

the **CHEAP LIST**



THE BIG PEACH

FOR ALL THE Underground Gourmet knows, there may be more fried-chicken specialists in Brooklyn these days than there are in the entire South. Among the newcomers, **Peaches HotHouse** (415 Tompkins Ave., at Hancock St., Bedford-Stuyvesant; 718-483-9111) is where we go whenever we want to breathe fire through our nostrils and watch steam shoot out each other's ears, the inevitable consequence, we discovered, of requesting the Nashville-style fried chicken extra hot (\$12). Cayenne pepper is the purported culprit, but as your lips numb, your tongue swells, and even your kneecaps begin to sweat, you wonder whether this fiendish concoction has been brined in rocket fuel and dry-rubbed with gunpowder. We're also quite partial to the fried chicken and biscuits at the divey **Commodore** (366 Metropolitan Ave., at Havemeyer St., Williamsburg; 718-218-7632), where it comes three crisp and juicy thighs to a plate (\$9). But the dish not to miss here is a grilled pimiento-and-poblano sandwich called an "adult

cheese" (\$6), crusty and tangy and perhaps more tastefully mature than the clientele. Of course, the big news in deep-fried poultry this year was the long-awaited return of **Pies-N-Thighs** (166 S. 4th St., at Driggs St., Williamsburg; 347-529-6090), a rural-hip country kitchen keeping the bewhiskered and plaid-clad locals afloat in crisp-skinned, moist-fleshed chicken, which we found most enticing tucked jauntily into a world-class biscuit (\$5). In an informal, if not piggy, state-fair-style sampling of all the endearingly homespun pies, the silky-textured banana-cream gets the Underground Gourmet blue ribbon. The country-fried crawl continues apace to Carroll Gardens, where you might want to wipe the chicken grease off your hands and mouth before entering the spiffy premises of **Soersucker**, the self-professed home for "cleaned-up" southern cooking (329 Smith St., nr. President St.; 718-422-0444). Accordingly, the best dish there is eaten with silverware instead of your fingers, and it's a luscious chicken and dumplings at that: a bowl of tender meat and soul-soothing dumplings, crowned with a crunchy tuile of chicken skin (\$18). We also quite liked the snack tray (\$15), a church-picnic-style spread of deviled eggs, country-ham pâté, pickled okra, and pimiento cheese. Wash it down with some sweet





The Commodore

tea or, even better, a glass of Red Hook rosé on tap.



SOME NEW NOODLES

NOODLE EATING continues to be all the rage among the cheap-eats populace, and the recent expansion of Flushing favorite **Xi'an Famous Foods** to two Manhattan locations has only increased the ecstatic slurping sounds you hear around town. Xi'an's Savory Lamb Cumin Hand-Pulled Noodles (\$5), dressed with spoonfuls of several invigorating sauces plus red-chile oil, tahini,

and a mingling of cumin-laced bits of lamb, is the Underground Gourmet's all-time favorite budget noodle dish, but the equally lip-smacking Liang Pi Noodles, served cold with luscious, spongy, Wheat Thins-size squares of sauce-soaking gluten (\$4), are the way to go in hot weather. Both pretty much define the meaning of the term *al dente*; they're rough and ragged, chewy but tender, with a profoundly satisfying mouthfeel. Note that the Chinatown branch (88 E. Broadway, nr. Forsyth St.; no phone) is standing room only, accommodating three hunched slurpers max, while the brand-new and comparatively palatial East Village outpost (81 St. Marks Pl., nr. First Ave.; no phone) has about ten seats. Judging by the way the neighborhood has pounced

on this welcome arrival, though, your chances of scoring one aren't so good.

Seats are also at a premium up in Hell's Kitchen at the new **Totto Ramen** (366 W. 52nd St., nr. Ninth Ave.; 212-582-0052), a spare ten-stool soup kitchen from the team behind the excellent Yakitori Totto and Soba Totto. (Its instant popularity has induced management to convert another of its holdings, Yakitori Tots, into **Hide-Chan Ramen** [248 E. 52nd St., nr. Second Ave.; 212-813-1800], specializing in tonkotsu, or pork-bone, broth.) The popular choice among the starchy-food enthusiasts here is the Totto Spicy Ramen, made with a deeply flavored chicken-based broth and some good, springy noodles delivered daily from Soba Totto across town.

Ramen is like kryptonite to the hapless vegetarian, with its super-porky broths and wheels of processed pink fish cakes known as narutomaki, but the no-judgment menu here includes a kelp-based broth, in regular and spicy models, that the omnivorous U.G. heartily endorses.



TORTILLA TOWN

THE BEST THING to happen to New York Mexican lately has been **Tortilleria Nixtamal**, a Corona, Queens, microfactory (and great taquería in its own right), whose tender, fresh tortillas,

Dos Toros



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD; MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, LISA HALL/COURTESY OF KITCHENETTE; NINA HOROWITZ/NEW YORK MAGAZINE; LEAH ABRAHAM/COURTESY OF SETTEPANI; COURTESY OF ZOMA

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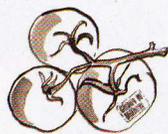
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made from lime-treated corn ground into masa, have been proliferating on menus around town. The second best? **Cascabel's** chorizo taco, a smoky, crumbly, boldly seasoned gem (\$8.50 for two; 1542 Second Ave., nr. 80th St.; 212-717-7800).

But back to those tortillas: Look for them to appear soon at both **Tacombi**, the vintage VW bus parked in a Nolita garage where chef-partner Aarón Sanchez is spending the summer catering special events and feeding Facebook fans, and **Casa Mezcal**, the Lower East Side mezcadería whose kitchen is still in Con Ed limbo. Until then, get your fix at **Dos Toros** (137 Fourth Ave., nr. 13th St.; 212-677-7300), a counter-service joint with Bay Area aspirations, lively homemade salsas, and flavorful flap-steak carne asada tacos (\$3.67). You'll also find Nixtamal's tortillas at the **Loading Dock** in downtown Brooklyn (170 Tillary St., nr. Gold St.; 646-355-7518), a raw, rustic space where one Choncho (a.k.a. Forrest Cole) has made a name for himself with the deep-fried, deftly garnished fish tacos he also sells at Brooklyn Flea (\$5). In the East Village, Nixtamal also distributes to **La Lucha** (147 Ave. A, nr. 9th St.; 212-260-0235), the Mexican-wrestling-themed taquería modeled after its ilk in Mexico City, where everyone apparently goes to feed before the big bouts.

