

MUST EAT

AN ECLECTIC SELECTION
OF CULINARY LOCATIONS

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PHOTOGRAPHY: KRIS VLEGELS

SUN

Love
At
First
Bite



Love
At
First
Bite



Scenes from the Battleship Gastronomica in NYC

“What’s the purpose of your visit to NYC, sir?” asked the customs officer, minutes after I disembarked at JFK. “Um, well, lunch and dinner,” I replied hesitantly. Three minutes later two custom officers were unpacking my luggage with the most sincere interest. I just barely avoided a full body cavity search. But I was telling the truth. I hadn’t come to NYC to see the numerous mind-blowing landmarks, the fabulous museums or Broadway shows. I came here to eat, full stop, to give myself over to absolute gastronomical pleasure in all its forms.

As a child of the Old World, it seemed (for a long time) as if I were strapped to some sort of gastronomical chastity belt. Somehow it felt like my taste buds were not allowed to go all the way. My first eating experiences in NYC, however, completely liberated me from the burden of gastronomical history and even “proper gastronomy” which always seemed to peep over my shoulder like a black raven. Entertainment seems to be the hardest word to stomach in the Old World. Here I really found the best of both worlds. Old World focus, depth, and precision, coupled with a New World perspective, playfulness and vision. All of this was 30-odd years ago.

Being a full time importer of wine and high-end Japanese ingredients (in Belgium) gets me around the globe. Wherever I am I always try to scratch the surface to connect with the soul of local gastronomy and eating establishments. Nowhere else have I found more culinary bliss than in NYC.

Must Eat NYC is absolutely not a complete guide; the mere idea that a guide to NYC restaurants could ever be “complete” is utterly preposterous. The NYC food scene is a bit like a Borgesian encyclopedia; unimaginably endless and profoundly strange. *Must Eat NYC* highlights my personal favorites and features those dishes that touch me, embrace me, and make me feel like coming home.

I hope you enjoy and savor this guide as much as I did in its creation.

Luc Hoornaert and Kris Vlegels

*Thanks, dear Qurratul-ain, for your patience and strength.
You are the wind beneath my wings.*

NYC in the rain, when?

CONTENT



BROOKLYN - 10

Grimaldi's	10
Hibino	14
Vinegar Hill House	18
French Louie	22
Roberta's	26
Smorgasburg	30
Shalom Japan	34
Traif	38
Peter Luger	42
Fette Sau	46
Glasserie	50
Greenpoint Beer & Ale Co	54
Lucky Luna	58
Peter Pan Donut and Pastry Shop	62
Olmsted	66
Leuca	70
Ramen.co by Keizo Shimamoto	74
Extra Fancy	79
Di Fara Pizza	79
Tacis Beyti	79
Brooklyn Grange	79
Pies 'n' Thighs	79
Nitehawk Cinema	79
Morgan's Barbecue	79
Café Tibet	79

BRONX - 82

El Nuevo Bohio Lechonera	83
Roberto's	83
Johnny's Famous Reef Restaurant	83

UPTOWN WEST - 84

Indian Accent	84
Asiate (Mandarin Oriental Hotel)	89
Per Se	89
Jean-Georges	89

UPTOWN EAST - 92

Rotisserie Georgette	92
Flock Dinner	97
Sushi Seki	97
Shun Lee Palace	97
The Jeffrey	97
Rao	97

MIDTOWN WEST - 98

NoMad @The NoMad Hotel	98
Eisenberg's	102
Eleven Madison Park	106
Chelsea Market	110
Dickson's Farmstand	114
Morimoto	118
Buddakan	122
Rouge Tomato Chelsea	126
Chef's Table at Brooklyn Fare	130
Ivan Ramen Slurp Shop	134
Gabriel Kreuther	138
Ootoya Chelsea	143
Añejo Hell's Kitchen	143
City Sandwich	143
Marea	143
Robert's Steakhouse at the Penthouse Club	143
Daisy May's BBQ USA	143
Gramercy Tavern	143
Pam Real Thai	143



MIDTOWN EAST - 144

Union Square Café	144
Maialino	148
Atoboy	152
Haandi	156
Sushi Yasuda	160
The Gander	163
Kajitsu	163
Dhaba	163
Tiffin Wallah	163
Aureole	163
Penelope	163
Nobu Fifty Seven	163
Empellón	163



