


before it opens at 6pm). If you're not averse to telling the occasional white lie, just say you're a West Village local—it works every time. *Sun–Mon 6–11:45pm, Tue–Sat 6pm–12:45am.* \$\$  16 Bank St. (Waverly Pl.), 212-243-7900

Changes (Please make a note in your Night+Day guide.)

Hotels:

Hotel QT, p. 118, is now Hotel Grace

Attractions:

Momenta Art (p. 132) is now located at 359 Bedford Ave., ground floor. The Museum of Television & Radio has changed its name to the Paley Center for Media (p. 77).

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NIGHT + DAY NEW YORK

Ins and Outs


Noteworthy Additions, Changes and Closures from publication date through September 30, 2008

Key to Night+Day Symbols

Restaurants

Singles-friendly


 Communal table

 Food served at bar

(G) Gourmet destination

Nightlife

Includes bars, clubs, and entertainment

 Cover or ticket charge (otherwise, entry is free)

Restaurants + Nightlife

Prime-time noise levels

 Quiet

 A buzz, but still conversational

 Loud

Venues followed by an * are those we recommend as both a restaurant and a destination bar.

Key to Pricing

Hotels

Best deluxe room

\$ \$100–\$199
\$\$ \$200–\$299
\$\$\$ \$300–\$399
\$\$\$\$ \$400 and up

Restaurants

Main course

\$- less than \$10
\$ \$10–\$19
\$\$ \$20–\$29
\$\$\$ \$30–\$39
\$\$\$\$ \$40 and up

Attractions

Entry or service

\$- less than \$10
\$ \$10–\$19
\$\$ \$20–\$29
\$\$\$ \$30–\$39
\$\$\$\$ \$40 and up

The Night+Day promise

Night+Day writers and editors use the same high standards in selecting and researching venues to be included in our Ins and Outs updates as we do for our books. Our local correspondents determine which new hot spots are the real deal and which are simply hype—just as you'd expect from **Night+Day**—to provide the kind of reliable information you need to make the best possible choices.

pulseguides.com

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Matsugen • Tribeca • Japanese

Jean-Georges Vongerichten’s empire (which includes Spice Market and Vong, among others) continues to expand, this time with Matsugen, an airy Japanese restaurant that once again showcases Vongerichten’s versatility in the kitchen. The menu is fairly straightforward Japanese—sushi, sashimi, *shabu-shabu*—but the care with which it’s made and presented catapults this spot into the upper tiers: Soba noodles are freshly kneaded, arriving dense and chewy in an aromatic broth, while a Wagyu beef salad is enhanced with sesame dressing. The cuisine is well-matched by the soothing space—blond-wood bar, wire-mesh chairs, and recessed lights—while the crowd tends toward genteel foodies. *Tue–Thu 5:30pm–midnight, Fri–Sat 5:30pm–1am, Sun 5:30pm–midnight (the bar stays open one hour later than the restaurant).* \$\$\$\$ ☑ 241 Church St. (Leonard St.), 212-925-0202, jean-georges.com

Olana • Flatiron • American

The spacious Olana pays homage to the Hudson Valley with striking landscape murals of the leafy region, which hang on mirrored walls that ring a dining room of red velvet chairs, leather banquettes, linen-topped tables, and striking flower arrangements. The New American seasonal fare lives up to its surroundings, revealing creative Italian and French touches, such as cauliflower soup with cheddar flan, and flounder poached in armagnac and blood orange, with olive oil mashed potato. Here in the Flatiron—a neighborhood that’s not-quite downtown, and not-quite midtown—the diners are an eclectic bunch, from business associates and sophisticated older couples to celebratory groups of friends splashing out on dinner before hitting the clubs. If you’re just in the mood to imbibe, the gleaming, circular bar makes for a pleasant pit spot for cocktails and conversation. *Mon–Fri 11:45am–11pm, Sat 5:30–11pm.* \$\$\$ ☑ 72 Madison Ave. (27th St.), 212-725-4900, olanayc.com

Shalizar • Upper East Side • Persian

Upper East Siders satisfy their cravings for exotic spices (and pomegranate martinis) at the cool-toned, upscale Persian restaurant Shalizar. Partners Parvez Eliaas and Kaz Bayati have developed a fine menu of Iranian favorites, such as saffron-marinated lamb kebabs and a steaming stew of chicken and walnuts. Of the rice dishes, don’t miss *polo albalo*, basmati that gets a tangy upgrade from sour cherries. The elegant Persian-decorated restaurant features colorfully patterned banquettes, dark-wood tables in crisp white linens, and exposed brick walls, pulling in a lively mix of UES residents and visitors who drift over from the nearby Museum Mile. *Mon–Thu noon–11:30pm, Fri–Sat noon–midnight, Sun noon–11pm.* \$ ☑ 1420 Third Ave. (80th St.), 212-288-0012, shalizarnyc.com

The Waverly Inn and Garden • West Village • American

The quaint name belies the social scene inside, which on any given night might include a celebrity or three, fashion editors in stilettos, and *Vanity Fair* editor Graydon Carter himself, who owns the place. Stars notwithstanding, it’s a cozy, low-lit, low-ceilinged restaurant, with fireplaces, banquettes, and an Edward Sorel mural of famous New Yorkers. The homespun, well-priced American menu features classics such as clam chowder, pork chops with roasted apples, an excellent organic salmon filet with lentils, and the much-talked-about \$55 mac ‘n’ cheese with shaved truffles. As for reservations? It’s simple—it doesn’t take them (unless you’re a personal friend of Carter’s, that is). Your best bet is to just walk in (preferably right

couples to locals out for a casual meal. On the weekends, enjoy brunch surrounded by friendly diners as unpretentious as the warm jelly donuts. *Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat 11am–midnight, Sun 11am–10pm.* \$\$\$ [156 10th Ave. \(20th St.\)](#), 212-924-4440, [cookshopny.com](#)

Del Posto • Chelsea • Italian

The culinary dream team of Mario Batali and the Bastianichs (mother and son Lidia and Joseph) further expand their empire with Del Posto, an opulent (if a bit self-consciously so) Italian dining palace with soaring ceilings, burnished mahogany, tinkling tunes emanating from the piano bar, and even purse stools for the ladies. Amid this splendor, you might think Batali's signature "peasant" fare would be gentrified, but thankfully that's not the case. Except for the haute presentation—think silver chafing dishes—the dishes are as boldly rustic as ever: warm bread smeared with house-cured lardo (pork fat), offal every which way, and succulent lamb shoulder. The crowd can tend toward corporate (read: those who can write off the bill), but a bonus for the budget set: Dine in the more casual Enoteca, where the menu and the prices are smaller than in the main dining room. *Tue–Thu 5:30–10:30pm, Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm.* \$\$\$ [85 10th Ave. \(16th St.\)](#), 212-529-8600, [delposto.com](#)

L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon • Midtown • French

To the delight of New York foodies, globe-hopping chef Joël Robuchon has at last alighted in Manhattan with the debut of his eponymous L'Atelier, or "workshop." As in his restaurants in Paris, Tokyo, Las Vegas, and London, the place to plant yourself is at the plush counter that wraps around the open kitchen. Here, just as Robuchon would like to have it, the divide between chef and diner seems to melt away—much like the signature truffled potato puree in your mouth. The best approach to the extensive menu is to order tapas-style for a wide sampling of Robuchon's casual French cuisine laced with exquisite Asian accents, such as plump scallops with seaweed butter, crispy frog legs in a garlic puree, and caramelized quail stuffed with foie gras. *Daily 11:30am–2pm and 6–11pm.* \$\$\$ [Four Seasons Hotel, 57 E. 57th St. \(Madison Ave.\)](#), 212-350-6658, [joel-robuchon.com](#)

Market Table • West Village • American

These days, any restaurant worth its (sea) salt peddles in market-fresh cuisine. The boho-chic West Village restaurant Market Table (by the same creators of the ever-packed Little Owl) takes this a step further: The front entrance is an actual market, where you can pick up everything from fresh gnocchi to organic beef patties. Beyond lies the rustic space, with floor-to-ceiling windows, brick walls, heavy wooden tables, and old-fashioned cutlery drawers. And while it can be tough to get a reservation, the vibe within is decidedly pretension-free, filling up with West Villagers who like their nights low-key: long-time couples with discerning palates, locals out for a solo bite, and amiable groups of foodies. Chef Mike Price harks from the seafood-haven Mermaid Inn, and he carries that tradition out with gusto here: The fruits of the sea are excellent, from bacon-swathed scallops to the fragrant crab cakes. As for getting a table, book a couple of weeks in advance, or if you decide to try dropping in, come by early in the week, right after it opens. *Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30pm–midnight, Sat–Sun 5–10pm.* \$\$\$ [54 Carmine St. \(Bedford St.\)](#), 212-255-2100, [markettablenc.com](#)

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Hot New York Hotels

The Bowery Hotel • East Village • Trendy (135 rms)

Back in the day, the Bowery was known for its flea-infested flophouses—and those who frequented them. You'll still see vestiges of its shady past, but gentrification is steadily marching through, as evidenced by the new luxury hotel named after the street it looms over. The Bowery Hotel's codesigners (Eric Goode and Sean MacPherson, of The Maritime Hotel), in a savvy nod to the neighborhood's gritty past, opted for a factory-esque, red-brick exterior with industrial windows. Inside, a handsome, antiquarian lobby reveals plush, tasseled sofas and moody lighting emanating from heavy iron lamps. The rooms, while not spacious, are flooded with light from the floor-to-ceiling windows, and offer a sexy mix of past and present: Oriental rugs and dark-wood chairs, along with all the modern amenities, such as flat-screen TVs and free WiFi. If you're a light sleeper, ask for an interior room, as those facing the street and the restaurant can sometimes be a bit noisier; most of the exterior rooms have open views, but the higher, the better. The bonus to being in this part of town is that you're near a slew of hip shopping districts, from NoHo to SoHo, and everything in between. \$\$\$ 335 Bowery St. (E. Third St.), 212-505-9100, theboweryhotel.com