Somehow, even without the benefit of Corona-crafted tortillas, several other worthy Mexican menus have made their debuts. **Hecho en Dumbo**, for one, abandoned its Brooklyn birthplace for a new home in Noho (354 Bowery, nr. Great Jones St.; 212-937-4245), where the tortillas, incidentally, are made in-house from dried-corn masa (the next best thing), and where the cosmopolitan Mexico City-style cuisine shines in dishes like chile-dusted jicama-and-pineapple salad with watercress dressing (\$6). Sue Torres, the new consulting chef at the **Rusty Knot** (425 West St., at 11th St.; 212-645-5668), makes her own masa for snacks like chalupas topped with chicken or vegetables (\$5). They're great bar food, and so is the happy-hour special at **Fonda** (434 Seventh Ave., nr. 15th St., Park Slope; 718-369-3144), the cozy new venture

of Roberto Santibañez, former Rosa Mexicano bigwig. From 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, an order of Rosa Mex-worthy guacamole for two—fastidiously prepared to order in a *molcajete* and served with warm tortillas, chips, and salsa—will run you five bucks, with \$3 beer and wine. The neighborhood has clearly discovered it, as empty bar stools vanish fast. And in Williamsburg, locals have warmly embraced the crew at **Cariño** (82 S. 4th St., nr. Berry St.; 718-384-8282), reunited after their last place of employ, Bonita, closed down last summer. The liquor license is still pending, but in the meantime, it's a fine place for a mellow brunch of chilaquiles topped with two eggs, any style, slathered with salsa verde (\$12).



GOING LOCAL

THERE ARE THOSE among us who grow vegetables on the roof, only eat beef from cows that once frolicked contentedly on New York State pastures, and haven't bought a banana since the last century. And where do they go for dinner? **Roman's** (243 DeKalb Ave., nr. Vanderbilt Ave., Ft. Greene; 718-622-5300), for one, the Italian-accented sibling of Williamsburg's pioneering Diner and Marlow & Sons. The menu changes constantly, a policy that infuriates creatures of habit but that the Underground Gourmet finds refreshing, especially when it brings such surprises as the season's first sweet Maine shrimp, or a flurry of fava beans, whipped into a purée or adorning a bowl of spaghetti (\$12). Card-carrying locavores also find sustenance at **Northern Spy Food Co.** (511 E. 12th St., nr. Ave. A; 212-228-5100), a cozy East Village nook that celebrates local products in unexpected dishes like upstate-freekeh risotto enriched with mascarpone (\$12). At Brooklyn Heights's **Iris Cafe** (20 Columbia Pl., nr. Joralemon St.; 718-722-7395), the coffee is Stumptown,

Where Chefs Eat Cheap

Four cooks' picks from their own neighborhoods.

BY CHRISTINE WHITNEY

1 | Marcus Samuelsson

Co-owner of Aquavit and chef-owner of Red Rooster, opening in October.



HARLEM



① Charles' Country Pan Fried Chicken

2841 Frederick Douglass Blvd., nr. 151st St. 212-281-1800

For really good fried chicken, I go here. I like the dark meat best (\$12 buffet).



② Sisters Caribbean Cuisine

47 E. 124th St., at Madison Ave. 212-410-3000

In Harlem there's a lot of steam-table food; this hidden spot has some of the best. Their goat curry (\$10.99) is fantastic.

⑧ Kitchenette Uptown
1272 Amsterdam Ave., at 123rd St. 212-531-7600
They do wonderful brunch; I go for any of the pancakes (\$10.50 for mixed berry).

⑦ Nectar Wine Bar
2235 Frederick Douglass Blvd., nr. 121st St. 212-961-9622
I trust whatever wine and bar snacks (\$4 and up) they have at this little bar.



⑤ Les Ambassades

2200 Frederick Douglass Blvd., nr. 118th St.; 212-666-0078
This Senegalese place has fantastic croissants (\$1.75), the way they are in Paris, nice and buttery. They also make ginger juice (\$3), great when you're getting a cold.

⑥ Zoma
2084 Frederick Douglass Blvd., at 113th St. 212-662-0620
I go to this Ethiopian restaurant for kitfo (\$17)—a kind of beef tartare served on sourdough pancake bread.



④ Settepani
196 Lenox Ave., nr. 120th St. 917-492-4806
A real Italian place with great teas, coffee, and homemade biscotti (\$4/plate). It's nice for socializing.



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD; MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, LISA HALL/COURTESY OF KITCHENETTE; NINA HOROWITZ/NEW YORK MAGAZINE; LEAH ABRAHAM/COURTESY OF SETTEPANI; COURTESY OF ZOMA

Chef illustrations by Luke Wilson

Minisize Me

All over town, less is suddenly more. Here's where to find big flavors for small change.
R.R. & R.P.

→

BOURBON-GINGER-PECAN PIE

First Prize Pies
The four-inch version of the powerhouse pie that won Allison Kave first place in a Brooklyn bake-off and launched her career. \$6; firstprizepies.com.



←

MICRO CANNOLI

Stuffed Artisan Cannolis

Even smaller than the shop's standard mini—a cannoli canapé, if you will. \$1; 176 Stanton St.; 212-995-2266.



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CAKE TRUFFLES

Momofuku Milk Bar

Wonka-esque compression of a layer cake into one moist, rich mouthful, in flavors like birthday cake (good) and chocolate malt (best). Three for \$3; 207 Second Ave.; no phone.



MINI PALETAS

La Newyorkina

Kid-size ice pops (for kids of all ages) in flavors like spicy mango and watermelon. \$1; weekends at Hester Street Fair.



PIZZETTA

Pizza Mezzaluna

The Neapolitan answer to the New York slice on the go, this seven-incher cooks in the time it would take to reheat a slab from Famous Ray's. \$5; 146 W. Houston St.; 212-533-1242.



SHORTY'S "SHORTY"

Shorty's

A six-inch cheesesteak—versus the standard nine—runs \$9 with a pint of beer during happy hour. It's plenty. 576 Ninth Ave.; 212-967-3055.



←
SNACK-SIZE LOBSTER ROLL

Luke's Lobster
Affordable luxury on a butter-toasted bun. \$8.71; 93 E. 7th St.; 212-387-8487.



MINI YUM KIPPERED

Russ & Daughters

Everyone knows mini-bagels are best—crustier, better balanced—especially when stuffed with baked salmon and cream cheese. \$5.95; 179 E. Houston St.; 212-475-4880.



←
Photographs by Hannah Whitaker

WHERE
CHEFS EAT
CHEAP



2 Sara Jenkins

Chef-owner at Porchetta and an East Village pasta restaurant opening in September; consulting chef at Veloce Pizzeria.

ASTORIA



8

Laziza

25-78 Steinway St., nr. 28th Ave.
718-777-7676

A pastry shop that makes classic Middle Eastern sweets: phyllo-and-nut pastries, baklava (\$1.50, or \$12/lb.).

1

Agnanti

19-06 Ditmars Blvd., nr. 19th St.
718-545-4554

My favorite Greek restaurant. The little zucchini fritters (\$7) and tomato fritters (\$7.50) are amazing.



2

Rosario's Deli

22-55 31st St., nr. Ditmars Blvd.
718-728-2920

Amazing cheese, sandwiches, pizza, and bread. He has only one kind of slice (Neapolitan), and it's really good (\$2).

7

Cedars Meat House

41-08 30th Ave., nr. 41st St.
718-606-1244

Their shish tawook sandwich (\$3.50) is the closest thing to the grilled-chicken sandwich in Beirut.

6

Petey's Burger

30-17 30th Ave., nr. 31st St.
718-267-6300

It's kind of In-N-Out inspired. I do delivery and get the double cheese with sauce and extra-crispy fries (\$9.01).