DOWNTOWN WEST - 166

Babbo	166
Balthazar	170
Dominique Ansel Bakery	174
China Blue	178
Locanda Verde	182
Nakazawa Sushi	186
La Bonbonnière	190
RedFarm	194
The Spotted Pig	198
Claudette	203
Chez Sardine	203
Decoy	203
Nobu Downtown	203
Murray's Cheese Bar	203
Corkbuzz Wine Studio	203
Charlie Bird	203
The Dutch	203
Blue Hill	203
Denino's	203
La Pulqueria	203



DOWNTOWN EAST - 206

Katz's Delicatessen	206
Yonah Schimmel	210
Lam Zhou	214
Rutger Street Food Cart	218
Wildair	222
Ikinari Steak East Village	226
Black Seed Bagels	230
Bessou	234
Saxon & Parole	238
Oriental Garden	242
Nom Wah Tea Parlor	246
Chinese Tuxedo	250
Amazing 66	254
Di Palo	258
Chee Cheong Fun Food Cart	262
Narcissa	267
Cherche Midi (Shane McBride)	267
Estela	267
Sushi Dojo	267
Momofuku Noodle Bar	267
Cha An Tea House	267
Golden Unicorn	267
Lombardi Pizza	267
Graffiti Me & You Private Dining Room	267
Gotham Bar & Grill	267
Mile end Deli	267
Il Posto Pizza	267
Alphabetical index	270
Colophon	272



1

GRIMALDI'S

1 Front St., Brooklyn - NY 11201

T (718) 858-4300 - www.grimaldis-pizza.com

Open Mon-Thur: 11:30 a.m.-10:45 p.m., Fri: 11:30 a.m.-11:45 p.m., Sat: noon-11:45 p.m., Sun: noon-10:45 p.m.



Under the Brooklyn Bridge, of course on the Brooklyn side, you will always see a long line of people waiting in front of a very handsome building. These are the pizza enthusiasts waiting for a table at Grimaldi's, one of NY's best-loved pizzerias.



Pizza Margherita

You can't reserve a table here and nope, they don't accept credit cards either.

One of the darkest days in Italian culinary history must have been when someone placed pineapple (from a can) for the first time on a pizza base and stuck it in the oven. Yet pizza Hawaii is the most popular pizza in Italy, thanks of course to the tourists. Pizza originated in the Mediterranean Sea area and people surmise that it began as a plate! In other words, people baked flat bread that was used as a tray. Everything that people wanted to eat was laid on it and only if one had an extremely big appetite, the 'plate' was also devoured. According to tradition, the Trojan hero Aeneas established the city of Lavinium on the spot where he devoured the empty plates (bread plates) himself out of hunger.

The Vikings also ate a type of pizza, namely a round-shaped bread with all sorts of ingredients on it which was baked in a type of pizza oven. It was only in the 17th century that pizza made its appearance in Naples, without the tomato sauce of course because at that time tomatoes were (erroneously) considered toxic. Tomatoes from South America were introduced in Europe around 1500 and were mostly a yellow variety. That is why the Italian name for tomato is *pomo d'oro*, which means "golden apple". The tomatoes that we see today were developed by means of cross-fertilization in the 18th century.

The best-known pizza in those days was the *Mastunicola*, a pizza base decked with lard, pecorino, black pepper and basil.

Most people still consider pizza Margherita *the* most authentic pizza. It was created by Raffaele Esposito, one of the best-known pizza makers in Naples. He had the honor of making a pizza for King Umberto I and his wife Margherita. His chauvinism inspired him to create a pizza with the colors of the Italian flag (tomato sauce, buffalo mozzarella and basil) and that's how pizza Margherita was born.

In 1941, when Patsy Grimaldi was just ten years old, he lived in the Italian part of Harlem where he learned the skills of pizza making. Patsy dreamed of having his own pizza restaurant in Manhattan, but there was one problem: You can only achieve the wonderful thin and crispy bottom and crust in an oven that ideally reaches a temperature of approximately 932° F. That is only possible in an oven fueled by charcoal or coal. His dream was shattered because Manhattan didn't permit new construction of such ovens. But in Brooklyn that was still possible, and so the location was moved to the current address! The oven weighs 25 tons and runs at a toasty but comfortable temperature of approximately 1202° F. (still pretty damn hot). Fresh dough, a daily delivery of super-fresh mozzarella and fresh San Marzano tomatoes do the rest.