Gramercy Park Hotel • Gramercy Park • Timeless (185 rms)

The plush Gramercy Park Hotel has long been a fabled New York spot—and is now even more so. The man behind the hotel's stunning renovation is hip hotelier Ian Schrager, who injected cool into the hospitality industry in the 1980s and 1990s with his series of boutique hotels. This time around, though, Schrager eschews hip and instead wisely pays homage to the hotel's legendary, eclectic past. The lovely

escargots enveloped in garlic and parsley butter, to heftier entrées such as steak tartare and lobster ravioli. The vibe—and the crowd—is lively and unpretentious, from blushing couples to birthday babes presiding over long tables of gal pals. *Sun–Wed 11:45am–2:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm, Thu–Sat 11:45am–2:30pm and 5:30–11pm. Bar open until 1am daily. \$\$ ☐ 60 W. 55th St. (Sixth Ave.), 646-943-7373, benoitny.com*

Borough Food and Drink • Chelsea • American

Prolific restaurateur Jeffrey Chodorow, along with Chef Zak Pelaccio, turn to multi-culti New York for culinary inspiration, offering diners the chance to sample goodies from the five boroughs without ever having to step on the subway. Sink your teeth into warm matzo balls from Katz's, slabs of springy mozzarella from Joe's Dairy, and sweet Italian sausage from Calabria Pork Store in the Bronx. Top it off with a hearty wine from Long Island or a local microbrew. Inside, it exudes a neighborly vibe—think wood-paneled library meets local pool hall—with the casual, Chodorow-loving crowd to match. *Daily 11:30am–3:30pm and 5:30pm–2am. \$\$ ☐ 12 E. 22nd St. (Broadway), 212-260-0103, chinagrillmgt.com*

Campo • Upper West Side • Italian

Upper West Siders flock to this sassy trattoria for grilled pizzas, steaming risotto, and belly-warming Italian vinos. The ample interior evokes pastoral Italy: ochre walls hung with paint-flecked shutters, wooden shelves heavy with chianti bottles, and dangling garlic braids and fat sausages. Campo's sociable vibe—pop music, a chatty staff, cocktails, and chatter at the bar—makes for an engaging backdrop for the hearty Italian dishes, such as duck risotto folded with wild mushrooms; tender pork *braciola* ladled over parmesan risotto, which gets a kick from pine nuts and raisins; and tart fried green tomatoes topped with mozzarella. Wet your lips with the aptly named Primitivo, an uncomplicated red from Puglia that pairs well with the rib-sticking fare. *Daily 10am–3pm and 5pm–1am. \$ ☐ 2888 Broadway (W. 112th St.), 212-864-1143, camponyc.com*

Convivio • Midtown • Italian

Convivio has given Italophiles a reason to visit Tudor City. Chef Michael White and his partner, Chris Cannon, made over the place from top to bottom, with stylish lamps, sexy red banquettes, and an ambitious menu, which brings an innovative spin to traditional Southern Italian dishes. White's pastas, in particular, are splendid, including saffron *gnocchetti* swimming with crab and sea urchin. The graceful, genteel setting draws a more mature crowd, many of whom come to celebrate anniversaries and other milestones over robust Italian wines. *Mon–Thu noon–2:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm, Fri noon–2:30 and 5–11:30pm, Sat 5–11:30pm. \$\$ ☐ 45 Tudor City Pl. (E. 42nd St.), 212-599-5045, convivionyc.com*

Cookshop • Chelsea • American

Cookshop's country-chic dining room—heavy oak tables, high-back chairs, large windows—complements the homegrown American menu. If there are stars on the menu, they're the regional farms and purveyors who supply Cookshop with its organic, hormone-free ingredients. Choose from Montauk grilled squid, Hudson Valley venison sausage, Catskill duck breast, and Berkshire pork chops, along with not-to-be-missed “snacks” such as the fried chili-spiced hominy and anchovy deviled eggs. The evening draws a mixed-age crowd, from young foodie

Mercat • SoHo • Spanish

The sleek, tile-walled Mercat, with its lively open kitchen, is named after the Catalan word for market—and features feisty takes on old-school Catalan cuisine, such as an aromatic “fisherman’s stew” floating with red shrimp, tender noodles with cuttlefish in its own ink, and soft potatoes enveloped in a spicy aioli. Douse the flames with a healthy swallow from a *porron*, a traditional long-spouted decanter filled with wine, which is passed around between the Uptown foodies and Downtown fiesta-seekers as the night revs up. *Mon–Sat 6pm–midnight*. \$\$\$ ☰ 45 Bond St. (LaFayette St.), 212-529-8600, mercatnyc.com

Original New York Nightlife

Solex • East Village • Wine Bar

With two other sophisticated Manhattan wine bars under his belt, it’s no surprise that Frederick Twomey’s third and latest venture is also a hit, swelling nightly with stylish oenophiles. Amid the scruffy bars of the East Village, Solex stands apart for its sleek interior—blond-wood furnishings, honey lighting, a vaulted ceiling, and a long bar backed by rows and rows of gleaming wine bottles. These are matched by its sleek crowd, happily sipping their way through the Loire Valley and the Alsace, among other regions of France, which are particularly well-represented on the wine menu. Pair a hearty red with a warmed quiche or cheese plate. *Daily 5pm–2am*. ☰ 103 First Ave. (6th St.), 212-777-6677

Classic New York Restaurants

Bar Milano • Murray Hill • Italian

New York sees so many restaurant openings (and closings, for that matter) that it can take months for a new spot to get noticed, let alone reviewed. Not so with Bar Milano, the latest venture from brothers Jason and Joe Denton (whose uncle is nightlife king Harry Denton in San Francisco). The brothers know a thing or two about successful restaurants—between them, they’ve opened the popular panini and wine resto-bars ‘ino and ‘inoteca—and Bar Milano is their most upscale and elaborate restaurant thus far. The sleek space alone warrants a peek: gleaming woods, walls covered in gorgeous swirly slabs of marble, light streaming in through tall windows. But it’s the Northern Italian-accented menu and creative cocktails (courtesy of mixologist Tony Abou-Ganim) that make the affluent, mildly Euro crowd linger. Starters include pickled trout and beets, while among the hearty mains is the sea-meets-land platter of grilled tuna, veal breast, and artichokes. If you’re looking for casual—and cheaper—tipples and nibbles, park yourself at the bustling bar area, where the crowd skews younger and flirtier. *Daily 7am–3am*. \$\$\$ ☰ 323 Third Ave. (24th St.), 212-683-3035, barmilano.com

Benoit • Midtown • French

Restaurateur and Chef Alain Ducasse brings his lush French fare to the lovely Benoit, the New York outpost of bistro siblings of the same name in Paris and Tokyo. The elegant restaurant, in a space formerly occupied by La Cote Basque, blends past and present, with an antique ceiling from a Paris bakery and heavy brass lamps, along with red banquettes and zinc tables. The menu offers, happily, a wide range of prices, from bistro small plates such as vegetable *cocotte* and

lobby, with Moroccan tiles and velvet curtains, is hung with paintings by Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, and Julian Schnabel, while the welcoming rooms sport oak floors, thick red carpets, leather-topped desks, and—in a nod to the hotel’s bohemian roots—mahogany English drinking cabinets. Half the rooms boast views of Gramercy Park. The quietest rooms are those on the top floors that face the interior courtyard (though note that even rooms facing the park are fairly quiet, as this is a residential neighborhood). Upscale amenities abound, including a luxurious spa and gym, and guests are given a key to Gramercy Park, the last remaining private park in Manhattan. As you might expect, the hotel draws a vibrant mix of guests, from artists (who’ve made it big), to entertainment professionals in designer duds, to well-heeled, adventurous older couples. The posh Rose Bar and Jade Bar are among the trendiest hotel bars in town—though the door policy can be annoyingly strict. \$\$\$\$ 2 Lexington Ave. (between 21st and 22nd Sts.), 212 920 3300 / 866-784-1300, gramercyparkhotel.com

The Greenwich Hotel • Tribeca • Trendy (88 rms)

Tribeca’s most famous fan (and developer) can now add a hotel to his repertoire. Robert DeNiro’s Greenwich Hotel sits on a cobblestone street, with an understated glass-and-brick facade that gives way to a handsome lobby with terracotta floors, Buddhist figures, and plush blue and green couches. *Discreet* is the defining word: DeNiro and company have aimed to keep a low profile, both in the press and among the neighbors, and the result is that it feels more like a high-end condo—with plenty of personal touches—than a hotel. On request, they’ll stock the minibar with goodies of your choosing and have your local paper delivered to your door. As for relaxing: The indoor pool is crowned by a beautifully reconstructed Japanese bamboo roof, which forms part of the Shibui Spa. The restaurant, Ago, which is the New York outpost of Chef Agostino Sciandri’s restaurant in LA, serves up delicious Italian fare. For downtown-hounds, the hotel couldn’t be better situated. It’s within strolling distance of the Hudson River and its sun-speckled bicycle path, along with the rest of Tribeca, SoHo, and the West Village. \$\$\$\$ 377 Greenwich St. (N. Moore St.), 212-941-8900, thegreenwichhotelnyc.com

The London NYC • Midtown • Modern (562 rms)

From the elegant lobby hung with a tapestry of Hyde Park to the spacious rooms with oak floors and leather-embossed desks, the London NYC offers a slice of upper-crust British living amid the honking cabs of Midtown. The hotel was originally built as a residence, so the rooms and public spaces are ample—a breath of fresh air in the cramped concrete jungle. The London is also one of the tallest hotels in Manhattan—ask for a top room (the 51st or 52nd floor) for splendid vistas. Rooms on the north side showcase partial views of Central Park. Top-notch amenities include Egyptian cotton bedding, flat-screen TVs, and Waterworks fixtures in the bathrooms. Do you bemoan the lack of good service these days? No worries here—the London prides itself on its superlative service, with a concierge desk that can snag tickets to sold-out events and cater to your indulgences (one personal masseuse coming right up). As for haute eats, head to Gordon Ramsay’s highly acclaimed eponymous restaurant or the adjoining London Bar for tapas. \$\$\$\$ 151 W. 54th St. (between Sixth and Seventh Aves.), 212-307-5000 / 866-690-2029, thelondonnyc.com