5

Seva

30-07 34th St., nr. 30th Ave.
718-626-4440

I particularly like the fried-bok-choy appetizer (\$3) at this Indian restaurant. Also, the apricot-lamb curry (\$12).

4

Naseem Meat Market & Grocery

25-65 Steinway St., nr. 28th Ave.
718-777-7032

They make the best merguez (\$3.99/lb.). Also: really good Moroccan preserved lemons (\$3.99/lb.).



Mediterranean Foods

23-18 31st St., nr. 23rd Ave.
718-721-0221

This shop has all the great prepared foods like taramasalata, a classic Greek dip with salted cod roe (\$3.85/lb.).



the turkey salad is made from antibiotic-free gobblers lovingly raised on Pennsylvania's Koch's Farm, and the caramel sticky buns are baked in-house. And then, on opposite ends of the culinary spectrum: **Eat** (124 Meserole Ave., nr. Leonard St., Greenpoint; 718-389-8083), where the overindulged U.G. goes to detox on farm-fresh fare like carrot-turnip-spelt salad and rhubarb tonic, and **Bark Hot Dogs** (474 Bergen St., nr. Flatbush Ave., Park Slope; 718-789-1939), Brooklyn's preeminent source for Slow Food fast food, from lard-basted, Rochester-made boutique franks to New Jersey-strawberry milk shakes.



THE DAN-DAN DIASPORA

If you've noticed a surge of late in Sichuan food, you can thank (or blame, depending on your spice tolerance) Wu Liang Ye. Despite the business's recent retrenchment, with shuttered branches in Yorkville and Murray Hill, it's impossible to overstate the role the onetime powerhouse has

MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, ANDREAS PRINGO/COURTESY OF AGNANTI; NEW YORK MAGAZINE; NINA HOROWITZ/NEW YORK MAGAZINE (REMAINING)

played Zhang bah, g launch. And t of-the WLYO through alizing, ments **Jeal** (1 St.; 2 friend alum, signat duck l meaty Ma P Tofu, cubes



Totto Ramen

played in the recent boom. John Zhang, the Grand Sichuan poohbah, got his start at Wu before launching his own mini-empire. And this year, front-and-back-of-the-house fugitives from the WLY organization have dispersed throughout the borough, materializing in spiffy new establishments like the wood-beamed **Wa Jeal** (1588 Second Ave., nr. 82nd St.; 212-396-3339), where the friendly young manager, a Wu alum, sagely guides newcomers to signatures like half a tea-smoked duck hacked into crisp-skinned, meaty hunks (\$15.95), and Chef's Ma Paul Diced Fish & Crispy Tofu, with crispy but tender cubes of flounder and bean curd

afloat in a glistening chile-oil lake (\$15.95).

There have also been unconfirmed reports of Wu folks spotted ten blocks south, at **Szechuan Chalet** (1395 Second Ave., nr. 73rd St.; 212-737-1838), where hand-scrawled thank-you notes from the local populace attest to the Sichuan-via-New Jersey chef's prowess with regional specialties like Cheng Du chilled noodles with spicy sesame vinaigrette (\$4.95) and double-cooked fresh bacon with spicy capsicum (\$13.95), long strips of savory pork belly mingled with green peppers and leeks. In the increasingly Sichuan-saturated Thirties, the one-

time Wu Liang Ye outpost has become **Mapo Tofu** (338 Lexington Ave., nr. 39th St.; 212-867-8118), but many of its former employees have wound up at **Lan Sheng** a few blocks west (60 W. 39th St., nr. Sixth Ave.; 212-575-8899), where the kitchen has entered into cutthroat culinary competition with the veteran Szechuan Gourmet up the street, deploying weapons like dan dan noodles (\$5.50) and chile-pepper-bombed Chongqing chicken (\$12.95).

Despite evidence to the contrary, there's more on the Sino-food front than Sichuan peppercorns and mapo tofu. There are, for instance, the unfam-

iliar Shangdong and Dongbei specialties that have been infiltrating Flushing, at places like the year-old **M&T** (44-09 Kissena Blvd., nr. Cherry Ave.; 718-539-4100), and the supremely comforting bo zai fan—or, as the 301-item menu modestly refers to it, World Famous Rice in Casserole, topped with everything from squab to eel (\$8.95)—at **A-Wah**, the Cantonese Chowhound favorite just south of the Manhattan Bridge (5 Catherine St., nr. Division St.; 212-925-8308).



PERPETUAL PIZZA BOOM

THE UNDERGROUND Gourmet's favorite new pizza can be found in hipster Greenpoint at **Paulie Gee's** (60 Greenpoint Ave., nr. West St.; 347-987-3747), the midlife career reinvention of Paul Giannone—until last March, a Neapolitan pizzaiolo trapped in the body of a disgruntled New Jersey software-quality-assurance engineer. His story is as inspirational as his pie: In recent years, fantasizing about living a better, pizza-centric life and maybe even opening his own pizzeria, Giannone built an oven in his suburban backyard, perfected his dough-stretching technique, and, for reasons known only to him, started inviting food bloggers over for dinner. Finally, encouraged by the ecstatic response, he found a restaurant location and made the leap to full-time pie man, and it's not too much to say that the software-quality-assurance industry's loss is the pizza world's gain. Light and airy with a fine, fleeting microlayer of crispness, Paulie Gee's pizza (starting at \$11) is in the same pristine Neapolitan class as the pies he idolized at Kesté, Motorino, and the late Una Pizza Napoletana. The man also has a healthy obsession with high-quality ingredients and a Jim (Co.) Lahey-like genius for toppings, most apparent, perhaps, in a rotating roster of seasonal specials like the U.G.'s current favorite: sweet Italian sausage mingled with fresh mozzarella and kale

that Giannone buys from Greenpoint's Rooftop Farm (\$17).

If you think that's too much to spend for a ball of dough, search between the cushions of your couch and then head over to the new East Village **Motorino** outpost in the old Una Pizza Napoletana space for lunch (349 E. 12th St., nr. First Ave.; 212-777-2644). From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays, a pizza (Margherita, marinara, Brussels sprouts, or soppressata piccante), plus your choice of salad or dessert, will run you just \$12. You'll find another bargain a few blocks away at **Totale Pizza** (36 St. Marks Pl., nr. Second Ave.; 212-254-0180), the somewhat baffling collaboration between former Una Pizza Napoletana understudy Gregory Ryzhkov and an owner of the \$1 slice specialist 2 Bros. Pizza down the block. Why should this merger befuddle the U.G.? Because if you remember anything about Ryzhkov's old UPN boss Anthony Mangieri—as uncompromising a pizzaiolo as ever turned a pie around the oven's hot spot—it's

hard to imagine a trusted former associate of his divulging trade secrets to the enemy. It's like a Peter Luger waiter going into business with the owner of Tad's Steaks. Of course, when all is said and done, all you need to know is that the Naples-style pizza here is well charred, nicely balanced, and made with good—presumably non-2 Bros.—ingredients, although it does suffer slightly from a crust that's too stiff and unyielding. Still, with prices that range from \$7 to \$13 per pie, compared with the former UPN's \$21, who's complaining?

