

PLUS: **Is Spamalot** the Next 'Producers'? By Bill Zehme

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DREAM MEALS

Our critics cook up their ultimate food fantasies.



ADAM PLATT

▼ APPETIZER

Steak tartare, 360 (360 Van Brunt St., Red Hook, Brooklyn; 718-246-0360) Arnaud Erhart's little bistro opened next to a cremation consultant in Red Hook, so it's only fitting his steak tartare is the best in town.

FISH COURSE

Lobster "Noilly Prat," Per Se (10 Columbus Circle; 212-823-9335) Thomas Keller touches his lobster with sweet vermouth and a little disk of candied fennel.



INTERMEZZO

Crispy sweetbreads, Casa Mono (52 Irving Place; 212-253-2773)

They have a brittle, compulsively tasty crunch like Chicken McNuggets, only much, much better.

ENTRÉE

Les Tripes en cocotte à l'Armagnac, Brasserie LCB (60 W. 55th St.; 212-688-6525)

An ancient classic, prepared by a master and served, with proper fanfare, under a great silver warmer.

DESSERT

Baba au rhum Monte Carlo style, Alain Ducasse (55 W. 58th St.; 212-265-7300)

If you want to end your ridiculously rich, over-the-top meal with a bang, this is the way to do it.



HAL RUBENSTEIN

AMUSE-BOUCHE

Blistered peppers, August (359 W. Bleecker St.; 212-929-4774) It's astonishing how something so simple can cause such a ruckus.

APPETIZER

Our Own Liverwurst, the Modern (9 W. 53rd St.; 212-333-1220)

No, it's nothing like what you remember or fear. A gorgeous, smooth pâté to cool the spice's flames.

PASTA COURSE

Pasta fiori, Café Gray (10 Columbus Circle; 212-823-6338) A simple flat noodle tossed with tomato concassé, thyme, and rosemary—but it's like tasting tomatoes for the first time.

FISH COURSE

Snapper in sancocho broth, Le Bernardin (155 W. 51st St.; 212-554-1515) Sancocho is a classic Puerto Rican dish of long-stewed veal, beef, pork, and peppers. Its briny, rich broth ignites a baked snapper. The fish course is no longer the tame one.

ENTRÉE

Boeuf grillé, Per Se If you love steak, who better to leave it to than Thomas Keller, who finds a cut even more flavorful than Black Angus? It doesn't even need the lovely Bordelaise it comes with. The bone marrow is divine.

DESSERT

Coconut vacherin, Daniel (60 E. 65th St.; 212-288-0033) This glistening white circle of half-crunch, half-velvet is dabbed with passion-fruit purée and diced fresh pineapple. It's citrusy, palate-cleansing, and lush at the same time.



GAEL GREENE



APPETIZER

Baby scallops on green-apple brunoise with fresh wasabi, yuzu, olive oil, and sea salt, Jean Georges (1 Central Park W.; 212-299-3900)

Scallops this sweet and rare inspire daredevil tricks. What makes this work is the wasabi smack and yuzu citrus.

INTERMEZZO

Shad roe out of its sac with bonito flakes and dried hot pepper with a shot of icy aquavit, Per Se I've been eating for decades and never encountered anything like Thomas Keller's shad in the nude. The aquavit is my idea.

▲ ENTRÉE

Hawaiian escolar slowly poached in olive oil with salad of lettuce hearts and tomato confit, Le Bernardin

Its mother would not recognize this white tuna with all the silken sweetness it picks up in Eric Ripert's hands.

DESSERT

Four-part citrus tasting, Jean Georges Citrus is what I crave after so many tastes. Johnny Iuzzini's unforgettable quartet features grapefruit gelée with blood-orange segments and honey-ginger ice cream, and that's just for starters.



ROBIN RAISFELD

AMUSE-BOUCHE

Edamame with Thai-basil lime oil, Kuma Inn (113 Ludlow St.; 212-353-8866)

I'd go all-Asian. These are the plumpest, freshest soybeans in town, imbued with a zesty citric zing.

APPETIZER

Galangal-and-coconut soup with chicken, lemongrass, and kaffir lime, Kittichai (60 Thompson St.; 212-219-2000)

A coconut-creamy, chili-fired tom kha gai to put all others to shame.

ENTRÉE

Jungle curry at Sripraphai (64-13 39th Ave., Woodside; 718-899-9599)

Unrestrainedly spiced and fully flavored—one of countless reasons to make a Woodside pilgrimage.

SALAD

Mung chaat, Dévi (8 E. 18th St.; 212-691-1300) A crunchy, palate-cleansing construction of pappadam (lentil wafers) and mung beans.

▼ DESSERT

Sesame sundae, Bôï (246 E. 44th St.; 212-681-6541) Il Laboratorio del Gelato's sesame ice cream layered with caramel, toasted sesame seeds, and chunks of dense, rich halvah.



ROB PATRONITE

ZUPPA

Cappelletti in brodo, Teodora (141 E. 57th St.; 212-826-7101) The opening bid in my ultimate pastore's tasting menu: delicate veal-stuffed dumplings in a capon broth so rich and soothing, just looking at it can cure a cold.



▲ PRIMO

Housemade spaghetti with tomato and basil, L'Impero (45 Tudor City Pl.; 212-599-5045) The essence of Italian cooking: a simple dish that transcends its simplicity.

SECONDO

Orecchiette with sweet sausage and rapini, Babbo (110 Waverly Pl.; 212-777-0303) It's almost impossible to pick just one Babbo pasta, but if forced, I'd go with the exquisitely chewy orecchiette.

CONTORNO

Potato gnocchi, Hearth (403 E. 12th St.; 646-602-1300) Marco Canora's signature side: rich, buttery, and as light as cotton candy.

DOLCE

Polenta nera, San Domenico (240 Central Park S.; 212-265-5959) Not a pasta, but a good way to end the starchfest: It's served warm with dark chocolate, hazelnut, and whipped cream on top.