Hot New York Restaurants

Amalia • Midtown • Mediterranean

Scratch the surface of Midtown to find the subterranean Amalia. Adjacent to the Dream Hotel, it's aptly named for the mom of the dream-decoder himself, Sigmund Freud. Black Murano-glass chandeliers preside over the moody, Baroque dining room, which is clad in stone walls punctuated by Chinoiserie wallpaper panels, while detailed Renaissance-style portraits are mounted on the ceiling. The innovative menu crisscrosses the Mediterranean, from dates oozing duck confit and prosciutto to crispy crab drizzled in a lemon-infused mustard. As night descends, so do the Midtown revelers. The dance music is cranked up, which brings a clubby spin both to the restaurant and to the evocative downstairs lounge, D'Or. *Sun–Mon 5–10pm, Tue–Thu 5–11pm, Fri–Sat, 5pm–midnight.* \$\$\$ ☰ 204 W. 55th St. (Broadway), 212-245-1234, amalia-nyc.com

Anthos • Midtown • Greek

This elegant white-walled restaurant showcases pink cherry blossoms throughout (Anthos means “blossoming” in Greek) via lovely paintings and a soft-focus mural behind the handsome bar. The Greek fare rises to the occasion, with dishes that offer a playful twist on tradition, particularly in the fish and seafood starters and entrées, such as smoked octopus with a lemon confit and roasted cod with whipped feta. Grilled rabbit receives a slithery tang from spring onions, while the well-selected wine list includes a slew of excellent vintages from Greece. This being Midtown, the daytime crowd tends toward business lunchers, while evening draws a dressier, sophisticated crowd. *Mon–Thu noon–2:45pm and 5pm–10:30pm, Fri–Sat 5–11pm.* \$\$\$ ☰ 36 West 52nd St. (Fifth Ave.), 212-582-6900, anthosnyc.com

Buddha Bar • Meatpacking District • French

After years of rumors and a few failed launches, Paris' popular Buddha Bar has finally landed on US soil—and it's a hit. This capacious yet intimate restaurant/lounge combo is a one-pop stop for tourists and locals alike, with the former dominating the weekend scene. From the intimate darkened lounge to the more appropriately lit dining room created by Miami-based nightclub-designer Stephane Dupoux, the gorgeous (if somewhat over-the-top) room is meant to impress. A pre-dinner cosmo in the singles-friendly lounge is a great way to start the evening (but don't worry—couples won't feel out of place). When it comes to dinnertime, it's tough to top the northeast corner, where a glass floor reveals an illuminated koi pool. Some older diners might enjoy the ambient Euro house tunes spun by DJs throughout the night, but the scene is really geared toward slightly younger jet-setters. *Tue–Sat 6pm–2am.* \$\$\$ ☰ 25 Little W. 12th St. (Washington St.), 212-647-7314, buddhabarnyc.com

Buddakan • Meatpacking District • Asian Fusion

Even in a city of superlatives, the palatial Asian-accented Buddakan stands apart. For starters, it's spectacularly massive, commanding a whopping 15,000 square feet—and has the giant chandeliers to go with it. Getting to your table is an adventure in itself: To reach the sumptuous dining room, you're almost forced to make a grand entrance, descending a long staircase in full view of all. Buddakan's over-the-top décor has not, thankfully, rubbed off on the solid Asian-fusion fare, which

Dovetail • Upper West Side • New American

Chef-owner John Fraser brings whimsical New American cuisine to the UWS at his cozy, brick-walled townhouse restaurant. Dovetail, defined as “to join together harmoniously,” is an apt description of the dishes, which blend seemingly disparate ingredients with finesse, such as clam chowder studded with chorizo, and rich pork belly with kale and a sherry broth. If you'd like the works, come for the prix-fixe Sunday supper, when you can graze on a wide range of Fraser's finest offerings. While the dining room leans toward sparse, the closely positioned tables lend a lively, familiar vibe, as does the chummy crowd, from neighborhood couples out for a weekend splurge to savvy foodies who happily take a detour from their usual downtown haunts. *Mon–Thu 5:30–11pm, Fri–Sun 11:30am–11pm.* \$\$ ☰ 103 W. 77th St. (Columbus Ave.), 212-362-3800, dovetailnyc.com

Elettaria • West Village • International

The eclectic Elettaria is named after the Latin word for cardamom, which makes an aromatic appearance (along with a rainbow of other Far East spices) in the inventive, India-influenced dishes. Chef-partner Akhtar Nawab, who honed his skills at Gramercy Tavern and Craft, among others, challenges diners with unique—and in many cases, genius—combinations, such as sweetbreads with pineapple and peppercorns; fried quail topped with pomegranate molasses, bacon, and fried egg; *Saag Paneer* of ricotta gnocchi, spinach, and cloves; and tender wild boar. Elettaria's arty interior and patrons are well-matched: The rustic dining room reveals wooden floors, brick walls, and a gleaming zinc bar, around which gather West Village creative types, well-heeled gourmets, and ethnically diverse groups of friends en route to nearby Meatpacking clubs. Elettaria can also lay claim to its own slice of Greenwich Village history: The open kitchen occupies the spot where Jimi Hendrix used to rehearse. In that spirit, the tasty cocktails are named after spirited legends, such as the “Ginger Rogers,” a sultry mix of dark rum, cognac, and ginger. *Daily 5:30–11:30pm.* \$\$\$ ☰ 33 W. 8th St. (MacDougal St.), 212-677-3833, elettarianyc.com

Kingswood • West Village • Australian/International

The Aussie creators of the rollicking Ruby's in Nolita are making inroads in the West Village with Kingswood, a big-hearted pub-restaurant with oddly charming outdoor garnishes such as butterflies stuck to the ceiling, a stuffed peacock, and a display case of branches and greenery. The potent cocktails and impressive selection of imported beers (with an emphasis on those from across the pond and Australia) ensure the hipster crowd of Brits and Aussies (and the locals who love them) is well-juiced, while the hearty food does a good job of soaking up the alcohol. The menu boldly zigzags across the globe, and includes a Goan curry of monk fish and coconut, a fragrant couscous tabouleh, duck with a chunky fig chutney, and a juicy burger. If you're flying solo for dinner, pull up to the copper-topped bar, where the gregarious bartenders hold court; otherwise, sink into one of the leather banquettes, which are intimate enough for first-daters, but can also accommodate Fosters-fueled groups, who get progressively louder as night descends. *Mon–Wed 6–11:30pm, Thu–Sat 6pm–midnight, Sun 11am–4pm and 5–11:30pm.* \$ \$ ☰ 121 W. 10th St. (Greenwich Ave.), 212-645-0018

vast wraparound terrace, shaded with tropical foliage filled with wooden benches and cushioned patio chairs. The rest of the year, kick back in the plush indoor lounge, which features splendid 1940s furnishings, including low sofas and sleek glass cocktail tables designed by luminaries such as René Drouet and Petra Blaisse. If you're angling for a more intimate evening, come by mid-week, when you and your honey can nuzzle in one of the many romantic nooks. *Daily 4pm–4am.* ☒ 230 Fifth Ave. (27th St.), 212-725-4300, 230-fifth.com

White Star • Lower East Side • Bar

Mixologist and nightlife guy-about-town Sasha Petraske ignited the cocktail craze with his sophisticated but understated bar, Milk & Honey. His newest drinking den—White Star—reveals a similar panache, with soft leather booths, sultry lighting, and a fabulous lineup of spirits, including potent absinthe. As for the crowd, White Star draws the kind of LES drinkers who know their bitters—and who look good in skinny jeans. On the weekends especially, the bar fills with sociable, flirty singles, making for a prime hook-up spot. *Daily 7pm–2am.* ☒ 21 Essex St. (Hester St.), 212-995-5464

Xai Xai • Midtown • Wine Bar

New York City's first South African wine bar is much like the country's signature Pinotage grape: earthy and bold, with lush traces of the African bush. With cypress tree trunks rising grandly to the ceiling, and candles flickering on dark-wood tables, Xai Xai offers a refreshing departure from the beery taverns in this wedge of town, and is an inviting spot for a pre- or post-dinner cocktail. The stylish crowd leans toward oenophiles, first-date couples, and coworkers out for a celebratory drink. The wine list is short but superb: The Southern Right Pinotage flaunts all that's excellent about the wine, with a muscular, dark-berry bouquet, and a smoky finish reminiscent of a fine whiskey. Chenin Blanc has long been the dominant white grape of South Africa, and it yields some excellent vintages, including the brisk Teddy Hall. Baby bites include the *drae wors*, dried sausage sticks; *bilton*, or beef jerky, which is feathery with a meaty tang; and a plump coil of farmer's sausage pressed onto a quivering mound of *pap*, a mild maize porridge that tastes a little like Cream of Wheat. *Daily 5pm–midnight.* ☒ 365 W. 51st St. (Ninth Ave.), 212-541-9241, xaixaiwinebar.com

Original New York Restaurants

Centro Vinoteca • West Village • Italian

Spiky-haired Anne Burrell may have gotten her 15 minutes as sous chef to Batali on *Iron Chef*, but it's her justly lauded West Village Italian restaurant that'll bring her the lasting recognition. Ease into the evening over *piccolini*, baby bites such as fried cauliflower in a parmesan crust, then dig into the meaty fare, from lamb bolognese with gnocchi, to rabbit stuffed with sausage and pine nuts. The superb, and remarkably well-priced, Italian wines arrive in *quartinos*, which bring a rustic cheer to the breezy bilevel space, with its whitewashed brick, honey lighting, and large picture windows looking over Seventh Avenue. For the buzzy scene, park yourself downstairs; solo diners will enjoy the lovely curved bar. The intimate black-and-white upstairs dining room fills with stylish couples (think third date) clinking glasses against a backdrop of leafy, rustling treetops. *Daily noon–2am.* \$\$ ☒ 74 Seventh Ave. (Bleecker St.), 212-367-7470, centrovinoteca.com

includes fragrant steamed sole in ginger scallion oil and superb tea-smoked chicken. If you'd like a more intimate setting, try the "library" sections off to the side. For the full effect, come on the weekend, when Buddakan shimmers like a nightclub—and the night seems forever young. *Sun–Mon 5:30–11pm, Tue–Wed 5:30pm–midnight, Thu–Sat 5:30pm–1am.* \$\$\$ ☒☒ 75 Ninth Ave. (between 15th and 16th Sts.), 212-989-6699, buddakannyc.com

