spin.



**2** Who'd have thought an haute cuisine dish could reference NYC's favorite street snack? These baked-to-order pretzels do.



**3** Yes, you can eat this "cigarette" — actually, fried dough wrapped in smoked sable — inspired by glamorous Stork Club-era NYC.



**4** Two ubiquitous NYC foodstuffs — Bloch & Guggenheimer peppers and Schaefer beer — radically transform the raw-bar course.



**5** The kasha krish at Yonah Schimmel on the LES reimagined as traditional caviar service? Meshuga!



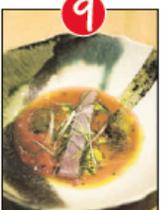
**6** A hand-painted Easter egg filled with sabayon, asparagus and field caviar tips its hat to Jean-Georges Vongerichten's signature caviar egg.



**7** Low-rent Chinese takeout and the Nuts4Nuts cart are the unlikely inspirations for this luxurious morsel of candied cashew chicken.



**8** What would the august Sirio Maccioni — credited with inventing pasta primavera at Le Cirque — think of this new-school riff made with rigatoni croutons?



**9** Acqua pazza — an Old World dish originating from Neapolitan fishermen — gets a New World spin with local mackerel and seaweed.



**10** Foie gras Newberg pays homage to that old Delmonico's war horse: lobster Newberg.



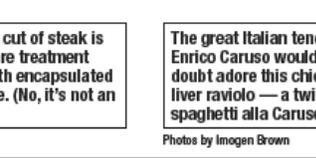
**12** The only sheep's-milk ricotta made in America (from upstate's Dancing Ewe Farms) is used to create these delicate seasonal gnocchi.



**13** A lazy Sunday spent fishing on Long Island helped conjure up this spaghetti dish made with both soft- and hard-shell crab.



**11** A Delmonico's cut of steak is given the tartare treatment and topped with encapsulated bernaise sauce. (No, it's not an egg yolk!)



**14** The great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso would no doubt adore this chicken liver raviolo — a twist on spaghetti alla Caruso.



Photos by Imogen Brown

---

# THE TEAM

---

Mario Carbone

---

Rich Torrisi

---

Jeff Zalaznick



**MARIO CARBONE**



**RICH TORRISI**



**JEFF ZALAZNICK**

# MARIO CARBONE

Mario was born and raised in Queens, New York. After years of working weekends and summers in local eateries, Mario attended The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He did his apprenticeship at Babbo, and following his graduation from CIA, Mario returned to Batali & Bastianich to join the opening team at Lupa Osteria Romana in Greenwich Village. Following Lupa, Mario went to work at a small family run restaurant on the western coast of Tuscany called La Dogana.

Upon returning home, Mario went to work for two masters with very different approaches. First came an opportunity to learn from Daniel Boloud, who taught precise, classic French cuisine at the highest level. Mario then went on to work for Chef Wylie Dufresne, and again with his mentor Mark Ladner to open Del Posto. Feeling the urge to spawn off on his own, Mario left the restaurant after two and a half years to pursue his dream of being an Executive Chef.

In 2009, with partner Rich Torrisi, he opened a deli on Mulberry Street called Torrisi Italian Specialties, where the duo served their own take on classic Italian-American sandwiches. The deli quickly evolved and began serving an innovative prix fixe dinner in the evenings.

In 2010, Mario and Rich teamed up with Jeff Zalaznick, a fellow restaurant visionary who shared their passion. Together, the trio formed Major Food Group (MFG), a new breed of restaurant group with the aim to conceptualize and operate restaurants that are respectful of the past, exciting for the present, and sustainable for the future; restaurants that uphold the highest level of food quality and fine dining service in a fun and inviting atmosphere for the guest.

Since forming Major Food Group, Mario and his partners have opened numerous restaurants, including multiple outposts of Parm, CARBONE in New York, Hong Kong and Las Vegas, ZZ's Clam Bar, Dirty French, Santina and Sadelle's.

Throughout its expansion, Major Food Group remains committed to and inspired by New York City. In 2015, MFG announced a partnership with an organization similarly passionate about New York, The Robin Hood Foundation, which aims to fight poverty in NYC. MFG currently donates 100 percent of its cancellation fees and a portion of its other proceeds to Robin Hood in addition to participating in its annual benefit.

To date, MFG has received 2 nominations for Best New Restaurants in America by the James Beard Foundation, holds 12 New York Times Stars and 3 Michelin Stars. In addition to the restaurants' numerous accolades, Mario has been awarded Best New Chef in America by Food & Wine Magazine and nominated for several James Beard Awards. Mario currently lives in Tribeca

# RICH TORRISI

Rich Torrissi grew up in Westchester, New York. From a very early age he took to cooking. After years of making his way through local kitchens near his native Hudson River, Rich took the next step in his culinary career by attending the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York.

After a successful externship at Aquavit, Rich continued to hone his skills under Marcus Samuelsson for the next two years while completing his bachelor's degree at the C.I.A. Following his graduation, Rich began to work under Chef Andrew Carmellini at Café Boulud, who would become a mentor over the course of his career. Rich spent over four years at Café Boulud. At the end of his tenure at Café Boulud, he knew it was time for him to travel to France and cook in as many Michelin starred restaurants as possible. Upon returning home, Chef Carmellini called upon Rich to once again team up on a new project called A Voce.