Uptown in Hell's Kitchen, at the streamlined **Zigolinis Pizza Bar** (675A Ninth Ave., nr. 47th St.; 212-333-3900), the U.G. has tracked down two more finely pedigreed pizzaioli. Here you'll find executive pie man Luigi Olivella, whose commendable Neapolitan work you may know from No. 28, Lasso, and the late Isabella's Oven. At his side, on occasion, is Giuseppe Paciullo, who once manned the pizza station with equal parts apparent

boredom and technical wizardry at the excellent Zero Otto Nove in the Bronx. The \$12 Margherita pie is soft and supple, charred and chewy, with discrete puddles of sweet mozzarella and a judicious swirl of tomato sauce.

And let's not forget **Totonno's** in Coney Island (1524 Neptune Ave., nr. W. 16th St.; 718-372-8606), not exactly new, having shoveled its first load of coal into the oven some 86 years ago, but back in the game after being sidelined by a fire for nearly a year, and run once more with an iron fist by Louise "Cookie" Ciminieri, granddaughter of the restaurant's Neapolitan immigrant founder.



THE OPEN MARKET

IF YOU BAKE IT, pickle it, ferment it, scoop it, grill it, or frost

it, they will come. At least that's the way it looks every weekend afternoon at the Brooklyn Flea and Hester Street Fair, every Sunday at Fulton Stall Market, once a month at New Amsterdam Market, and even in the posh environs of the **Cooper Square Hotel** garden, where Faustina chef Scott Conant recently started hawking his private-label tomato sauce and \$5 bags of Stromboli (25 Cooper Sq., at 5th St.; next date July 31, 1 to 7 p.m.). New York, it's safe to say, is swept up in market fever, fueled by career-changing cooks and cupcake-happy hobbyists catering to the insatiable appetite for the artisanal, the handmade, and the quaintly packaged. The **Brooklyn Flea**, a culinary destination after just two years, is still the place to go for Salvatore Bklyn cannoli, and brands-in-the-making like the Good Batch stropwafels. On **New Amsterdam Market** days (monthly July and August, weekly September 12 to December 19), the Underground Gourmet likes to leg it down to the Seaport and slurp up some Bent Spoon sorbet, or tuck into something sustainably beefy or porky from Marlow & Daughters (chili come fall, we hope), while stocking up on exotica like Finnish ruis bread and spelt linguine. Over at **Hester Street Fair** in the Seward Park Co-op, there's a sort of perverse pleasure to be had in chasing a pulled-pork sandwich with a vegan sandwich cookie. But our favorite edible expedition of late has been to the **Red Hook Mercado** (Mercadito would be more accurate), an intimate, lushly landscaped lot out in the Brooklyn boonies, where itinerant foodies and windswept locals commune over pupusas and sopes griddled up by moonlighting vendors from the nearby ball fields (410 Van Brunt St., nr. Van Dyke St.; Saturday and Sunday noon to 9 p.m.).



ASIAN NEW WAVE

WHATEVER YOU think of the word *fusion*, there's no denying that some of the most delicious

Paulie Gee's



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD

The Year in Meatballs

On sliders, sandwiches, and sticks—where to find the best new variations on the form.



\$9

THE MEATBALL SHOP

(84 Stanton St., nr. Allen St.; 212-982-8895)
Of the five kinds of house-ground balls available in just about every sauce-and-bread configuration known to man, we like the spicy pork variety with meat sauce and provolone on a hero.



\$5

KENMARE

(98 Kenmare St., nr. Centre St.; 212-274-9898)
Joey Campanaro's signature Little Owl slider, transplanted from the West Village to Nolita. The best ball-to-bun synergy out there.



\$12

NORTHERN SPY FOOD CO.

(511 E. 12th St., nr. Ave. A; 212-228-5100)
The locavore-minded kitchen uses pork leg from Fleisher's to make these super-tender orbs. They're seasoned with star anise, oven-roasted, then braised in sauce.



\$9

MOTORINO

(349 E. 12th St., nr. First Ave.; 212-777-2644)
First pizza, now meatballs. Former fine-dining chef Mathieu Palombino has mastered the form: nicely browned on the outside, tender within, and served in the most invigorating pool of sauce in town.



\$8

BALABOOSTA

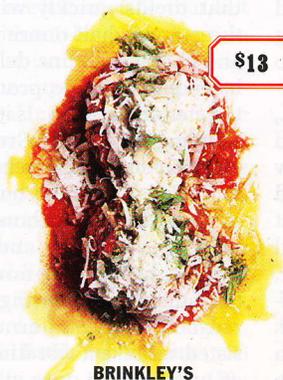
(214 Mulberry St., nr. Spring St.; 212-966-7366)
Two delicious cheap-eats trends collide: grass-fed-beef balls wrapped in falafel and served on a stick, with a lip-smacking green tahini sauce.



\$7

MIA DONA CART

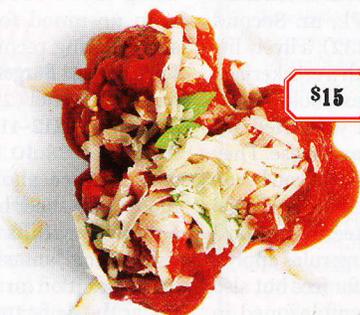
(206 E. 58th St., nr. Third Ave.; 212-750-8170)
Some restaurants set up ice-cream stands outside their doors. Mia Dona has a meatball cart, hawking \$5 bowls or \$7 focaccia sandwiches, and starring the best meatballs in midtown.



\$13

BRINKLEY'S

(406 Broome St., at Centre St.; 212-680-5600)
While the trend is toward golf-ball-size meatballs, Michael Sullivan's take is unabashedly big and lusciously soft.



\$15

CORSINO

(637 Hudson St., at Horatio St.; 212-242-3093)
Rib-sticking Heritage-beef-brisket balls with a pleasantly coarse texture, and a 2 a.m. last call.



\$11

TERROIR TRIBECA

(24 Harrison St., nr. Greenwich St.; 212-625-9463)
Exquisitely soft and airy, Marco Canora's veal-ricotta meatballs have always been among the best; now he serves them on a toasted baguette.