Casaville • Murray Hill • Moroccan

Moroccan eats and beats bring sizzle to Murray Hill. Casaville is petite but lively, with a bright-red awning, Moorish-style arches, and gauzy curtains. Moroccan owner Lahcen Ksiyer, formerly of Cafe Noir in SoHo, features a menu that zig-zags from Morocco to France to Spain. Start out with *brivat*, filo dough layered with chicken and almonds and dusted in cinnamon. The top-notch *tagines*, such as lamb shank or succulent chicken with fat peas, bubble in a heavy clay bowl and are topped with curls of preserved lemon—a signature Moroccan touch. As night descends, so do the Midtown crowds, who get saucy on Mediterranean wine (and with each other) as Middle Eastern tunes wail into the night. *Mon–Thu 11:30am–11pm, Fri 11:30am–midnight, Sat noon–midnight, Sun noon–11pm.* \$ ☒☒ 633 Second Ave. (E. 34th St.), 212-685-8558, casavillenc.com



Delicatessen • SoHo • Diner

Commanding a lively SoHo corner at Prince and LaFayette, Delicatessen spills over with a near-constant crowd of downtowners and Europeans (and Euro-wannabes) refueling over comfort food and cocktails. It may be a "delicatessen" on the menu, but the sleek, bright space—cream couches, Danish-modern chairs, pounding music—is clubby all the way. It's more about the scene than the cuisine, with floor-to-ceiling windows wrapping around the restaurant, so you feel as if you're watching (or are being watched in) *SoHo: The Movie*. While the crowd tends toward waifs with giant purses, the food's unapologetically fatty and filling, such as cheeseburger spring rolls, steaming meatloaf, pastrami on rye, and a fresh Cobb salad, along with ethnic eats, such as Moroccan cous-cous, and, of course, potent cocktails. *Open 24/7.* \$ ☒☒ 54 Prince St. (Lafayette St.), 212-226-0211, delicatessennyc.com



El Quinto Pino • Chelsea • Spanish

In the spirit of a true Spanish tapas bar, El Quinto Pino has no tables—simply stools that you can pull up to a white-marble bar that's backed by Moorish tiles and a smiling, wine-savvy staff. As the sassy (and even tinier) sister to the perpetually packed petite tapas joint Tia Pol, this spot has been buzzing since opening day: Sleek Chelsea couples gay and straight mingle with fashionable foodies with a penchant for Spanish cuisine. The menu's simple, as is the presentation—hot pork cracklings arrive in a paper bag—but each nibble bursts with heat and flavor. Chickpeas float in a ginger-garlic broth flecked with spinach, while the sea urchin sandwich is an intoxicating blend of briny sea and olive oil. For an unusual sweet finale, try the fried eggplant drizzed in honey. To snag a coveted counter seat, come earlier in the evening (around 7pm) so you can be lazily tucking into tapas and Spanish vino as the crowd pushes in. *Sun–Thu 5pm–midnight, Fri–Sat 5pm–1am.* \$\$ ☒☒ 401 W. 24th St. (Ninth Ave.), 212-206-6900, elquintopinonyc.com



Gemma • East Village • Italian

Dripping candles, aged chandeliers, and dangling copper pots form the boho-rustic backdrop for Tuscan-tinged cuisine—and the hipper-than-thou Downtowners who flood this sizzling restaurant in the Bowery Hotel once the sun sets. Shareable, crowd-pleasing small plates—very much *de rigueur* these days—include yellow-fin tuna sprayed with citrus, crostini smeared with chicken liver pâté, and robust mortadella studded with pistachios. If you want to sit in the thick of it, opt for the lively front room or, in the balmy months, the outdoor sidewalk tables. Otherwise head to the back, where you can nuzzle with your s.o. surrounded by rows of gleaming wine bottles. *Mon–Sat 6pm–midnight.* \$\$   [The Bowery Hotel, 335 Bowery St. \(E. Third St.\), 212-505-9100, theboweryhotel.com](#)

Gordon Ramsay at the London NYC • Midtown • Asian

For a chef, successfully cracking New York's cuisine scene is the actor's equivalent of making it on Broadway. British Chef Gordon Ramsay recently crossed the pond to do just that, with the debut of his eponymous restaurant at the London Hotel. Though still in its infancy, the restaurant is off to a healthy start, drawing a varied crowd of suits with fat expense accounts, curious foodies, and fans of Ramsay's various TV programs (including the Fox reality show *Hell's Kitchen*). The hushed restaurant, with its oak panels and green-leather chairs, seems at odds with the chef's blustery TV persona, but the splendid menu is classic Ramsay—Continental and French cuisine with Asian accents, including caramelized sweetbreads with creamed artichokes, roasted striped bass with pak choi, and succulent roast lamb with candied onions. It's pricey, so if you're looking to spend less—and favor a more informal vibe—the adjoining London Bar with its tapas-style menu. *Wed–Sun 6–10:30pm.* \$\$\$\$   [151 W. 54th St. \(between Sixth and Seventh Aves.\), 212-468-8888, gordonramsay.com](#)


Hundred Acres • SoHo • American

Season-driven American cuisine; a warm-toned, welcoming space; a friendly, accessible bar area and communal tables; reasonable prices; and a SoHo zip code all account for why this new spot (formerly Provence) has been humming since opening day. Chef Marc Meyer (of Five Points and Cookshop) emerges with his signature farmhouse favorites here, from baked macaroni with English peas and goat cheese, to pork sausage with beet salad, to fried rabbit with walnut honey. If you want to people-watch, sit near the front, where French doors are flung open in warm weather; for a more intimate meal, settle in at a quiet table in the back atrium. *Daily 5:30pm–midnight.* \$\$   [38 MacDougal St. \(King St.\), 212-475-7500, hundredacresnyc.com](#)


Insieme • Midtown • Italian

Chef Marco Canora (of Craft and, more recently, Hearth) brings his inventive Italian to a wedge of Midtown-meets-Times Square that's traditionally associated with neon-lit tourist traps. Refreshingly, the spare, cool-toned Insieme is anything but, with weathered white-oak tables, raw silk drapes, tan banquettes, and an innovative menu that lists “traditional” Italian on one side, and modern, quirky takes on the other. In fact, both sides of the menu reveal flair, including octopus carpaccio with fennel and an aromatic fish and shellfish stew with aioli and saffron. The restaurant forms part of the Michelangelo Hotel, so the clientele's a pleasant mix of hotel guests, local foodies, and savvy tourists who know


Gottino • West Village • Wine Bar

Plunked down on a quiet stretch of Greenwich Avenue, this petite wine bar offers a soothing alternative to crammed West Village and Meatpacking nightspots. The Italian vino flows freely, as does the casual banter at the marble bar, where sexy patrons enjoy each other and the complimentary nuts served in rustic baskets. Brick walls, flickering candles, piles of blood oranges and pomegranates, and a breezy garden that opens in warm weather add to the country-Italian vibe. The menu, while simple, offers seasonal riches that pair beautifully with the wines: butternut squash, brussel-sprout salad, chicken-liver pâté, and pungent cheeses and prosciutto. You may find yourself coming by for one glass, and staying for five. *Daily 4pm–2am.*  [52 Greenwich Ave. \(Perry St.\), 212-633-2590, gottinonyc.com](#)


Grayz* • Midtown • Restaurant Lounge

This sleek new lounge brings nighttime pizzazz to Midtown. Settle into a soft leather banquette, and try such delicious concoctions as “Passion for Ginger,” made with vodka, ginger syrup, and passion-fruit puree. *See Cool Restaurants for details. Mon–Fri 11:45am–2pm and 5pm–midnight, Sat 5pm–midnight.*  [13-15 W. 54th St. \(Fifth Ave.\), 212-262-4600, grayz.net](#)

Merkato 55* • Meatpacking District • Restaurant Bar

This being the Meatpacking District, Merkato 55 straddles the culinary and cocktail worlds, and the clubby crowd comes as much for the drinking as the dining. Enjoy tipples such as date-infused rum and Ding Ding (named after an African dance), made with cachaça, ginger beer, and lime, in the low-lit downstairs lounge with a stone well in the center. *See Cool Restaurants for details. Mon–Fri 5:30pm–midnight, Sat–Sun 11:30am–3pm and 5:30pm–midnight.*  [55 Gansevoort St. \(Washington St.\), 212-255-8555, merkato55.com](#)

Santos Party House • Tribeca • Nightclub

Clubbers have been waiting for more than three years, but Santos Party House has finally pumped up the volume and set its disco balls twirling. The space is fast becoming known for its stellar sound system. Musician Andrew W.K. and partners converted an art gallery into this bilevel, black-walled dance palace, with a rotation of hottie DJs, including co-partner Spencer Sweeney and DJ Spun. The New York dance club scene skews young, and this spot is no different, with lots of noisy groups of 20-something gal pals in tight skirts and guys in tight T's—though nights when live concerts are scheduled draw in the 30–40 set. A note to remember: This is a dance club, people, with nary a spot to sit or lounge, so come ready to groove. In case you should lose sight of why you're here, helpful signs are posted throughout, including “All dancing allowed! Thank you,” and “You look amazing!” The door—for now, at least—is refreshingly lenient; you just need to call ahead and leave your name and number. *Daily 10pm–4am.*  [100 Lafayette St. \(Walker St.\), 212-714-4646, santospartyhouse.com](#)