HIBINO

333 Henry St. (Atlantic & Pacific), Cobble Hill, Brooklyn - NY 11201

T (718) 260-8052 - www.hibino-brooklyn.com

Open Mon-Thu: noon-2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m., Fri: noon-2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m.

Sat: 5:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m., Sun: 5:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.



This walk-in restaurant specializes in traditional and contemporary sushi, Kyoto style tapas known as *obanzai*, and homemade tofu. The latter is an enormous task, because tofu is not the simplest dish to make, nor is it the most popular.



HIBINO

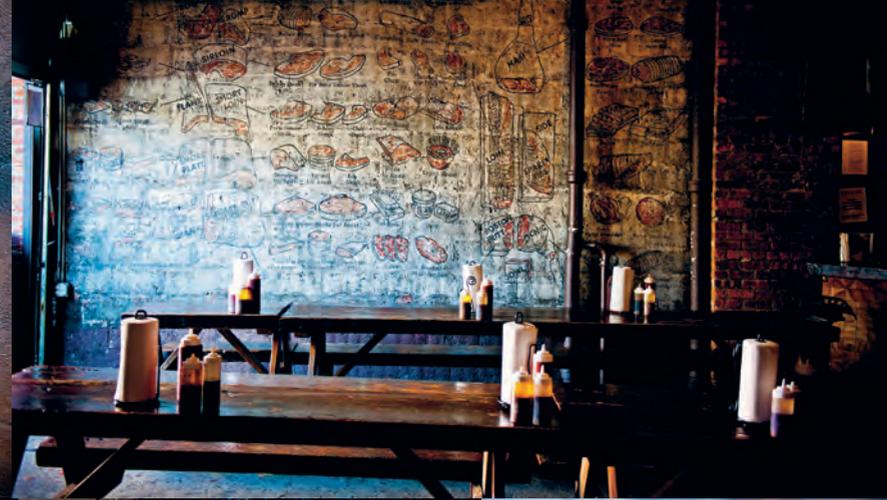
Freshly Made Tofu, with grated ginger and scallions, soy-dashi sauce

The first piece of evidence of the existence of tofu was a stone tablet in the grave of Han, illustrating how to make tofu. It was a poem, a tribute to tofu, written by Su Ping in 1500 BC. Obviously, we can never be sure whether this was genuine, but the fact is that tofu reached Japan via China. Kento priests, who during the Nara period (710-794 AD) traveled to China to study Buddhism, brought back the tofu-making technique to the land of the rising sun. Tofu is a source of protein and the word tofu was used for the first time in Japan in the diary of Shinto priest Nakaomi, who used tofu as an offering on the altar.

It was not until 1489 that the word tofu actually spread throughout Japan by

means of Kanji (Chinese letters) and became popular among the Samurai and the noble class. During the Edo period (1603-1867), tofu also became popular among common people. There was even a cookbook printed in 1782, *Tofu Hyakuchin*, that became a best-seller.

In the USA, the first tofu business was established in 1895 in San Francisco by Hirata & Co. Tofu is very healthy and when it is prepared with top ingredients, it is delicious. They certainly demonstrate this at Hibino where they serve tofu very honorably and with a quality level that I've rarely tasted outside of Japan. Go and discover this hidden gem on Cobble Hill.



FETTE SAU

354 Metropolitan Ave. (between N 4th and Roebling St.) - NY 11211
T (718) 963-3404 - www.fettesaubbq.com

Open Mon: 5:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m., Tue-Thu: noon-11:00 p.m., Fri-Sat: noon-midnight, Sun: noon-11:00 p.m.



Williamsburg is a trendy neighborhood where hobos and graffiti have to compete with gourmet cheese stores, extravagant music happenings, topnotch trendy retail stores and superior restaurants. Some parts of this area actually remind me a bit of Berlin.