R.R. & R.P.

food comes from the artful collision of cultures and flavors. Just ask Jean-Georges Vongerichten or David Chang. Or try a Kim Dog at **Mrs. Kim's** (160 Franklin St., at Kent St., Greenpoint; 718-389-8881) and see for yourself. The juicy house-ground pork sausage, slicked with gochujang ketchup (a paste made from red chiles and fermented soybeans) and garnished with kimchee on a soft toasted roll, is but one of several fruitful collaborations between a Korean owner and two American chefs, and makes an excellent chalkboard special (\$10 with a pint of beer). Kimchee, seemingly the new salsa, is also a staple at **Purple Yam** (1314 Cortelyou Rd., nr. Rugby Rd., Ditmas Park; 718-940-8188), where Filipino chef Romy Dorotan tucks it into a Korean-meatball hero on a purple yam bun (\$8). Pan-Asian explorations animate his menu, a border-crossing document that features dishes as traditional as vinegar-braised chicken adobo (\$16) and as unexpected as one evening's crimson steamed dumplings (\$7), stuffed with beets and tofu and served with yogurt, a combo that conjured Kiev more than Manila. King Phojanakong calls the Thai-Filipino fusion he first introduced at Kuma Inn "Asian-American," and of all the small plates on offer at his Brooklyn sequel, **Umi Nom** (433 DeKalb Ave., nr. Classon Ave., Bedford-Stuyvesant; 718-789-8806), we steer you toward the grilled mackerel (\$11), a slender specimen garnished with a salad of cherry tomatoes and jicama in a lively garlic-chile-lime dressing. Asian-American would also be an apt description of Zak Pelaccio's genre-busting barbecue at **Fatty 'Cue** (91 S. 6th St., nr. Berry St., Williamsburg; 718-599-3090), the Malaysian-flavored roadhouse frequented by the Underground Gourmet whenever the craving strikes for Pullman toast with 'cue drippings (a.k.a. Master Fat, \$4), or a late-night smoked-brisket-and-smoked-Cheddar sandwich with chile jam (\$10). The U.G. has also been known to bulk up on Haus Baos (\$4.50) at **Baohaus** (137 Rivington St., nr. Norfolk St.; 646-684-3835), where chef-owner Eddie Huang

reinterprets the red-cooked pork of his Taiwanese-American youth with Angus skirt steak and a marinade that combines cherry cola and Chinese sorghum liquor.



BURGER BINGE

FUNNY TO THINK that fourteen years ago, this magazine admitted, rather resignedly, that New York was not a great "burger town." Not like L.A., say, or Houston, or even Oklahoma City. Funnier that while we are now indisputably and unrelentingly a great burger town, all the Underground Gourmet's ingrate foodie friends say they are sick and tired of burgers. But there are still some unjaded eaters who appreciate a Pat LaFrieda patty, and to accommodate them, a fresh new crop of burger shops have sprung up within the past year. Chief among them is the stylish, pub-like **Black Market** (110 Ave. A, nr. 7th St.; 212-614-9798), where you can get a cocktail called a Tompkins Square Swizzle or a plate of broiled kale seasoned with Parmesan to go along with the excellent LaFrieda-blend house cheeseburger. This six-ounce dynamo has a nice crumbly texture and a good salty flavor, and comes with a pile of first-rate fries for \$12.

A few blocks west but still flying slightly below the burger radar is the nine-month-old **Mark** (33 St. Marks Pl., nr. Second Ave.; 212-677-3132), a lively little burger bar with a crackerjack staff that flips a textbook-perfect two-ounce slider with fried onions and American cheese. They go for \$2 a pop, but if you break the house slider-eating record (currently eighteen; standard competitive-eating rules apply), you not only eat for free but also get your name emblazoned in colored chalk on a menu board above the griddle. Speaking of sliders, the juicy little flavor bombs (\$3; \$3.50 with cheese) at **Saint Anselm** in Williamsburg (355 Metropolitan Ave.,

Umi Nom

nr. Havemeyer St.; 718-384-5054) are unsurpassed, and it's no wonder: Owner and New Jersey native Joe Carroll modeled them faithfully after the ones he was raised on at White Manna.

When the U.G. craves something more substantial and is in no mood for squashing slider-eating records, we go to **Bill's Bar and Burger** in the meatpacking district (22 Ninth Ave., at 13th St.; 212-414-3003) and fork over \$8.50 for the new seven-ounce short-rib-blend model. For sheer beefy flavor, it outdoes even Bill's much-lauded five-ounce "smashed" burger, but order it on an English muffin, as the de facto house bun is no match for this thing's lavish juices. At the cubicle-size **Fresh-N-Fast** (111 E. 23rd St., nr. Park Ave. S.; 646-454-9144), a new In-N-Out knockoff located just a short burger-eater's waddle

away from the Madison Square Park Shake Shack, we like the \$5.99 double cheeseburger dressed with nothing more than the house special sauce. Unlike Bill's bun, F-N-F's squishy potato variety is a team player that melds quickly with the three-and-a-half-ounce patties and cheese into one delicious, harmonious whole, prompting the eternal question: Is it worth skipping the Shack's Great Depression-era soup-kitchen line for? Well, not quite, but hope springs eternal: Although the place was deserted and thoroughly lacking in non-U.G. customers the other night, the red-bow-tied counterwoman insisted we take a vibrating pager just like the ones at Shake Shack, as if, at any moment, he were expecting a mob.

Continuing on our burger-town tour to Queens, the **Astor**



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD; MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, SLAWEK/COURTESY OF KARCZMA; TODD FULLER; COURTESY OF 7-ELEVEN; COURTESY OF MRS. KIM'S

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WHERE CHEFS EAT CHEAP

3 | Julie Farias

Chef, the General Greene

GREENPOINT



8 | Karczma
136 Greenpoint Ave., nr. Manhattan Ave.
718-349-1744
My Polish spot, with waitresses in crazy peasant outfits. Two favorites: pickle soup (\$2.50) and peasant-style lard (\$3.50) with bacon, spices, and a big hunk of rye bread.

1 | Corner Frenzy
995 Manhattan Ave., nr. Huron St.
718-349-9663
They sell empanadas (\$1.25) inside this laundromat. Super-junky and so good.



2 | Peter Pan Donut & Pastry Shop
727 Manhattan Ave., nr. Norman Ave.; 718-389-3676
I like the glazed sour cream (\$.95). By the time I'm at the end of the block, I'm finished.



7 | Mrs. Kim's
160 Franklin St., at Kent St.
718-389-8881
I order the kimchee plate (\$6 for five flavors), and a fava-bean dish (\$6)—favas grilled in their pods, served with mint and tart fish sauce.

3 | Sikorski Meat Market
603 Manhattan Ave., nr. Nassau Ave.; 718-389-6181
Amazing smoked pork ribs (\$4.99/lb.).



5 | 7-Eleven
883-885 Manhattan Ave., nr. Milton St.
718-389-7389
This just opened. I saw the sign and couldn't wait for the Slurpees. I like the Coca-Cola, or goji-berry-cherry (\$1.59) if I'm feeling festive.

4 | Bar Matchless
557 Manhattan Ave., at Driggs Ave.
718-383-5333.
I go for "2 for Tuesdays"—two-for-one drinks—and buffalo wings (\$9) or a fried-chicken sandwich (\$9). They're open till 4 a.m.

6 | Acme Smoked Fish
30 Gem St., nr. Meserole Ave.
718-383-8585
I buy Blue Hill Bay's smoked-whitefish salad (\$3.25/8 oz.), which you have to have with Ritz crackers.