230 Fifth • Midtown • Bar

One glimpse of the eye-popping vistas at the perennially popular rooftop bar 230 Fifth—the Empire State building looks close enough to touch—and you'll forgive the inflated cocktail prices and nightly swarms, from Midtown bankers in loosened ties to gaggles of bachelorettes. Happily, though, you'll have no problem staking out a spot for you and your crew. What club-meister Steven Greenberg's latest nightspot has is space—and lots of it. In the balmy months, head for the

bubble in a copper bowl. For an aromatic finale, warm the throat with tea served in petite iron teapots. *Sun–Thu 11:30am–11pm, Fri–Sat 11:30am–midnight.* \$ ☰ 39 E. 13th St. (University Pl.), 212-253-2696, tongnyc.com

Cool New York Nightlife

Beatrice Inn • West Village • Restaurant/Dance Club

Oh, it's hip alright. Just ask co-owner Paul Seigny, whose Oscar-nominated sister Chloé drops by with all her celebrity friends. It's warm and neighborhoody during the dinner hours, but it really comes to life only after midnight when the popular kids show up. Despite the low-key façade Beatrice Inn has maintained almost since its days as an alleged speakeasy, this restaurant-cum-small club isn't your grandpa's hangout. Once the burgers and steak platters are bussed away and rockin' DJs become the main course, the thrifty furnishings shake, the oil paintings rattle, and the fashion-forward crowd rolls in a setting two parts kitsch and 10 parts stylish. The extremely low ceilings and the black-and-white diner-style floor add to the dizzying effect. Add to that a lack of size and a surplus of partygoers, and it's easy to understand how the unpredictable doorman might be doing the faint of heart a favor in turning them away. Red leather sofas line the walls, but those who remain seated too long run the risk of being mistaken for a coat rack. *Sun–Mon 5–11pm, Tue–Sat 5pm–4am.* ☰ 285 W. 12th St. (W. Fourth St.), 212-243-4626

Death & Co. • Lower East Side • Bar

The classic cocktail trend has modern-day Manhattanites jitterbugging for joy, and Death & Co. mixes them as well as anyone in the business. Sidecars, Dark and Stormies, and gin martinis set the stage for jazzy, low-lit, low-key imbibing Prohibition-era style at this clever date spot. Even now, the place is completely soundproofed so as not to attract passersby; the dark-wood doors seem better suited to mark the entrance of a church; and until the city made the owners post a sign, the bar was unmarked. Inside, hardwood walls bear dim sconces, which, along with glass chandeliers, illuminate suede furnishings, the likes of which might have graced Al Capone's rec room back in the day. The kitchen turns out better-than-average share plates (aka appetizers) that are big on crabmeat, steak strips, and truffles. Tables can be reserved during after-work hours, but after that, a greeter only admits visitors when seating is available, taking the cell-phone numbers of those who are waiting. Our advice: Head 20 feet east to the divey Cherry Tavern, drink cheap, and keep your cell phone on. *Sun–Thu 6pm–1am, Fri–Sat 6pm–2am.* ☰ 433 E. Sixth St. (Ave. A), 212-388-0882, deathandcompany.com

Felice Wine Bar • Upper East Side • Wine Bar

It's about time that a welcoming little wine bar washed up on the shores of the Upper East Side. The intimate space, with flickering candles, exposed brick walls, and tufted leather seats, is presided over by an eye-catching chandelier of wine jugs and rope. The Tuscan-style menu includes robust pastas, roast chicken, and grilled salmon, but it's the more than 100 Italian wines (more than 15 by the glass) that pack in the vino-sipping uptowners. Pair the aromatic house wine, which comes from a Tuscan vineyard owned by the family of partner Giustiniani, with the small plates of tasty crostioni and fragrant cheeses, and your evening is set. *Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat–Sun 10am–midnight.* ☰ 1166 First Ave. (65th St.), 212-593-2223, felicewinebar.com

a quality restaurant when they see it. *Daily 7–10am (Sat–Sun 8–11am), noon–2pm, 5:30–10pm (Thu–Sat until 11pm).* \$\$\$ ☰ 777 Seventh Ave. (51st St.), 212-582-1310, restaurantinsieme.com

La Esquina • SoHo • Mexican

Everyone loves a secret, and New Yorkers perhaps most of all, especially in the after-dark arena, where exclusivity is a byword for hip. La Esquina has managed to maintain an elusive air since it opened, which has naturally kept its coolness quotient high. At first glance, La Esquina (“the corner”) appears to be nothing more than a Mexican takeout joint. Peer around, though, and you'll spot a door marked with the words “Employees Only,” and usually fronted by someone with a clipboard. It's through here that the stylish SoHo types descend, to an underground, candlelit, Goth-tinged restaurant and lounge. Not surprisingly, there's a savvy nightlife guru behind La Esquina: Serge Becker, of Bowery Bar, among other New York nightspots. While the aim of most revelers is to get sauced on the premium cocktails and more than 100 specialty sakes, the food is far from an afterthought. The superb Mexican fare includes chorizo-and-onion quesadillas, whole shrimp doused in chipotle, and tender pulled pork. The door policy fluctuates: On busy weekend nights, you may not get in downstairs without a dinner reservation; otherwise, looking the part—chic and clubby—usually garners entry. *Taqueria: Daily noon–5am. Restaurant: Daily 6pm–2am.* \$\$ ☰ 106 Kenmare St. (LaFayette St.), 646-613-7100, esquinanyc.com

La Zarza • East Village • Spanish

Buenos Aires meets Ibiza at this loungey, low-lit restaurant where DJs spin pulsing beats for cocktail-swilling South American model-types and all their hangers-on. An ambient mood pervades, with soft lights that cast a glow onto chocolate-hued banquettes, and brick shelves flickering with candles. The Spanish-influenced Argentine eats, courtesy of Chef Jorge Rodriguez (formerly of Chimichurri), include octopus unfurled on a bed of white beans, and citrusy ceviches such as sweet lobster studded with diced mango and charmingly accompanied by a bowl of popcorn. The juicy Patagonian rib eye satisfies, as do the *crocantitos*, crispy calamari with lashings of honey. La Zarza has an impressive pedigree, with four owners, including Spaniard Mario Larrea and Argentine Tomas Antelo, who have storied backgrounds in the club industry; hence this place really gets going later in the night, especially with the help of the make-your-own sangrias, spiked with coconut rum and peach puree. *Mon–Thu 6–11:45pm, Fri–Sun 6pm–12:45am.* \$\$\$ ☰ 166 First Ave. (10th St.), 212-477-1111, lazarzany.com

Momofuku Noodle Bar • East Village • Korean

New York is home to oodles of rising young chefs, but few have garnered as much recent press as Korean-American David Chang, whose Momofuku empire includes the Noodle Bar, Ssam Bar, and Ko. Momofuku Noodle was his first, and it's still the best spot to tuck into Chang's wonderfully eclectic, Korean-tinged offerings. The menu changes daily, but hot starters might include steamed pork buns and fried veal sweatbreads with salted cucumbers, followed by the signature Momofuku ramen, soaked in a fragrant stock made from pork bones and chicken legs, then laden with pork belly, snow peas, bamboo shoots, and a poached egg. The space is airy and light, with pale wood walls, recessed lights,

and a long communal-seating bar that spills over with a nightly crowd of nattily dressed East Villagers, along with discerning diners from all over New York—because Chang’s fans, it seems, only continue to multiply. *Sun–Thu noon–4pm and 5:30–11pm, Fri–Sat noon–4pm, 5:30pm–midnight.* \$\$ 📍 171 First Ave. (10th St.), 212-475-7899, momofuku.com

Rayuela • Lower East Side • Latin

Come for the sassy, Latin-inspired cocktails (gracias to master mixologist Junior Merino, who was handpicked from The Modern), and stay for the “freestyle” Latino eats, such as tart ceviches—try the red snapper soaked in a ginger soy citrus topped with eye-smarting jalapeños—and a crispy pork heaped with grilled pineapple. Skip the ho-hum desserts, and instead top off the meal with one of the signature sweet drinks, such as the perennially popular “Coming Up Roses,” of rum and rose petals with a spritz of champagne. The airy, *au naturel* dining room—witness the olive tree rising grandly in the center, and the gauzy white curtains floating between booths—plays host to a natty Downtown crowd, from gals out on the town to club-hoppers. The boisterous weekend brunch heats up with live Latin music. *Sun 10am–5pm and 5:30–midnight, Tue–Thu 5:30pm–midnight, Fri 5:30pm–2am, Sat 10am–5pm and 5:30pm–2am.* \$\$ 📍 165 Allen St. (Rivington St.), 212-253-8840, rayuelanyc.com

Resto • Murray Hill • Belgian

Say “Belgian cuisine,” and most will think of *moules frites* and beer. Chef Ryan Skeen has set out to take it a step (rather, several bold leaps) further at his welcoming, tin-ceiling, wood-tabled resto-pub in Murray Hill. A robust shellfish *waterzooi* is flavored with fennel, leeks, and lardon, while quivering lamb belly is enlivened with snap peas and goat cheese. And yes, there are *moule frites*, though here you can try them *au naturel* or with a bevy of flavors from garlic and orange zest, to curry-style with coconut milk and cilantro. The late-night menu—or *souhais ridicules*—includes such oddball goodies as deviled egg on pork toast and crispy pig’s ear salad. The phenomenal beer selection is, as you might expect, all Belgian, including a white beer—*blanche de bruxelles*—and satan gold, each of which is served in its own signature glass. *Mon–Wed 5–11:30pm, Thu 5pm–1am, Sat 10:30am–3:30pm, 5pm–1am, Sun 10:30am–3:30pm and 5–10:30pm.* \$\$ 📍 111 East 29th St. (Park Ave.), 212-685-5585, restonyc.com

Scarpetta • Meatpacking District • Italian

Superchef Scott Conant (of L’Impero and Alto) escaped Manhattan’s restaurant scene for a while in the Hamptons, and it seems the break did him a lot of good. The first restaurant he opened since returning is the spacious Scarpetta in the Meatpacking District, which manages to be both refined and relaxed, with warm lighting, spare lines, dark-wood floors, and aromatic bunches of flowers. Appealing to the Meatpacking masses while maintaining high culinary standards can be tough, but Conant does it with aplomb, and includes cocktail-friendly appetizers such as crispy seafood *fritto misto*, hearty Italian platters of tagliatelle with lamb and sweet peas, and veal topped with turnip. *Mon–Thu 5:30–11pm, Fri–Sat 5:30pm–midnight, Sunday 5:30–10:30pm.* \$\$ 📍 355 W. 14th St. (Ninth Ave.), 212-691-0555, scarpettanyc.com