SHORT
PLATE

RIB

BRISKET

SQUARE CUT
PORK CHOP

SHANK

Standing
Rib Roast

Pork Chop

Pork Tenderloin

Triangle Bone
Pot Roast

Smoked beef brisket, hand-pulled Berkshire pork, housemade Berkshire sausage

From the sidewalk, it is not so easy to spot Fette Sau, but fortunately there is one way of recognizing it, which you cannot miss – the oh-so-wonderful smoky smell of barbecue that seems to linger outside its gate, which sports a tiny, discreet signboard, and entices you inside. You would never suspect that one of NYC's finest barbecue restaurants is located here.

The building that accommodates Fette Sau was previously a garage and in terms of the infrastructure, it still looks like one. A long driveway where simple picnic tables stand leads to the restaurant. The restaurant is a real feast, even before you have had your first bite. The delicious smell that hangs in the air whets your appetite. They use red and white oak, apple, cherry, peach and maple wood to achieve the complex aromas that penetrate the meat. All the wood, by the way, comes from upstate New York. Although Fette Brau – a beer brewed in the Pilsner style especially for them – flows abundantly from the taps, the handgrips of which are old butcher knives, and there is no need for an apéritif due to these delicious aromas. My mouth is watering already.

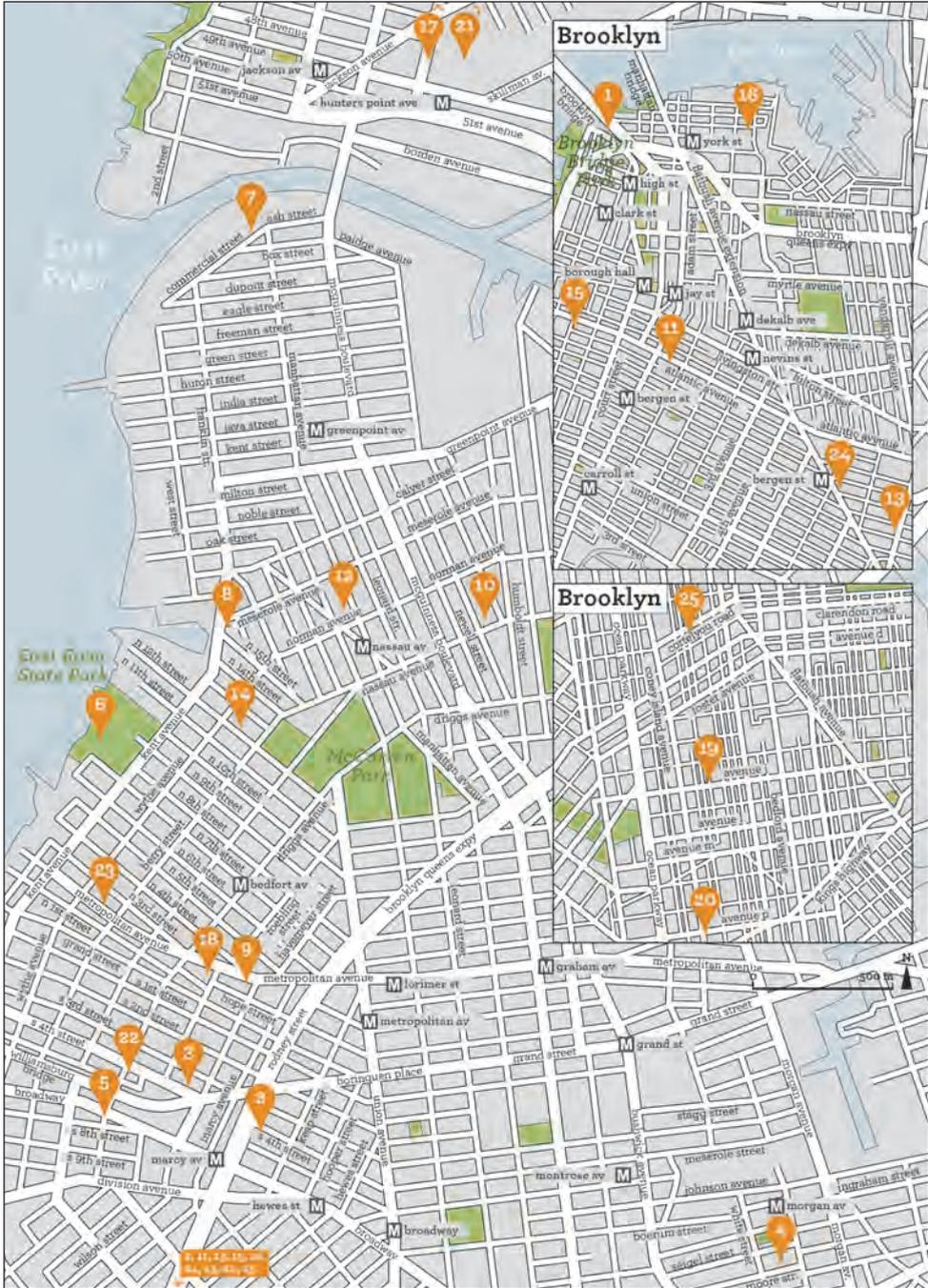
Beer, by the way, is the strong point of Fette Sau, but that will surprise no one because the owners, Joe Carroll and Kim Barbour, have one of the best beer bars in NYC just on the other side of the street – the Spuyten Duyvil. Belgian beers and obscure mini-breweries are the specialty here. Spuyten Duyvil is a neighborhood in the Bronx, close to Spuyten Duyvil Creek, where the Hudson runs as wild as a spewing devil. History even tells us of a cer-