Bake Shop (12-23 Astoria Blvd., at 14th St., Astoria; 718-606-8439) is, for all appearances, a bright and breezy patisserie, but one with hidden depths. Remember Mitchel London's Burger & Cupcakes concept? This place is kind of like that, but in addition to cupcakes there are tarts, croissants, éclairs, sticky buns, a superb almond-cornmeal cake, and, behind a white subway-tile kitchen partition, a burger-making station. The one to get is the six-ounce Astor burger (\$8.75), another La Frieda-brisket-blend patty with chile-infused mayo and all the fixings. And wrapping things up in Crown Heights, there is **Dutch Boy Burgers** (766 Franklin Ave., nr. St. Johns Pl.; 718-230-0293), a retro-diner-ish spot in a onetime Dutch Boy paint shop, where you can get a bulky seven-ounce bacon-

blue-cheeseburger (\$8.50) and wash it down with a Blue Marble ice-cream shake.



MEATLESS IN MANHATTAN (AND BROOKLYN)

THE FALAFEL joint is a natural habitat for frugal vegetarians, and this year has seen the arrival of two nifty new additions to an increasingly crowded (and corporate) field. **Soomsoom Vegetarian Bar** (166 W. 72nd St., nr. Amsterdam Ave.; 212-712-2525) is kosher, Israeli, and so perpetually packed that the salad-bar scrum can get scarier than the produce department at Fairway. The falafel are crisp,

SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD; MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SLAWEK/COURTESY OF KARCZMA; TODD FULLER; COURTESY OF 7-ELEVEN; COURTESY OF MRS. KIM'S

Trucks on a Roll

FOOD TRUCKS, the next step up the evolutionary ladder from the traditional sidewalk food cart (trucks are generally larger, more tricked-out, and self-propelled), aren't exactly new. Trucks serving pizza or halal chicken and rice have fed midtown office workers and outer-borough revelers for years. What is new is the elevation of the form—the quality, variety, and sheer number of the things have never been greater. Here, a look at 25 of our favorites. BY AILEEN GALLAGHER, DANIEL MAURER, AND HELEN ROSNER



Moshe's Falafel
46th St. and Sixth Ave.
A small portion of the crispy, fluffy falafels (three for \$3.75) is a meal; a large order (five for \$5.25) is a feast.



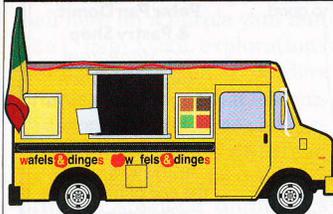
NYC Cravings Truck
twitter.com/nycravings
Pair the meaty Taiwanese fried pork or fried chicken over rice (\$7) with a side of anchovies with peanuts and chili peppers (\$4).



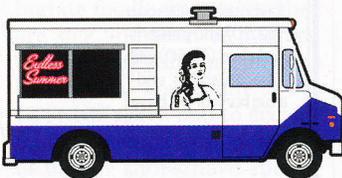
Rickshaw Dumpling Truck
twitter.com/rickshawbar
The chicken-and-Thai-basil (six for \$6) are the best of these snack-size savory creations.



Jiannetto's Pizza
jiannetospizza.com
Their Grandma slice (\$2.75) is a thin-crust Sicilian that's crunchy (but not brittle) with sauce that's sweet (but not too sweet).



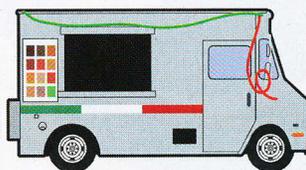
Wafels & Dinges
twitter.com/waffletruck
The Brussels wafel (\$5) is airy enough for summer. Save the denser Liège variety (\$5) for colder weather. Smother either in fudge or Nutella.



Endless Summer
N. 3rd at Bedford St., Williamsburg
The juicy pork (\$2.50) or beef (\$3) tacos with avocado crema are deliciously overstuffed.



La Cense Beef Burger Truck
twitter.com/LCBBurgerTruck
There are two things on the menu, a hamburger (\$6) and a hamburger with cheese (\$6.50). Neither disappoints.



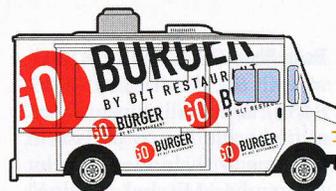
El Rey del Taco
30th Ave. nr. 33rd St., Astoria
Late-night drinkers are powerless before the "sincronizada" (\$7)—a gooey melted ham-and-cheese between pressed flour tortillas.



96th St. a
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Street Sweets

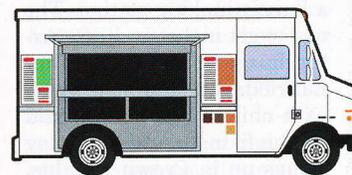
twitter.com/streetsweets
Fear the addictive potential of the whoopie pies. The chocolate and pumpkin varieties are baked daily and cost a dangerous \$2 apiece.



GO Burger
twitter.com/goburger
The namesake burgers are good. The \$6 Kobe hot dog—served on a buttery bun and topped with chili and cheese or apple slaw and jalapeño—is better.



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The Brothers L&C Latin Fast Food
18th St. at Sixth Ave.
For \$2.50 (or three for \$7), get a double corn tortilla filled with juicy, flavorful shredded pork, beef, or chicken.

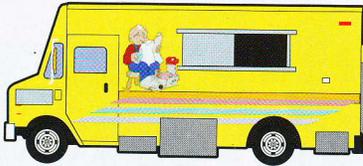


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Big Gay Ice Cream Truck

twitter.com/biggayicecream
The tasty soft-serve is really just a vehicle for exotic toppings like wasabi-pea powder, olive oil, and cardamom.



Red Hook Trucks

Red Hook Ball Fields, Court St. at Bay St., Red Hook

The tacos, pupusas, and huaraches (all under \$10) that helped reignite New York's love affair with street food.



Super Tacos

96th St. at Broadway and 14th St. at 7th Ave.

Try the tlacoyos (\$3): long masa flatbreads stuffed with refried beans and topped, tamale style, with bright-orange spicy pork, sweet chopped onion, lettuce, and cilantro.



Van Leeuwen

twitter.com/VLAIC

The anti-Mister Softee. The milk and cream come from upstate cows, the ginger is "baby-fiber-free," and the chocolate is from Michel Cluizel.



Bistro Truck

twitter.com/bistrotruck

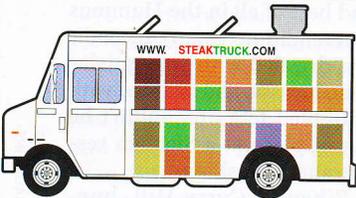
A sort of Niçoise sandwich, the Tangiers Bocadillo (\$6) is packed with tuna, hard-boiled egg, veggies, mortadella, and french fries *inside*.



Frites 'N' Meats

twitter.com/fritesmeats

You'll be tempted to order an "American Kobe" burger (\$7.50), but the cheaper (\$5.50) grass-fed Angus is plenty thick and juicy enough.



Steak Truck

47th St. at Park Ave.

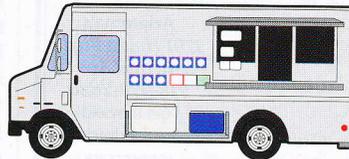
Enough yummy kebabs (\$2.50), cheesesteaks (\$4), and chicken-and-rice platters (\$4) for a month of lunches without duplication.