Omido • Midtown • Japanese

The culinary wasteland of Times Square received a much-needed boost with the arrival of the glossy, dark-wood Japanese joint Omido. Forget the neon-lit TGIF, and treat your tastebuds instead to beautifully crafted sushi and sashimi, cold fish plates such as organic salmon with citrus miso, and sizzling Kobe steak, courtesy of Chef Eiji Takase, formerly of Sushi Samba among other Asian hot spots. The sleek candle-lit interior is eye-catching for good reason: It was designed by the firm AvroKO, which also created the stylish interiors at Public and Stanton Social. As you might expect, Omido sees lots of *Playbill*-clutching tourists, along with a smattering of sushi-savvy locals who’ve stopped by to sup before jumping in a cab to party elsewhere. They’re off to a good start, with more than sakes by the glass to choose from, along with inventive cocktails, such as the sake sangria. *Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat–Sun 5pm–midnight.* \$\$ 📍 1695 Broadway (53rd St.), 212-247-8110, omidonyc.com

Pata Negra • East Village • Spanish

The slender Pata Negra is owner Rafael Mateo’s homage to Spanish ham. The menu showcases varying grades, from deep-red *jamón serrano* to one of the world’s priciest meats, *jamón ibérico*, which comes from free-roaming, black-hooved (*pata negra*) pigs from Spain’s southwest. The purplish ham, streaked with yellowish fat, is nutty and creamy, pairing well with weighty reds from the Rioja. Also on offer are Spanish cheeses from Murray’s, of which manchego and la serena lend a tangy counterpoint to the rich cured meats. Pata Negra’s cocoon-like interior features half a dozen high tables, flickering candles, burgundy curtains, and wistful Spanish tunes such as Bolero love songs. *Tues 5pm–midnight, Wed–Thu 5pm–1am, Fri–Sat 5pm–2am, Sun 5pm–midnight.* \$\$ 📍 345 E. 12th St. (First Ave.), 212-228-1696, patanegratapas.com

Suba • Lower East Side • Spanish

“If you don’t succeed the first time, try (and try) again” might well be the guiding principle at the chic Spanish Suba, which has limped through various permutations to emerge, finally, with a sassy—and satisfying—small plates menu, thanks to tapas guru Seamus Mullen. The subterranean dining room is surrounded by a lit-from-below moat, which evokes the soothing sensation of floating on water. Whet your appetite with the “broken” potatoes topped with apple-glazed eel and a quivering egg, and a trio of *croquetas*—Spain’s comfort food—here creatively tweaked by Mullen with such fillings as sweet crab and roasted peppers. Suba heats up on Flamenco Sundays, with plenty of hand-clapping and skirt-swishing as the sangria-swilling scenesters look on. *Sun–Thu 5:30pm–midnight, Fri–Sat 5:30pm–2am.* \$\$ 📍 109 Ludlow St. (Delancey St.), 212-982-5714, subanyc.com

Tong Thai • East Village • Thai

A giant Buddha hologram hovers over this elegant, bilevel Thai restaurant that sits in the shadow of Union Square. The sleek dining room is wrapped in backlit frosted glass, making for a romantic setting that draws plenty of first-daters. The northern Thai cuisine, thanks to Chef Peter Pitakwong (of Peep and Highline), rises admirably above the ubiquitous takeout joints of the area. Pitakwong deftly applies novel touches to traditional Thai, such as slippery mussels with white-pepper sprouts on pillows of rice batter. The main dishes manage to be both hearty and refined: Hanger steak arrives on banana leaf sprinkled with grilled leeks, salt-baked chicken is sweetened with strips of mango, and braised ribs and roasted shallots

waitstaff sports ruffled red shirts, and the cocktails are fruity and potent. His finest move was to woo Chef Jessica Floyd, a Boulud apprentice, who brings a whimsical spin to Spanish dishes. Quivering pork belly is dotted with candied pine nuts and olive oil-poached apple; black rice is enveloped in winter truffles and goat cheese, with aromatic traces of curd and earth; and plantains are drizzled in sea-salt caramel. *Daily 11:30am–2am.* \$\$ 📍 247 E. 50th St. (Second Ave.), 212-752-1414, isleronyc.com

Merkato 55* • Meatpacking District • African

Ethiopian-Swedish chef Marcus Samuelsson, who made his mark with Aquavit, turns his sights to Africa with Merkato 55, inspired by outdoor Ethiopian markets. The spacious, multistory interior reveals African portraits on silk screens, soft leather banquettes, and gleaming dark wood. Samuelsson proves himself once again with an inspired pan-African menu, which includes spiced hummus, warm *injera* bread, tender venison skewers, and plump meatballs with couscous. This being the Meatpacking District, Merkato 55 straddles the culinary and cocktail worlds, and the clubby crowd comes as much for the drinking as the dining. Enjoy tipples such as date-infused rum and Ding Ding (named after an African dance), made with cachaça, ginger beer, and lime, in the low-lit downstairs lounge with a stone well in the center. *Mon–Fri 5:30pm–midnight, Sat–Sun 11:30am–3pm and 5:30pm–midnight.* \$\$ 📍 55 Gansevoort St. (Washington St.), 212-255-8555, merkato55.com

Mermaid Inn • Upper West Side • Seafood

Have a hankering for fresh fish? Make for the Mermaid Inn's latest Manhattan outpost on the Upper West Side. Just like its East Village sibling, this UWS seafood palace showcases fresh fruits from the sea, from a superb raw bar (oyster-lovers will swoon) to a charred monkfish with crushed hazelnuts. Happily, too, you'll find plenty of crusty favorites straight from a New England chowder house, such as cod cakes and Old Bay fries. The name fits, as the warm-toned restaurant feels like a seaside inn, with wood floors, nautical posters, and an easygoing staff. The amiable mood rubs off on the all-ages diners, from silver-haired couples to gaggles of post-work gal pals, many of whom are UWS locals. *Mon–Thu 5:30–11pm, Fri–Sat 5:30–11:30pm, Sun 5:30–10pm.* \$\$ 📍 568 Amsterdam Ave. (87th St.), 212-799-7400, themermaidnyc.com

Morandi • West Village • Italian

Restaurateur Keith McNally's culinary empire continues to expand—but nobody's complaining. His latest outpost, Morandi in the West Village, offers just what we've come to expect from McNally—good food, a hip crowd, and plenty of buzz (which started long before opening day). While his other hot spots (Balthazar, Pastis, et al) skew French, this time around he's going Italian, with offerings such as *baccala al latte* (cod cooked in milk with raisins and anchovies) and a delicious risotto with mushrooms, sage, and blueberries. In keeping with the rustic trattoria theme, the dining room features brick arches, wood-beamed ceilings, and aged mirrors. Come balmy weather, the sidewalk tables are sure to be the most coveted seats in the Village. *Daily 8am–midnight.* \$\$\$ 📍 211 Waverly Pl. (Charles St.), 212-627-7575, morandiny.com

Sheridan Square • West Village • American

Spacious Sheridan Square occupies one of the busiest spots in the West Village, commanding a wide wedge of Seventh Avenue that sees near-constant foot traffic, with a lively crowd traipsing by day and night. Inside, it's inviting and low-key: The ample dining room, with tin ceilings and circular red lamps, is set against an open kitchen with a wood-burning oven and grill. Chef Gary Robins (Biltmore Room, The Russian Tea Room) unveils an innovative New American menu, including a rich foie gras ravioli and anise-scented crispy duck with fava beans and a cherry rhubarb chutney. This is also a prime spot for a cocktail, with a lively bar where mixologists concoct inventive drinks, including a margarita infused with smoked salt. *Sun–Thu 5:30–10:30pm, Fri–Sat 5:30–11pm.* \$\$ 📍 134 Seventh Ave. (10th St.), 212-352-2237, sheridansquarenyc.com

STK • Meatpacking District • Steak House

This is not your daddy's steak house. Sleek and chic, STK sits, appropriately enough, in the heart of the Meatpacking District, and features white-leather banquettes, a sexy bar presided over by grand—if surreal—plaster tusks, and a trendy, cocktail-swilling, carnivorous crowd. Purists will dig the menu, where hefty slabs of dry-aged beef are listed by size—small, medium, and large. If you're in the mood for a sceney night out, come by on the weekends when STK is in full swing. Choose from the retro-with-a-twist cocktail menu, including a tasty cherry cosmo, a gin fizz, and a “not your daddy's” Manhattan. *Daily 5:30pm–2am.* \$\$\$ 📍 26 Little W. 12th St. (between Washington St. and Ninth Ave.), 646-624-2444, stkhouse.com

Hot New York Nightlife

Antik • SoHo • Nightclub

With all the VIP rooms and bottle service at Manhattan nightspots, it was only a matter of time before someone opened a club that billed itself as “semi private.” Or so they'd like you to believe. It's true that Antik's focus has been on hosting private events—for hedge-funders, fashion folks, and the like—but on weekend nights especially, they seem to loosen their policy, allowing entry to plenty of walk-ins. (It helps, of course, to be female and in slinky garb.) Inside, Antik has a certain sexy vibe, with a vague attempt at looking “antique” (heavy velvet curtains, low lighting, and candelabras). The cocktails, mixed with top-shelf liquor, are predictably potent and pricey. And the crowd is predictable too: designer-wearing guys and gals with money to burn. *Mon–Sat 10pm–4am.* 📍 356 Bowery (Great Jones St.), 212-388-1655, antiknyc.com