tain Anthony van Corlaer who in 1642 wanted to swim across the Hudson River from Spuyten Duyvil in order to prove there were no devils in the water. Witnesses claimed to have seen a giant fish that grabbed him by the legs and pulled him beneath the waves. This may be the earliest recorded shark attack in history.

Although NYC has less natural historical affinity with barbecue than, say, Dallas or Kansas City, this art is taken very seriously at the establishment. As far as I am concerned, Fette Sau is one of the best addresses for barbecue anywhere on the planet. The restaurant itself is very well appointed. The eastern wall is entirely covered with a fresco from floor to ceiling, illustrating all of the cuts of a cow, pig and lamb, the only animals that Fette Sau barbecues. The rest of the space is beautifully tiled or decorated in a stylish brown with white painted stripes. A monitor showing a sizzling hearth fire provides a homely coziness.

All the tables are set together, and there is no table service, per se. Shenae keeps an eye on everything with utmost efficiency while people stream in and the line of waiting customers gets longer. All the spectacular meat is displayed and you simply order by weight or according to the number of ribs you desire. In addition, you are offered lovely side dishes that constantly vary. One particular hit is the German potato salad and the chili. Try to come here with a group because if you are only two, you will regret not being able to taste all the delicious smoked meat. Fette Sau is truly the king of the NYC barbecue scene.

BROOKLYN



ADDITIONAL EATERIES

18 EXTRA FANCY

302 Metropolitan Avenue - NY 11211 (Brooklyn)
T +1 347 422 0939
www.extrafancybklyn.com

▶ Clam and corn fritters with sriracha ranch dip

19 DI FARA PIZZA

1424 Avenue J (between 14th and 15th Street)
NY 11230 (Brooklyn)
T +1 718 258 136
www.difarany.com

▶ Calzone

20 TACIS BEYTI

1953-1955 Coney Island Avenue (between Avenue P & Kings Highway) - NY 11223 (Brooklyn)
T +1 718 627 5750
www.tacisbeyti.com

▶ Kiy mali pide

21 BROOKLYN GRANGE

37-18 Northern Boulevard (between 38 and Steinway Street)
NY 11205
T +1 347 670 3660
www.brooklyngrangefarm.com

▶ Rooftop veggie

22 PIES 'N' THIGHS

166 S Fourth Street (Driggs Avenue) - NY 11211
T +1 347 529 6090
www.piesnthighs.com

▶ Smoked pork hash and eggs

23 NITEHAWK CINEMA

136 Metropolitan Avenue (between Berry Street and Whyte Avenue) - NY 11249 (Williamsburg, Brooklyn)
T +1 718 384 3980
www.nitehawkcinema.com

▶ Crab cakes with avocado mayo

24 MORGAN'S BARBECUE

267 Flatbush Avenue (corner of St. Marks & Flatbush)
NY 11217 (Brooklyn)
www.morgansbrooklynbarbecue.com

▶ 16h slow smoked brisket

25 CAFÉ TIBET

1510 Cortelyou Road (Flatbush)
NY 11226
T +1 718 941 2725

▶ Beef momos

Colophon



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