

NEW YORK CITY DINING

MOMOFUKU KO

Cuisine	American Nouveau, Japanese/Sushi, Korean
Price range	\$\$\$\$
Things to know	Reservations are only made on the Internet and gone by 10:05 a.m., but cancellations occur throughout the day, so you might get lucky if you keep trying online.
Ideal meal	The fixed-price menu is constantly evolving. Favourite dishes include: kimchee purée, foie gras, deep-fried short rib and cereal-milk panna cotta.
Review	David Chang's white-hot East Village dining empire, Momofuku Ko, isn't a restaurant in the normal sense of the word, it's more of a dining club. It is a twelve-seat bar; customers are chosen at random by a computerised system and seats can be booked only a week in advance and only by logging on to the Momofuku website. So is it worth the effort? Chang's inspiration is the classic Japanese bar-dining model. You can eat a delicious ten-course dinner for around \$125. It's the chef's first attempt at ambitious, haute cuisine cooking and as the big dishes with a fusion of ingredients appear, I have to admit, it works.



MINETTA TAVERN

Cuisine	French
Price range	\$\$\$
Things to know	Minetta serves an abbreviated late-night 'supper' menu after midnight.
Recommended dishes	Roasted marrow bones; pig's trotters; a Black Label burger or a New York strip and chocolate soufflé.
Review	Keith McNally's Minetta Tavern is a revamped version of a 1930s pub and whilst he has taken the place upscale he's wisely left most of the old saloon-era interior intact. The real overhaul at the new Minetta Tavern is in kitchen. The vibe at Minetta might be buzzy, exclusive, and chaotic, but the menu is a compact, carefully edited compendium of practiced brasserie favourites and old-fashioned tavern fare. Happily almost everything tastes good!



THE LITTLE OWL

Cuisine	American Nouveau, Mediterranean
Price range	\$\$\$
Things to know	The wine list offers a nice selection of half-bottles; brunch is served on Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; the restaurant provides outside catering.
Ideal meal	Crispy soft-shell crab; pork chop and warm chocolate cake.
Review	The Little Owl is another place where the high quality of the cooking is out of all proportion with the restaurant's unassuming size. There are ten tables in the tidy white space and 28 chairs. Thirteen dollars buy several plump grilled scallops served over a green, cheesy risotto mixed with fresh spinach and nuggets of lobster. These intricate little creations are the handiwork of chef Joey Campanaro, who has perfected a uniquely pleasing American bistro style.



LOCANDA VERDE

Cuisine	Italian
Price range	\$\$
Things to know	It is open for an Italian-style breakfast; a brasserie-style lunch and the kitchen also serves elegant ready-made desserts.
Ideal meal	Sheep's-milk ricotta with herbs; blue-crab crostini; rabbit terrine or 'testa della casa' (headcheese); chicken for two and lemon tart.
Review	This is the latest of actor Robert De Niro's Italian restaurants, but in style, conception and tone it's very different from its predecessors. It is divided by curving, wood-rimmed banquettes into smaller, more intimate dining sections and a granite-topped bar and café tables promote a casual, tavern-like feel. The most radical overhaul is in the kitchen, run by chef Andrew Carmellini; master of classical French and Italian cuisine, which he presents 'family style' and reasonably priced. No main course costs over \$25. This is crowd-pleasing cooking not designed to win culinary awards, but to promote a good time in a casually stylish, relatively economical way and, judging by the crowds, it's succeeding.





ABC KITCHEN	
Cuisine	American Nouveau
Price range	\$\$\$\$
Things to know	There is a great series of non-alcoholic 'house brewed' soft drinks. I recommend the one spiked with lemon and ginger.
Ideal meal	Peekytoe-crab toast; house-made ricotta ravioli; chilli-herbed black sea bass and ice cream sundae.
Review	The great chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten, is famous for fusing Asian flavours with the classical tradition and ABC Kitchen is the chef's most show-stopping restaurant yet. It's located at the ABC Carpet & Home department store, so you can buy furniture before you eat! The theme is locavore, 'sustainability', so most things on the menu are sourced from local suppliers; the menus are made from recycled paper; the place mats and the leftovers are all composted after hours; waiters wear casual clothes; the clay dishware was made by a local artisan and the tables are set with wildflowers. The food on the other hand is anything but recycled. ABC finds a balance between old-fashioned culinary artistry and the seasonal integrity of locavore and almost everything on the menu is inventive and it works.

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

1 Read the introductory notes to the five most influential New York City restaurants of the past six years and answer these questions.

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|---|--|
| 1 Where are Pig's trotters a recommended meal? | 4 In which restaurant can you only book online? |
| 2 Which restaurant serves great non-alcoholic drinks? | 5 Where do they serve brunch on Saturdays and Sundays? |
| 3 Where can you eat breakfast? | |

2 Read each of the restaurant reviews and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Momofuku Ko is more like a dining club than a restaurant.
- 2 There are only twelve tables at the Momofuku Ko.
- 3 The Minetta Tavern used to be a pub in the 1930s.
- 4 Its menu is vast and complex.
- 5 The Little Owl is big and expensive.
- 6 Its food is American bistro style.
- 7 Actor Robert De Niro is the chef at the Locanda Verde.
- 8 The Locanda Verde is an inexpensive place to dine with the family.
- 9 The ABC Kitchen is located in a department store.
- 10 The ABC does everything it can to be environmentally friendly.

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SPEAKING

3 Work in pairs. Discuss the five different styles of restaurant and decide what elements of each you will keep in a new restaurant you will open in partnership.

- A *I really like the sustainability idea of the ABC Kitchen.*
 B *Me too, but I would prefer something a little more sophisticated in terms of atmosphere and location.*
 A *OK, how about...*

WRITING

4 Continue working in the same pairs and write a description of your new restaurant based on the information given in the reviews above. When you have finished, display your restaurant profile for your classmates to see and choose the one(s) you prefer.

You should include:

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|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • average cost; | • things you need to know; | • atmosphere; |
| • style of food; | • location; | • any other relevant information. |
| • signature dishes; | • décor; | |