



New Yorkers have their cake-and eat it too!

May 11, 2009 - Shopping Centers

Restaurant openings and closings are not unusual in New York, in any economy. New Yorkers, as with sophisticated urban dwellers around the world, spend hours in restaurants working, socializing and just plain relaxing. We identify with and continue to patronize our many time-honored establishments, but we also love the fresh and exciting. It is a very positive reflection of the retail picture overall that we are seeing more dining options, not less - a clear sign that landlords in this city are becoming more flexible and that hope is on the horizon.

Reinforcing this premise is the fact that restaurant applications rose sharply. In the first quarter, alone, there were 1,411 new applications, up 25% from the year before. Could restaurants be the business boom of today that replaces banks on every corner?

Nearly every established neighborhood in the city has been benefiting from this deliciously active commerce. Two of the Eastside's most revered establishments are leaving their brownstones and moving into midtown: Charlie Palmer's Aureole has found literally greener pastures at One Bryant Park. Three-star seafood restaurant Oceana is sailing slightly south to the McGraw-Hill Building at 1221 Avenue of the Americas in Rockefeller Center.

On the Upper West Side, which had its haute cuisine boom before the economic climate changed, the action is continuing in terms of openings, but "affordable eats" are especially prominent. Danny Meyer's Shake Shack on the corner of Columbus Ave. and 77th St., has had lines segueing around the corner since it opened in March. Another example of value-priced dining is Lansky's Deli, which opened late last year at 225 Columbus Ave., and Israeli creamery Screme at 2030 Broadway. Another contender for affordable-but-fabulous is star-chef Zak Pelaccio's Fatty Crab, which just opened at 2170 Broadway.

A little further uptown, Harlem doyenne Doris Wade is opening Questan's at 2113 Frederick Douglass Blvd., between West 114th and West 115th Sts.

Moving into Midtown, Hell's Kitchen, aka Clinton, has two brand new and much ballyhooed watering holes, Blue Ruin at 438 Ninth Ave. and Pony Bar at 637 Tenth Ave. In Midtown East, iconic Italian culinary gathering place, DeGrazia Ristorante, is moving across the street to larger space at 208 Third Ave. Apna Taj, an Indian buffet has opened on 55th St. between Lexington and Third Aves.

Downtown Dines On

Nowhere are we seeing as much vibrant activity as in downtown Manhattan, from Chelsea to the Bowery. Starting with Meatpacking, new restaurants are continuing to open and compete with the likes of such well-established and flourishing destinations as Pastis and Spice Market. At 675 Hudson St., 675 Bar replaces Level V - for a start.

Danny Meyer is opening an Italian-inspired eatery at Gramercy Park Hotel. In NoHo, Table 8 at the Cooper Square Hotel is opening to much fanfare. Terrance Brennan's "barstro" Bar Artisanal opened in April at 268 West Broadway and tequila bar Mayahuel opened at 304 East 6th St. Also,

soon to hit is La Cr pe Parisienne at 51 Spring St. between Lafayette and Mulberry.

And there's even more good news in the Village, including Berimbau at 43 Carmine St., the Crosby Connection at 45 Bleecker St. and Sea Thai at 835 Washington St. In addition, Otarian, an Australian vegetarian restaurant, will open its first U.S. location at 154 Bleecker St.

On the Lower East Side, The Clerkenwell is serving traditional British pub fare at 49 Clinton St. and National, a new cafe and soon-to-be restaurant, has opened at 6 Rivington St.

In the Bowery, a healthy experiment is receiving raves at Anne Appar's Homegrown Kitchen, which opened mid-April. The new restaurant is housed in a six-story building at 169 Bowery with a rooftop garden that helps supply vegetables and herbs for her kitchen. Moreover, Appar is offering lunches starting at \$8 per entr e and dinners at an amazing \$10.

Clearly, we are seeing lots of new and creative destinations opening throughout the city, many of which are offering fare that's priced just right for the times.

The Proliferation of the Pizza Pie

The pizza parlor, that ubiquitous economy-friendly bastion of good eating, has been updated and upgraded to include several new gourmet styles such as those found at Pizza Plus NYC, recently opened at 707 Ninth Ave., and Keste Pizza & Vino at 271 Bleecker, which claims to serve a Neapolitan pizza based upon the first recipe ever developed, dating back to the 14th Century. These packed-every-night eateries follow the success of gourmet pizza predecessor, Co. at 230 Ninth Ave., the 54-seat venue that was packed from the moment it opened six months ago.

Restaurant openings are often considered a reason for optimism in good and bad economic times. In New York, they're also a way of life; an inherent part of our culture. Even if the planning of these venues was a couple years before their openings, the fact that so many recent restaurants are following through and opening, offers tangible proof of optimism for the future of New York. Here, we live well, eat well and always shop well.

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