

NEW YORK RESTAURANTS



WHERE TO EAT

While New Yorkers' appetite for good food remains unaffected by the economy, our annual survey of must-eats changes with the times. Here, a rundown of this year's best spots for splurging on gourmet lobster poêlé or saving on noodles.

BY ADAM PLATT

Best New Chefs



Shaun Hergatt

Sho Shaun Hergatt

A master of French technique and also one of the last Asian-fusion gunslingers. Catch his cooking while you still can.

Unexpected Gourmet



Sho Shaun Hergatt.
(Photo: Jeff Mermelstein)

Whenever the bedraggled food-snobs I know start to whine about the decline of classic, white-glove gourmet cuisine in New York, I tell them to get a grip. Inventive Continental cooking is still available all over this burger-ravaged metropolis; you just have to work a little harder to find it. If you don't believe me, follow the rest of the food obsessives to Aldea, on West 17th Street, where the talented young cook George Mendes has created a futuristic home for Iberian cuisine, complete with an open kitchen and glimmering aqua-colored walls. Mendes specializes in spare, deceptively simple Spanish recipes, like crunchy pigs' ears tossed with apples, and a creation called shrimp Al-hinho made with seared shrimp, shreds of pimento, and a delicious shrimp reduction finished with paprika. But the dish the people at my table couldn't stop nattering about was the densely flavored, paella-style arroz de pato, which Mendes makes with nickels of chorizo, black olives, and duck confit and tops with crunchy, translucent wafers of duck cracklings.

Best New Restaurants



Illustration by Bella Foster

Sho Shaun Hergatt

Chef Hergatt revisits the glory years when Asian flavor met impeccable classic technique.

Modern greenmarket Austrian cuisine is the theme at Seasonal Restaurant & Weinbar in midtown, on an anonymous stretch of 58th Street. This means platters of plump, un-Austrian diver scallops plated with tangles of buttery, beet-flavored tagliatelle, and blocks of soft, crackly, farm-to-table pork belly, which the restaurant's co-chefs, Wolfgang Ban and Eduard Frauneder, sweeten with Riesling wine. Ban and Frauneder make zwiebelrostbraten (beef and onions), that potentially chewy old Austrian warhorse of a dish, with uncommonly tender strips of Brandt beef from California. And if you crave traditionalist cooking from the old country, try the fluffy, pie-size Wiener schnitzel (with tangy potato salad and housemade lingonberry jam), followed by a spoonful or two of topfenockerl dumplings for dessert, which the chefs fold with stewed raspberries and infused with a sinfully rich injection of farmer's cheese.

Similarly unexpected pleasures are available at SHO Shaun Hergatt, although if you want to find this curiously named, underpublicized establishment tucked among the gloomy corporate buildings along Broad Street, it helps to have a GPS in your pocket. But you won't taste a delicately constructed foie gras mille-feuille or classic, peach-sweet lobster poêlé like this anywhere else in the vicinity of the New York Stock Exchange (or farther uptown, for that matter). All sorts of vanished gourmet items make their appearance on Hergatt's menu (gold leaf, caviar, Urfa spice), but pay special attention to his inspired Asian-fusion creations, like tiny-boned segments of fried quail dredged in cornstarch and glazed with chile-flavored coconut milk, and the delicious modernist interpretation of duck à l'orange, served with red hibiscus gelée.