Catch-22 • Chelsea • Bar

Catch-22 is proof that the retro-cocktail movement still seems to be infiltrating the drinking dens of Manhattan. This Flatiron bar pays a nod to the 1940s, with sultry red-tinged lighting, leather banquettes, elegant glassware that holds such yesteryear tipples as mint juleps, and a sexy bar staff that looks like they could have stepped out of WWII pin-up mags. The Flatiron crowd tends toward post-work suits and ladies out for a night of chatter and cosmos. Like most of the bars in this neighborhood, the velvet ropes are unfurled come nightfall, but if you don't mind a wait, once you get to the door

the bouncer's usually pretty lenient about letting everyone in. *Tue–Thu 5pm–4am, Fri 4pm–4am, Sat 7pm–4am, Sun 9pm–4am.* ☰ 4 W. 22nd St. (Fifth Ave.), 212-675-0607, catch22nyc.com

Club Touch • Midtown • Nightclub

You have to hand it to the promoters of Club Touch. For months before the (oft-delayed) opening, they managed to build a huge buzz around this massive nightclub. Club Touch finally flung open its doors (well, to those who look the part) in late 2007, and the occasion was celebrated with a splashy party attended by Snoop Dog. The interior is swank in that glittery, nightclub sort of way: plush, purple couches; a top-notch sound system booming tunes; a wraparound balcony; and a second-floor “solarium” (their word), essentially a large window with views over 52nd Street. And that brings us to what is perhaps the biggest draw: Club Touch is proof that not all dance clubs must be in the Meatpacking District. It's actually near Times Square. If your aim is to drink top-shelf (and top-money) cocktails and dance the night away surrounded by a club-savvy crowd that's (scantly) clad in designer duds, then Touch is for you. Do note, though: The big bouncers are out in force on the weekends, so be prepared to flirt your way in or to arrive with a crowd where the female quotient is high. Want to add some Euro-style to your night? Come by on French Tuesdays, when the champagne flows, as do the international pop tunes and pick-up lines. *Touche! Thu–Sat 10pm–4am.* ☰ 240 W. 52nd St. (Broadway), 212-489-7656, touchnewyorkcity.com

El Morocco • Off-Map • Nightclub

In the 1930s and '40s, the swank, Latin-tinged El Morocco, with its trademark zebra-print motif, hosted the rich and famous, from Cary Grant to Marlene Dietrich (Bogart was famously banned for life from the club). The glamour (and the zebra-print decor, plus carved palm trees) lives on at the new 10,000-square-foot El Morocco, which was carefully created as a “modern interpretation” of its predecessor. The draw these days? Hot, sassy, hip-twirling live Latin music, from merengue and bachata to reggaeton, which draws women in slinky dresses and heels and men in slick suits to the dance floor. *Tue 6pm–2am, Fri–Sat 10pm–4am.* ☰ 3534 Broadway (145th St.), 212-939-0909, elmorocconyc.com

The Eldridge • Lower East Side • Bar

The Eldridge timed its opening with Fashion Week. Enough said. The LES has plenty of snooty lounges, but The Eldridge, opened by Matt Levine (who runs a hot menswear label, among other projects) is determined to be even snootier. And of course, this has invited crowds (and criticism) since opening night. If you can get in (your best bet is to come early, preferably in a group with lots of sexy ladies), you're likely in for a memorable evening, mixing it up with star guests such as Kate Moss, along with a designer-clad brigade of DJs, mixologists, fashiony folks, their friends, and their friends' friends. The lounge is petite but elite, with expensive leather banquettes and a wall covered with Armand de Brignac champagne. Looking for the front door? It's hidden behind a used-bookstore facade, complete with a worn wooden sign: “Buy, sell, trade.” *Hours vary, so call ahead.* ☰ 247 Eldridge St. (Houston St.), 212-505-7600

BLT Market • Midtown • French

French Chef Laurent Tourondel's epicurean empire continues to expand, with his latest venture, BLT Market—in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, no less—paying homage to seasonal produce and local purveyors. The impressive result is rustic fare with a twist *française*, from stuffed Amish chicken with shoestring potatoes, to black cod with a butternut-squash puree. Of the appetizers, don't miss the zucchini blossoms oozing cheese. If you can forget bleating NY cabs outside, you might think you were in a French farmhouse: The ample, light-flooded restaurant features vases of big sunflowers, heavy wood tables, and colorful paintings of fruits and vegetables. The crowd's less homespun: As you might expect of the ritzy Ritz, you'll spot plenty of moneyed tourists alongside well-heeled residents popping by from their posh nearby addresses. Come balmy weather, the breezy outdoor patio is the place to sit. *Mon–Fri 11:45am–2pm and 5:30–10pm, Sat Sun 5:30–10pm.* \$\$ ☰ 1430 Sixth Ave. (58th St.), 212-521-6125, bltmarket.com

Grayz* • Midtown • French

Gray Kunz, a New York culinary guru and creator of the buzzy Cafe Gray and former Lespinasse, is known for his superb fusion fare, which you can nibble on here, from a menu showcasing French-influenced small plates, as well as entrées such as tender baby-back ribs. Housed in what was once a Rockefeller mansion, Gray exudes an effortless elegance, from the gleaming wood bar, soft leather banquettes, and fireplaces, to a lovely, high-ceilinged atrium. Kunz fans number many, and Gray fills nightly with a sophisticated, gourmet-leaning crowd, many of whom start off their night here and then linger until closing. *Mon–Fri 11:45am–2pm and 5pm–midnight, Sat 5pm–midnight.* \$\$ ☰ 13-15 W. 54th St. (Fifth Ave.), 212-262-4600, grayz.net

Gusto Organics • Chelsea • Argentinean

Taxi-clogged Sixth Avenue, lined with fast-food eateries, may seem an unlikely spot for the city's first organic restaurant, but the sky-lit Gusto Organics has successfully found its footing, pulling in droves of savvy, green-friendly New Yorkers. Owner Alberto Gonzalez draws inspiration from his native Argentina to emerge with robust dishes that turn the tofu-and-wheat germ stereotype on its head: Steak sandwiches are layered with smoky filet mignon, and thin-crust pizzas bubble with mozzarella and tangy tomato sauce. Gusto's airy interior hints at a South American eco-lodge, with a high ceiling and rough-hewn tables fashioned out of wood recovered from barns. The soy ink-printed menu is on recycled paper (as is the TP), and takeout utensils are made of corn. For a meal's-end indulgence, try the baked goodies, including *alfajores*, flaky biscuits smeared with dulce de leche. *Sun–Thu 8am–midnight, Fri–Sat 8am–2am.* \$\$ ☰ 519 Sixth Ave. (14th St.), 212-242-5800, gustorganics.com

Islero • Midtown • Spanish

When entering the ring of competitive Manhattan restaurants, it helps to be named after Islero, the 1000-pound bull who gored and killed the matador Manolete in 1947. This honey-hued, Spanish, Midtown hideaway is everything the surrounding frat-boy pubs are not. A DJ spins ambient dance tunes; classic black-and-white photos of cape-wielding matadors hang over embossed leather banquettes. The liveliest nights to be here are on Fridays and Saturdays, when a flirty 30- and 40-something crowd gathers around white Carrera-marble tables. Owner Chris Bianchi carries out the Latin theme with flair: The chatty

Cool New York Hotels

Night • Midtown • Trendy (72 rms)

Gothic meets high-thread-count sheets at Night, the latest in Vikram Chatwal's trio of haute-concept hotels in Manhattan. Chatwal's hotels may be too much style over substance for some, but if that's your goblet of wine, then Night makes for a memorable night. The black-and-white theme is applied obsessively—if a bit dizzily—throughout, from the sleek stone-black façade to the too-cool lobby, which is hung with arty photographs of angular models with lots of black eyeliner casting smoldering glances at each other. The rooms are smallish, with black furnishings, but feature all the boutique hotel indulgences—plush beds, Wi-Fi, Bose stereo, and Molton Brown toiletries. The hotel sits in Times Square territory, so ask for an interior room if you're a light sleeper. As you might expect, Night attracts a stylish crowd with cash to burn: Think music execs in sunglasses. The Nightlife lounge—done up in black and white, of course—serves pricey cocktails and decent finger foods such as mini burgers, calamari, and a “One Night Stand”—a Kobe beef hot dog dressed with truffle peach mustard. \$\$\$\$ [132 W. 45th St. \(between Sixth and Seventh Aves.\)](#), 212-835-9600, [nighthotelny.com](#)

Thompson LES • Lower East Side • Trendy (141 rms)

This swank boutique hotel is the latest from Jason Pomeranc's Thompson Hotel Group, which runs 60 Thompson, among others around New York and the US. As befits the neighborhood over which it looms, Thompson LES is one part industrial loft and two parts luxury: The lobby is stylishly stark, while the ample rooms are eye-catching and include a light-box headboard showcasing Lee Friedlander photography, a massive flat-screen TV, a gleaming bathroom with Fresh products, zebra wood throughout, and a comfy couch separated by a wire-mesh curtain. While all rooms are relatively quiet, light sleepers might want to request a room on the 14th floor or higher (the top floor—the 18th—is the penthouse), and also one away from the elevators. In keeping with the hotel's arty vibe, the seasonal swimming pool has a tiled face of Andy Warhol. Pan-Asian restaurant, Shang, and the chic bar, Above Allen, are due to open in early 2009. \$\$\$\$ [190 Allen St. \(Houston St.\)](#), 212-460-5300, [thompsonles.com](#)

Cool New York Restaurants

Allen & Delancey • East Village • American

It would be hard to pick a more apropos neighborhood for Allen & Delancey than the Lower East Side, with its scruffy-cum-sophisticated air. The low-lit restaurant has a (studied) bohemian interior—brick walls, heavy curtains tied with sashes, plenty of bric-a-brac scattered about—and high-end, inventive New American eats. Chef Neil Ferguson (of The London NYC) really shines in his new digs, emerging with an eclectic menu that reveals a whole other side to traditional American cuisine. Starters include caramelized bone marrow with a shallot puree, followed by such mains as filet of cod with blood orange, corn-fed chicken in a light crayfish *velouté*, and trout topped with almond cream. This is lower Manhattan's restaurant du jour, so expect nightly crowds of casually dressed locals rubbing shoulders with giddy gourmands. *Mon-Sat 6–11pm, Sun 5–10pm.* \$\$\$\$ [115 Allen St. \(Delancey St.\)](#), 212-253-5400, [allenanddelancey.net](#)