The Treats Truck

212-691-5226

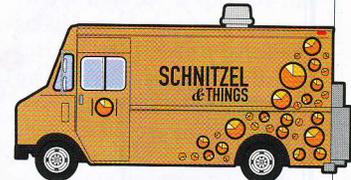
A rolling bakery full of cookies (\$1 each) and brownies (\$2.50 and up). The Mexican Chocolate is a real killer.



Yvonne Yvonne

71st St. and York Ave.

Consummate hostess Yvonne makes a perfect braised oxtail (\$6.50) and other Jamaican staples like curried goat.



Schnitzel & Things

twitter.com/schnitzeltruck

There's more food with the platter (schnitzel and two sides, \$10), but the sandwich (\$8) keeps the focus on the chicken, pork, cod, or veal.



Patacon Pisao

202nd St. nr. Tenth Ave.

Order the "full" sandwich (\$5.50), a gob of marinated beef, pork, and chicken and a square of fried cheese stuffed inside two crispy disks of fried plantain.



Mini Picanteria El Guayaquileño

37th St. at Sixth Ave. and Warren St. at Roosevelt Ave., Jackson Heights

Midtowners (at lunch) and Ecuadorans (at the nocturnal Queens location) go for the encebollado fish soup (\$8).



World's Best Sandwich

20th St. and Broadway

The name may be an overstatement, but the chicken-salad sandwich (\$4)—with more meat than mayo—certainly outperforms most delis.



Berry Fro Yo

A cheap fix of tangy, unsweetened yogurt, with toppings that range from the virtuous (granola) to the shameless (Lucky Charms-style marshmallows).

WHERE
CHEFS EAT
CHEAP



4 Francis Garcia

Chef-owner of Artichoke Pizza, This Little Piggy Had Roast Beef, Led Zeppole, and a new Artichoke location opening in August.

DONGAN HILLS, STATEN ISLAND



7

Lee's Tavern
60 Hancock St.,
nr. Garretson Ave.
718-667-9749
The best pizza in Staten Island. I get an anchovy pie (\$12) and tell them to burn the anchovy until it disintegrates.

1

Duffy's

650 Forest Ave.,
nr. Bement Ave.,
West Brighton
718-447-9276

This bar was making kick-ass burgers, on charbroiled Thomas's English muffins, before burgers were cool.



2

Fortune Garden

1771 Hylan Blvd.,
nr. Liberty Ave.
718-979-6100
Best Chinese in the neighborhood. They make a big Dungeness crab (\$24.25) with ginger and scallion that's awesome.

3

Ariemma's

1791 Hylan Blvd.,
nr. Buel Ave.
718-979-2630

I get the cold-cut sandwich: soppressata, provolone, and red peppers with brown mustard on semolina bread (\$10.49/hero).

6

Joe's Lobster House

1898 Hylan Blvd.,
nr. Seaver Ave.
718-667-0003

Lots of seafood, and everything's fresh. The lobster bisque (\$4.50) is awesome, with a piece of bread on the side.



5

LaRocca's Italian Ices and Pizzeria

489 Midland Ave.,
nr. Kiswick St.
718-979-8833

My favorite Italian ice is cookies and cream (\$3.75/large). It's not low-fat, but it doesn't weigh you down.

4

Colonnade Diner

2001 Hylan Blvd.,
nr. Jefferson Ave.
718-351-2900

They've been around since the sixties. If I had to pick a favorite: the spinach pie (\$10.95).



the pitas fluffy, and free garnishes like pickled turnips and paprika-dusted kohlrabi fresh and plentiful, but for the Underground Gourmet's money, the thing to get is the excellent sabich sandwich (\$6.80), crammed with velvety fried eggplant, potato chunks, and a hard-boiled egg. Out in the industrial wilds of East Williamsburg, **Yummus Hummus** (55 Waterbury St., nr. Meserole St.; 347-984-6202) materializes like a mirage in the culinary desert. The owners built the rough-hewn nook from scratch, and the same philosophy applies to the food: Everything is made in-house, from the breakfast blueberry scones to the flat, chewy (and, as it cools, rather tough) pita. In a brave, some might say blasphemous, approach, falafel are baked, not fried. But the hummus is as it should be—creamy, rich, anointed with oil and tahini. It's good as is, better crowned with an entire head of oven-roasted garlic from

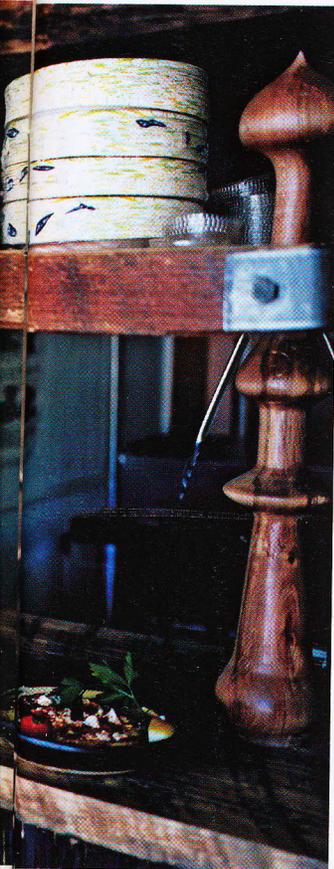
which you squeeze the butter-soft cloves (the Baked Bulb), and best of all in the Hummus Hot rendition (\$7.50). Incendiary, drizzled with yogurt-jalapeño harissa, and studded with crumbled feta, it wouldn't be out of place at a Sichuan restaurant in Flushing.

When in Curry Hill, hungry herbivores are directed to **Bhojan** (102 Lexington Ave., nr. 27th St.; 212-213-9615), a rather elegant new restaurant on the strip. The \$16 dinner thalis—traditional meals served on a metal tray, the rice-and-bread-equipped center ringed with eight bowls of dhal, salad, raita, chutney, and curries—can easily feed two, but be prepared to pony up a \$6 sharing fee. The rest of the extensive menu, like the thalis, reflects the vegetarian cooking of Punjab and Gujarat, and includes a wide assortment of street snacks like tangy, crunchy chaat and Indian-style sandwiches. For a sly American take on an In-

SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS BY GILLIAN MACLEOD; MAP BY JASON LEE; PHOTOGRAPHS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, MICHELLE PALEMBRE BROWN; NEW YORK MAGAZINE; CHRIS LAROCCA; COURTESY OF THE LOBSTER HOUSE

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Yummus Hummus

dian-style sandwich, we recommend the Clean Slate at **Saltie** (378 Metropolitan Ave., nr. Havemeyer St., Williamsburg; 718-387-4777), an exuberant, open-face assemblage of hummus, quinoa, pickles, yogurt, and herbs on house-baked naan (\$9).



THE SMALL-PLATE DEBATE

AND NOW let's revisit the hot-button topic of portion control. Some are for it, some against. But hasn't it been scientifically proved that appetizers generally trump main courses? And didn't Michael Pollan tell us to eat less, anyway?

