

# Beyond breakfast: a hip, hearty brunch scene

If you go . . .



Carolyn Christie and Lee Irvine at City Bakery, which has a cafeteria-style brunch.

**202 Café**  
75 Ninth Ave.  
646-638-1173  
Daily brunch, \$50 for two.

**Dim Sum Go Go**  
5 East Broadway  
212-732-0797  
Daily dim sum, \$40 for two.

**Alias Restaurant**  
76 Clinton St.  
212-505-5011  
aliasrestaurant.com  
Brunch Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., \$35 for two.

**Cookshop**  
156 10th Ave.  
212-924-4440  
cookshopny.com  
Brunch Saturday and Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., \$50 for two.

**City Bakery**  
3 West 18th St.  
212-366-1414  
citybakerycatering.com  
Brunch all day Saturday and Sunday, \$30 for two.

**Balthazar**  
80 Spring St.  
212-965-1414  
balthazar.com  
Brunch Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.-4 p.m., \$50 for two.

By Bonnie Tsui  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NEW YORK — My favorite meal has always been breakfast. Each morning, or early afternoon, holds a glow of possibility when you awake hungry. What I always loved about living in this city was the dedicated brunch ritual shared by its residents. And not just on weekends. There has always been enough of a non-9-to-5 population to warrant offering daily brunch on many a menu around town.

On a recent trip back to Manhattan, I hit up a few old favorites and scoped out a handful of newer restaurants that happily have emerged on the brunch scene.

The English have historically been dogged by an awful reputation when it comes to food, but prepare to sample the British breakfast made new at 202 Café, in Chelsea, a hip clothing store and restaurant. Inside foodie-fabulous Chelsea Market, where gourmet frosted cupcakes and dairy-fresh organic milk get equal attention, London-based designer Nicole Farhi — who has a boutique of the same name in Notting Hill — serves up daily brunch of the nouveau-English-meets-Mediterranean variety.

Long wooden tables, brick walls, and high ceilings make for a refurbished warehouse look. Customers can browse Farhi's luxurious collection of cashmere sweaters, scarves, and dresses and follow it up with a bowl of lentil soup with chickpeas and baby spinach (\$6) or a classic side of bubble and squeak (\$5), that browned English fry-up of mashed potatoes with cabbage. The service is friendly if at times achingly slow, but you can always get up and look at some elegant glass candleholders while you wait.

Down in Chinatown's Chatham Square, the perky red-and-white dining room at Dim Sum Go Go is a great place to bring vegetarian friends and experience fresh takes on the typical dim sum brunch. The 10-piece vegetarian sampler (\$11.95) is a jewel-toned array of dumplings filled with spinach and bamboo shoots and mushrooms, some with pink wrappers colored with beet juice. Try all the dipping



202 Café offers a British breakfast and designer clothes, and a vegetarian sampler at Dim Sum Go Go comes with dipping sauces.

sauces, which include chopped ginger and hot chili.

The tiny roast pork buns are fresh and perfectly glazed. You can easily fill up on dim sum, but try an order of Chinese broccoli and white fungus cooked in egg whites (\$12.95). It's a surprising and savory dish with crunchily pleasing textures that you don't find on most Chinese restaurant menus.

"Fresh local" is a favorite phrase of foodies these days, and Alias Restaurant, the latest offshoot of Lower East Side pioneer 71 Clinton Fresh Food, serves up Southern-influenced, seasonal, and affordable eats. The Crustacean Mary is a terrific house drink — a spicy blend of vodka, tomato juice, horseradish from the Pickle Guy (a local vendor), with Old Bay seasoning on the rim of the glass, all garnished with a fresh chilled shrimp (\$7). Breakfast burritos come wrapped in fresh, chewy tortillas; whole-wheat biscuits are warm and buttery; and a bowl of yogurt and crunchy granola is topped with fresh fruit. Bustling and small, the restaurant has the

feel of a hip neighborhood diner, with orange paint and brick walls.

Cookshop, from the owners of Five Points, has a farmhouse gourmet aesthetic and an open kitchen outfitted with a wood-burning oven and grill that features sustainably-produced meats and locally-caught fish. But chef Marc Meyer also is known for new twists on eggs and pancakes and is the author of "Brunch: 100 Recipes from Five Points Restaurant" (Universe, 2005). So it should come as no surprise if the line is out the door. But once you get inside, service is fast, and the food is worth the wait: cornmeal pancakes with caramelized banana and berry compote; warm grilled Gulf shrimp salad with champagne vinaigrette; and a sizzling, cheesy frittata with cherry tomatoes, summer squash, and dill crème fraîche.

If you're in the mood for a quick bite, City Bakery, near Union Square, is perfect for a cafeteria-style Sunday brunch: everything from bagels with lox, jasmine rice Thai salad, and fried



chicken to pretzel croissants and sweet sweets. The place is famous for its homemade marshmallows — dense, deeply decadent squares that somehow manage to stay afloat in a mug of hot chocolate. Be prepared for the hungry hordes who flock here on weekends.

Finally, everyone loves a brasserie, and in the last decade, Keith McNally's Balthazar has established itself as a classic. The dining room is usually filled with local denizens who just rolled out of bed and excitable tourists fueling up for a day of shopping in SoHo. The menu features classics such as

eggs Florentine with spinach and artichoke (\$17.50), salade niçoise with chunks of fresh seared tuna (\$20.50), and a grilled and very tender brook trout over a warm spinach walnut and lentil salad (\$17.50).

It's a scene all right, and the mirrored, warmly lighted room is usually packed. Many people are there to be seen. If you're smart, you'll keep your eyes on the prized food.

Bonnie Tsui, a freelance writer in San Francisco, can be reached at [bonniettsui.com](mailto:bonniettsui.com).

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A gondola floats past Bethesda Terrace in Central Park, one of the attractions included in Tailored Tours itineraries.

## Ready to roam? These tours are made for walking

By Beth D'Addono  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

New York is big, full of attitude, and for the uninitiated, a bit overwhelming. Which is why exploring with a local who knows how to avoid tourist traps and uncover hidden gems is the way to go. But if you don't have a friend like that, Tailored Tours is the next best thing.

The brainchild of Bronx residents Lisa and Christopher Karel, Tailored Tours ([tailoredtours.com](http://tailoredtours.com)) offers self-guided walking tours delivered as e-mail attachments you can print or use on your cell-phone or PDA. Designed for independent travelers, the one- to six-hour tours, which cost \$3 each, let you pick a theme (first visit, romantic, scavenger hunt, pub crawls) or a neighborhood (Fifth Avenue, Times Square, Central Park) and explore at your own pace.

"We got the idea from writing little itineraries for friends and family who would come to visit and want to tour while we worked," said Christopher Karel,

who took a buyout from his corporate sales job to start the business a year ago. With more than 40 itineraries offered for New York, Karel, who has lived and spent time in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Boston, will be expanding Tailored Tours in the coming year.

Karel includes spots that tourists might never find, like Chumley's, a speakeasy hidden in an apartment building courtyard featured in tour No. 150. There's no sign outside the 175-year-old pub and restaurant, so it's easy to miss. It's at this watering hole that the term "86ed" originated. The bar's address is 86 Bedford St., so whenever somebody was ejected, they were said to have been "86ed." A plaque above a doorway bears autographs of the famous such as Ernest Hemingway, Arthur Miller, and Frank Sinatra.

Now that's a hidden gem worth discovering.

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