Kiss & Fly • Meatpacking District • Nightclub

At the Meatpacking District's latest nightclub, the crowd's Euro (think Ibiza at the height of summer), the decor's Roman with an over-the-top jolt of Vegas (gold columns, a ceiling fresco), the dance floor's sweaty and swinging, the strobe lights are on (and off, and on...), the music's thumping house, the drinks are potent and pricey, and, yes, the door's strict. But that's par for the course in this part of town, and come weekends you'll see a long line of hottie guys and gals trailing down the sidewalk. Looking chic and clubby usually garners entry, as does committing to bottle service, which is offered to the 28 tables surrounding the dance floor. *Wed-Sat 11pm–4am.* [409 W. 13th St. \(Ninth Ave.\)](#), 212-255-1933

D'Or • Midtown • Lounge

A low-lit taste of Downtown in Midtown, D'Or reveals creamy leather seats, an elegant, vaulted ceiling, and glittering chandeliers, spiced up by clubby, DJ-spun tunes. The nights to come here are Friday and Saturday, when D'Or swells with a sexy, club-hopping crowd that gets fueled on cocktails and grazes on the splendid small plates of Mediterranean fare from the upstairs restaurant, Amalia, before moving on to a dance club. Try to snag a banquette near the entrance so you can kick back and observe the revelers piling in. Thankfully, D'Or has a less tiresome velvet-rope policy than most nightspots, because this is, after all, Midtown and not the Meatpacking. Do, though, call ahead, because D'Or sometimes plays host to private soirees, and is closed to the public. *Tue-Wed 6pm–2am, Thu-Fri 6pm–4am, Sat 9pm–4am.* [204 W. 55th St. \(Broadway\)](#), 212-245-1234, [amalia-nyc.com](#)

The Randolph at Broome • SoHo • Lounge

Looking for the latest downtown hangout for that boisterous breed of “bankers-by-day, boozers-by-night”? Head for the hopping lounge Randolph at Broome. SoHo's newest cocktail lounge started out slow, but it has recently hit its stride, and weekends see it swarming with financial types who like to inject some downtown cool into their nighttime sojourns, along with a sizeable arty SoHo contingent who make it no secret that they actually live around here. Once the cocktails start flowing, the mood turns decidedly flirty, especially around the buzzy bar and in the low-lit corners. Drinks range from the golden oldies, such as a potent Dark and Stormy, to a house special of vodka, beer, and lemon concentrate. The Randolph's twist is its weekly theme nights, such as the thumping '80s night on Thursdays and a Tribute to Prince (yes, that one) on Sundays. *Daily 9:30pm–4am.* [349 Broome St. \(Elizabeth St.\)](#), 212-274-0667, [randolphnyc.com](#)

Rose Bar and Jade Bar • Chelsea • Hotel Bar

There are three ways of gaining entrance to these late-night sibling spaces in the Gramercy Park Hotel: 1) Be rich and famous; 2) Be really lucky on a slow night; 3) Be a hotel guest. Yes, the easily admitted weekend-package crowd's quick skip of otherwise tough velvet ropes makes the pay-to-play formula pretty obvious at this hotel's bar-lounge combo. Rose Bar, the right hook of this one-two punch, is a stylish lounge where high-powered publicists, fashion-magazine editors, and random nouveau-riche businesspeople squander their disposable incomes on \$18 specialty cocktails prepared by expert bartenders. The Jade Bar is more or less a VIP adjunct to the Rose Bar, and here reservations are required after 10pm, when celebrities and socialites start rolling in requesting their “usual” tables. Scene-seekers love the see-and-be-seen feel pervading both

rooms. For the full show, go during Fashion Week (in February and September), and request one of the corner tables farthest from the bar or pool table, as those areas tend to get crowded. Seating by the fireplace isn't too shabby either. *Daily 10pm–4am.* [Gramericy Park Hotel, 2 Lexington Ave. \(21st St.\), 212-920-3300, gramericiparkhotel.com](#)

Smith & Mills • Tribeca • Bar

This retro-chic Tribeca cocktail bar, housed in a former horse stable, is mighty snug—but for many New York studio-dwellers, it'll feel just like home. With Matt Abramcyk (of Employees Only) at the helm, the classic cocktails are superbly mixed and well-matched by the notable eats, from cured salmon to an addictive cold chicken. Come in the early eve to snag a seat as the moon rises. The coveted leather booths swell with Downtown hipsters, but most end up standing cheek by jowl around the small bar, behind which hangs an impressive pair of mirrors framed in drainpipe molds. Do pay a visit to the bathroom, which is located in the building's original freight elevator, amid opaque glass splendor. *Daily 5pm–4am.* [71 N. Moore St. \(Greenwich St.\), 212-219-8568, smithandmills.com](#)

Socialista • West Village • Lounge

Papa Hemingway sipping a highball and puffing on a stogie wouldn't be out of place in this languid bilevel Cuban lounge—and that's exactly what creator Armin Amiri, former doorman of Bungalow 8, intended. Socialista evokes Havana in its heyday: Distressed leather couches spill over with a sexy, cocktail-fueled crowd, as sunlight (or moonlight, on a clear night) filters in through the wooden shutters of the tall windows; antique fans spin lazily; and dynamic Cuban bands—à la *Buena Vista Social Club*—rouse revelers to their feet between rounds of tropical tipples such as the mint-infused mojito. Getting in, however, is hardly a socialist process: On Friday and Saturday nights, the stern door policy can be tougher than gaining entry to Cuba, unless you're buddies with one of the backers, which include the Ciprianis, Harvey Weinstein, and Sting. It's usually easier to slip in and nab a seat early in the evening during the week. *Daily 11:30am–4am.* [505 West St. \(Jane St.\), 212-929-4303, socialista.us](#)

Star Lounge • Chelsea • Hotel Bar

There may not be another hotel-bar union as unlikely as this one: Inside this classically shabby hotel, a pre-rock star Bob Dylan got married, and Sid Vicious killed his girlfriend. The hot new subterranean VIP lounge below, however, is geared toward a crowd that hadn't even been born when the rooms upstairs were checking into Manhattan lore. Owned by the proprietors of one of the Hamptons' most established boîtes, Star Lounge is celebrity-oriented, which means the velvet ropes may suddenly tighten on nights when a motorcade of limos rolls up and guests such as Sienna Miller and Diddy make appearances. Your best bet is to arrive early (around 11pm) and, if you're staying in the hotel, see if you can get the concierge to put in a good word. The best parties here seem to fall on Thursdays—again, arrive early to increase your chances of getting in. Star Lounge is divided into three rooms; the space to the far right of the entrance is the most secluded and most desirable. Visitors who opt for the room to the left of the entrance may feel a bit cut off. *Thu–Sat 10pm–4am.* [Chelsea Hotel, 222 W. 23rd St. \(Seventh Ave.\), 212-255-4646, starlounge.nyc.com](#)

Suzie Wong • Meatpacking District • Nightclub

A sultry Asian parlor vibe pervades this nightclub, which is bathed in red light and features swinging red lanterns, chandeliers, heavy curtains, and back-lit Chinese characters. Fittingly, Suzie Wong is the city's first club with sake bottle service (from \$150), which you can slowly sip while sunk into the plush banquettes. Go for the sake straight-up, or try one of the Orient-fetishizing cocktails, such as the Geisha, a sassy mix of plum sake, Asian pear, and vodka. Nibbles include spicy dim sum, such as a tasty crab in a ginger-soy glaze. If you're in a group, go for the "Love u Long Time" dim-sum platter. Suzie Wong is more intimate than most of the neighborhood's nightclubs, with plenty of dim nooks, and a smallish dance floor that fills up, but not to sweaty, exhausting capacity like other nearby nightspots. The DJ-spun tunes are a refreshing mix: Yes, there's deep house and hip-hop, but also plenty of pop-oriented '80s beats and Euro tunes. *Thu–Sat 7pm–4am.* [547 27th St. \(10th Ave.\), 212-268-5105, suziewongnyc.com](#)

Tenjune • Meatpacking District • Club

Blink, and you just might miss one of the young Hollywood types crossing this coveted threshold amid long lines of gawkers who may get in or may simply end up as background fodder in a celebrity glossy. Lindsay Lohan has DJed in this subterranean space where the usual suspects nestle in VIP sections overlooking the small dance floor. You know the drill here: Table reservations (that means \$300 bottles of booze) are all but required, and even then, showing up before midnight is a good idea for guaranteed entry. Your best bet is to reserve seating in the VIP sections surrounding the dance floor, as the isolated VIP room in the far back is a bit alienating. Weekends can be a bit over the top, making Thursday the best night to be here. The pretty standard hip-hop and '80s music is fast, loud, and meant to keep bodies in motion. The owners here have a hand in the steak house upstairs (STK), where it isn't uncommon for regulars to pregame at the bar while waiting for the club scene below to get started. We suggest a stuffed-olive martini up there for starters. *Tue–Sat 10pm–4am.* [26 Little W. 12th St. \(Washington St.\), 646-624-2410](#)

205 Club • Lower East Side • Dance Club

Rock stars snorting coke, civilians snorting coke, rock stars doing nothing much at all, civilians and rock stars together either doing or not doing whatever ... the stories around this bilevel club are generally a lot more exciting than what's found inside. That's not to say this true Downtown gem isn't fun; it's just shrouded in a bit more mystery than others of its caliber. Modeled after Andy Warhol's famed Factory, with what appears to be tin foil covering some walls, 205 looks as though it were designed by kooky artists. The soundtrack—fusing rock, funk, and dance music, and spun at a less-than-frenetic pace—is conducive to either grooving or just hanging out. The downstairs area stays closed on slower nights, but it's where you want to be when things get busy. Hang out near the bar if you're single; grab a banquettes if not. *Daily 10pm–4am.* [205 Chrystie St. \(Stanton St.\), 212-477-6688](#)