In 2009, with partner Mario Carbone, he opened a deli on Mulberry Street called Torrissi Italian Specialties, where the duo served their own take on classic Italian-American sandwiches. The deli quickly evolved and began serving an innovative prix fixe dinner in the evenings.

In 2010, Mario and Rich teamed up with Jeff Zalaznick, a fellow restaurant visionary who shared their passion. Together, the trio formed Major Food Group (MFG), a new breed of restaurant group with the aim to conceptualize and operate restaurants that are respectful of the past, exciting for the present, and sustainable for the future; restaurants that uphold the highest level of food quality and fine dining service in a fun and inviting atmosphere for the guest.

Since forming Major Food Group, Mario and his partners have opened numerous restaurants, including multiple outposts of Parm, CARBONE in New York, Hong Kong and Las Vegas, ZZ's Clam Bar, Dirty French, Santina and Sadelle's.

Throughout its expansion, Major Food Group remains committed to and inspired by New York City. In 2015, MFG announced a partnership with an organization similarly passionate about New York, The Robin Hood Foundation, which aims to fight poverty in NYC. MFG currently donates 100 percent of its cancellation fees and a portion of its other proceeds to Robin Hood in addition to participating in its annual benefit.

To date, MFG has received 2 nominations for Best New Restaurants in America by the James Beard Foundation, holds 12 New York Times Stars and 3 Michelin Stars. In addition to the restaurants' numerous accolades, Mario has been awarded Best New Chef in America by Food & Wine Magazine and nominated for several James Beard Awards. Mario currently lives in the West Village.

# JEFF ZALAZNICK

Jeff Zalaznick is a restaurateur and entrepreneur. He was born and raised in New York City and is a graduate of Cornell University. Prior to becoming a restaurateur, Jeff worked as an investment banker for J.P. Morgan and then a manager at the Mandarin Oriental. He then struck out on his own and conceived, developed and sold two highly influential restaurant websites.

In 2010, Jeff met his match in visionary chefs Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi at Torrisi Italian Specialties. Together, the trio formed Major Food Group (MFG), a new breed of restaurant group with the aim to conceptualize and operate restaurants that are respectful of the past, exciting for the present, and sustainable for the future; restaurants that uphold the highest level of food quality and fine dining service in a fun and inviting atmosphere.

In 2011, Major Food Group opened Parm, a casual dining experience that celebrates classic Italian-American food. Upon opening, Parm received two stars from The New York Times and was named as one of the 101 Best Places to Eat in North America by Newsweek. Since opening Parm in 2011, MFG has opened outposts of Parm at Yankee Stadium, on the Upper West Side and in Battery Park.

Major Food then set their sights on the ambitious venture of resurrecting Italian-American fine dining. In March 2013, they opened CARBONE, an homage to the great Italian-American fine dining establishments of mid-century New York. Upon opening, CARBONE received a dazzling five out of five stars from Time Out New York, four and a half stars from Bloomberg and, its greatest honor, three stars from The New York Times. Since then, they have opened outposts of CARBONE in Hong Kong and in Las Vegas.

After that year they opened ZZ's Clam Bar to celebrate a passion for raw fish and well-crafted cocktails. ZZ's Clam Bar received three stars from GQ Magazine and from Bloomberg. It was also credited by The New York Times for ushering in a new age of raw eating in New York City. ZZ's serves as the hub of cocktail creativity for the group and in 2014 was nominated as the Best New Bar in America by Tales of the Cocktail.

In September 2014, MFG opened Dirty French in The Ludlow Hotel. Dirty French is an edgy New York bistro that takes its cues from the great legacy of the neighborhood and relevant worldly influences. In addition to Dirty French, MFG opened Lobby Bar, a 100-seat indoor/outdoor cocktail bar and lounge at the hotel. MFG manages all food and beverage operations for the hotel, including special events and 24-hour room service.

In January of 2015, MFG opened Santina, a coastal Italian restaurant located underneath the High Line in a structure designed by renowned architect Renzo Piano. It received a glowing two-star review from The New York Times and was named one of GQ's Most Outstanding Restaurants of 2015.

In the same year, MFG opened Sadelle's, a bakery and restaurant that celebrates some of New York's greatest food traditions. The restaurant has earned praise from Bloomberg, Eater and The Wall Street Journal for its hand-rolled bagels and classic dishes.

While MFG grows, it continues to celebrate the history of New York. In 2016 they will be taking over the city's iconic Four Seasons Restaurant located in the historic Seagram's Building. They will open three new fine dining concepts in the building.

To date, MFG has received 2 nominations for Best New Restaurants in America by the James Beard Foundation, holds 12 New York Times Stars and 3 Michelin Stars.

In addition to the restaurants' numerous accolades, Jeff is the Cornell Hotel School's Entrepreneur-in-Residence and has been listed in 30 Under 30 by Zagat and Forbes. He has also been named 40 under 40 by Crain's and a Rising Star Restaurateur by Star Chefs. In addition, Jeff and his partners believe strongly in giving back, and have pioneered an exciting charity partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation. Jeff lives in Soho with his wife Ali and their children Poppy and Leo.