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## Keeping it Hot

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN KENNEDY. BY BRIAN SCOTT LIPTON.

In New York City's increasingly competitive restaurant world, it can be hard to stay alive, let alone thrive for decades. Yet a chosen few do so—dining rooms always full, reservations hard to come by, their toques perpetually on top. These are their stories.

### TRIBECA GRILL



Though it's now twentysomething, Tribeca Grill remains eternally trendsetting, thanks in part to its New American menu. Soul-satisfying specialties include butternut squash and apple soup with spiced crème fraîche (left) and a red wine-braised short rib with glazed heirloom carrots and parsnip mousse (right).

Veteran restaurateur Drew Nieporent shares a similar outlook on the importance of keeping the customer satisfied. Just ask anyone who has snagged a table at his Tribeca Grill (375 Greenwich St., 212.941.3900), the Downtown destination in a reclaimed brick building co-owned by Robert De Niro (who is also a frequent customer). Although the Grill was a trailblazer in many ways (including boldly going where few restaurants had gone before, namely the then-desolate TriBeCa neighborhood), its core values sound impressively old-school. "Our philosophy is to treat people with dignity and respect," Nieporent notes. "For example, we always make sure to honor reserva-

tions, by seating guests on time. It's about putting the shoe on the other foot: treating guests in the same way we'd wish to be treated."

Another way Nieporent shows his devotion to his clientele is by never removing certain favorites from the American menu. "Our signature dishes are important to maintain, because they're what people think about when they want to come back," he says. "For example, we've never changed the buffalo mozzarella arugula salad or Drew's Salmon [served with marinated white beans and basil oil]. There's just something about them everyone loves."



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