Even in the realm of cheap eats, the Underground Gourmet

has always prized quality over quantity—as should anyone, we might argue, who doesn't inhale Nathan's hot dogs for a living. And with more and more fine-dining chefs scaling back their tariffs, if not their technique, quality has never been better. This is immediately evident at **Traif** (229 S. 4th St., nr. Havemeyer St., Williamsburg; 347-844-9578), chef-owner Jason Marcus's tongue-in-pork-cheek rebuke to Jewish dietary law. But there's more to Traif than bacon and shrimp: The changing menu features offbeat salads, like a recent combo of dark-roasted carrots, orange segments, arugula, feta, and grapes (\$6), and barbecue-braised short-rib sliders served with attention-grabbing sweet-potato fries (\$8). With prices like that, you don't expect shot-glass *amuses* and dainty mignardises, like a juicy pineapple cube adorned with pomegranate molasses and lime zest, but Traif delivers both, as well as an appealing wine list and serious Schott Zwiesel stemware.

Like Traif, the **Vanderbilt** (570 Vanderbilt Ave., at Bergen St., Prospect Heights; 718-623-0570) offers front-row seats—counter stools, really—to the open kitchen, where ambitious young cooks painstakingly compose salads and tweak garnishes, and even the smallest of small plates seems complex. A broccoli "hors d'oeuvre" is thinly sliced, flash-fried, seasoned with Korean chile powder and lemon juice and dusted with Pecorino (\$5). The charcuterie is all house-made and plated as elegantly as Bar Boulud's. And while you might think it adequate to coat a sweet-fleshed mackerel fillet with piment d'espelette, sear it perfectly on the grill, and balance it somehow on a puck of diced Israeli-salad-style vegetables, the Vanderbilt crew doesn't consider the dish complete without a pitcher of tomato broth to pour on top (\$15).

Similar flourishes are on display at **6th Street Kitchen** (507 E. 6th St., nr. Ave. A; 212-477-

4649), Chris Genoversa's home-spun conversion of the former OG, primarily in specials like an ethereal corn custard, accessorized with chanterelles and mâche (\$12). The place has already gained a following for its chorizo sliders (a small-plate motif, it seems), and a calm, civilized ambience that makes it an East Village oasis. Even more transporting is **Robotaya** (231 E. 9th St., nr. Second Ave.; 212-979-9674), specializing in the theatrical Japanese practice of grilling items to order and passing them to sake-swilling customers on long-handled wooden paddles, not unlike feeding time at some high-class zoo. Of the raw material on display, the Japanese sweet potato (\$5) benefits beautifully from this treatment, as do tender morsels of duck and Kobe beef. But one shouldn't neglect the non-grilled dishes, served paddle-less—in particular, a pot of Hinohikari rice for two, accessorized with nori, duck morsels

in miso, and spicy cod roe (\$10), and a decidedly non-locavore salad of Japanese cucumber, Oxnard's Nagatoshi Farm tomato, Sendai miso, and a hillock of boutique Japanese salt that management should hide before City Hall confiscates it.



SWEET SPOTS

WHY PIE, why now? Not only is it the ultimate recessionary dessert, delivering homespun comfort in an uncertain time, it aligns perfectly with the hand-crafted, DIY Zeitgeist of the day. That, and it's so damned delicious. Especially when it's one

acquired from crust mavens Emily and Melissa Elsen, the South Dakota-bred sisters behind **Four & Twenty Blackbirds** (439 Third Ave., at 8th St., Gowanus; 718-499-2917), like their signature salted caramel apple, or a recent blueberry-cherry number oozing sweet-tart juice (\$4.50). And should you find yourself in the vicinity of Bed-Stuy's snug **Pilar Cuban Eatery** (393 Classon Ave., nr. Greene Ave.; 718-623-2822), you'll want to follow up your perfectly pressed Cuban sandwich with a slice of guava-and-cream-cheese pie (\$4.50). Don't let the thing's flat, unassuming mien fool you—a flakier, more buttery crust cannot be found. When in South Brooklyn, we like to swing by the **Red Hook Lobster Pound** not just for a Connecticut-style lobster roll but also to grab one of Margaret Palca's spectacular whoop-

ie pies (\$3), an eerie flashback to our Devil Dog-dependent youth (284 Van Brunt St., nr. Visitation Pl.; 646-326-7650).

The Underground Gourmet has also fallen hard for First Prize Pies, a new venture launched by amateur baker Allison Kave, who so far sells only online and to two new restaurants: Fatty 'Cue, where her brother Corwin is executive chef, and which usually has two varieties on hand (pray that one is the fudgy, toasted-marshmallow-fluffed s'mores, \$6 a slice with "local cream"), and **Brooklyn Farmacy** (513 Henry St., at Sackett St., Carroll Gardens; 718-522-6260), an old apothecary lovingly restored into a general store and soda fountain. In addition to seasonal slices of First Prize Pies (peach, at the moment; \$4.50), the Farmacy traffics in egg creams that do the

borough proud (\$2.50).

Ostensibly, **Stuffed Artisan Cannolis** (176 Stanton St., nr. Clinton St.; 212-995-2266) purveys just one thing—in up to 75 different rotating flavors, as outré as "Girl Scout" (Samoa cookie, specifically) and root-beer float. We were, admittedly, skeptical at first, but the proof is in the unfailingly crisp piped shell and lush ricotta fillings (\$2 for a mini, or 3 for \$5). **Popbar** (5 Carmine St., at Sixth Ave.; 212-255-4874), another revolutionary advance in dessert science, is clearly a franchise in the making. The concept: a customizable gelato (or sorbetto or yogurt) on a stick, crumbed to your precise specifications with nuts or granola, say, and dipped, half-dipped, or even double-dipped in chocolate (\$5.50).

Street sweets are fine, don't get us wrong, but sometimes you want something a little more sophisticated—something like goat-cheese cheesecake with blackberries and rosemary caramel (\$6), made by a team of former Le Cirque pastry cooks at **DessertTruck Works** (6 Clinton St., nr. Houston St.; no phone), the brick-and-mortar outgrowth of the popular sweetsmobile. Speaking of elegant plated desserts, Spice Market alum Pichet Ong offers them up three for \$20 in a tapas-style tasting at **Spot Dessert Bar** (13 St. Marks Pl., nr. Third Ave.; 212-677-5670), where our current favorite, the yuzu eskimo, layers Oreo "soil," yuzu ice cream, and passion-fruit foam. We love his Chinese walnut cookies, too (\$1.95)—lumpy, crunchy biscuits also on offer at his other consulting gig, Nolita's **Village Tart** (86 Kenmare St., at Mulberry St.; 212-226-4980).

And finally, this wouldn't be a complete survey of New York's new sweetscape without a reverent mention of **Güllüoğlu** (982 Second Ave., at 52nd St.; 212-813-0500), whose legendary expertise with phyllo dough, sheep's-milk butter, and nuts has made the 139-year-old Turkish brand the uncontested baklava world champion. Its new Manhattan café stocks the full flaky line, including varieties like chestnut, walnut, and especially Turkish pistachio, the pride of Gaziantep.

Four & Twenty Blackbirds



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Paul Wexle

SPOT ILLUSTRATION BY GILLIAN MACLEOD