

FEAST | Guide



Home Is Where the Art Is

The close quarters and devoted service at **Erminia** make eating a meal there as satisfying as reading your favorite novel. —*Chris Cuomo*

When a restaurant has been around for 30 years, there's usually a good reason. And when the patrons are intentionally tippedback about it, there's always a very good reason. Erminia is, as Nabokov might say, a 12-table dance on your palate.

Small, quaint, quintessential—food-making tools from the Old Country hang as reminders of what and what is to come. The intimacy—again, just 12 tables—is intentional, to allow for unique attention to... well, everything. Southern Italian food, when it's made in an authentic home (like my mother's) is simple, with flavors that work because of season and reason. And the best ingredient is one you can't plant: love.

Erminia is such a home.

The men who greet and feed you, Pasquale Martinelli and Nikola Camaj, are as interesting as the meal. Nikola is the owner, and Pasquale is the almost-too-handsome (judging by my wife's attentiveness) narrator of the storybook meal. The jobs of buying, preparing and serving are shared, and Pasquale explains each dish like a story: how a risotto should move, why pork loin was chosen for the piccata, which olive is in season.

The best news may be that if you can't get one of Erminia's precious seats, you can still get the Pasquale and Nikola experience through their new catering service, WarmPalate. 250 E. 83rd St., 212.879.4284, erminiarestaurant.com

- ★ Michelin stars
- ★ The *New York Times* 3-4 stars

- \$\$\$ Very Expensive (\$80 & up)
- \$\$\$ Expensive (\$40-\$80)
- \$\$ Moderate (\$30-\$40)
- \$ Inexpensive (under \$30)

Prices reflect the average cost of a three-course dinner for one, excluding drinks, tax and tip.

New Restaurants

—*Beth Landman*

Cherry

Jonathan Mori, whose creative Eastern concepts at Republic and BonDi were such runaway hits, they're still popular after more than a decade, has opened a new French-influenced Asian spot beneath the Dream Downtown hotel in Chelsea. The décor is rich with wine and wood tones, and the menu, from chef Andy Choi (who was sous chef at both Bouley and M.J. Pêche), includes such adventurous offerings as buckwheat risotto with ma-take puree and seasonal vegetables, and lobster thermidor with yamaka whiskey, shiso and kamameshi rice. 355 W. 10th St., 212.629.5800 \$\$\$

Lafayette

The spacious bi-level Noho location that housed Chinatown Brasserie has been transformed by chef Andrew Carmellini and his partners, Josh Piskard and Luke Ostrom (the team behind Locanda Verde and The Dutch), into a grand French café. A large rotisserie turns out roasted meats for dishes like parrotel rôti, while a corner bakery serves up macarons and fresh bread baked in-house. 380 Lafayette St., 212.533.3000 \$\$\$

Melbea

Medi-tern chef Jesus Nuñez is opening a contemporary Mediterranean restaurant next door to his popular tapas and paella bar, Barraca. Among the menu items are grilled kale salad with homemade quince jam, squash, manchego cheese, anchovies and sherry vinaigrette, and fresh pasta with braised octal and spicy octopus. Mel bea will also feature a chef's table for "Mediterranean omakase." Opening soon. 2 Bank St., 212.453.0090, melbea.nyc.com \$\$\$

Tribeca

Alers

As foodie buzzwords go, "foraging" is to farm-to-table what "artisan" is to modern American cuisine. A champion of the Pacific Northwest foraging scene, Executive Chef Matthew L'Ghizer transformed Castaway in Portland, Ore., into a destination restaurant along the lines of Thomas Keller's French Laundry. Now situated in Tribeca

in the space formerly occupied by Compost, the intimate 17-seat Alers is a showcase for L'Ghizer's ever-changing prix fixe tasting menu, which moves from small snacks like foie gras "pearls" to main acts like ragout of fish cheeks with seared butter and herbaceous garlic. Its two Michelin stars—earned after the restaurant had been open only six months—and a coveted three-star review from *The New York Times* make it well worth the lobbying wait for a reservation. 77 Worth St./Broadway, 212.226.1444 \$\$\$ ★ ★ ★

Dylan Prime

Take away the steak, and many steakhouses immediately fall flat. But not Dylan Prime. The ritzy Tribeca eatery (where the Weinstein brothers filed 30 of their just-d-off employees back in 2009) does solid nouveau American fare in elegant, minimalist quarters. But its trumpet card is its grown-up cocktail menu (and hours): Martin's garnished with bacon-stuffed olives appeal to the savory tooth, and the lounge is open late for younger- and young-at-heart-revelers. 62 Laight St./Greenwich St., 212.394.4753 \$\$\$

Landmarc

As popular with bankers (Goldman, Citigroup) as it is with legal eagles (Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr.), Landmarc offers a long list of reasonably priced wines, salads and pasta available in two s/eas; \$4 desserts; and a menu filled with serious crowd-pleasing entrées such as roasted bone marrow with onion marmalade, mussel and an escallop burger. Chef Marc Murphy also operates a Landmarc outpost in the Time Warner Center, which has superb views of Central Park. 179 W. Broadway/Lefferts St., 212.343.3883 \$

Locanda Verde

Chef Andrew Carmellini has achieved grand success with Locanda Verde, where he serves rustic pastas, wood-fired meats, delectable cheeses and affordable wines. What fuels word of mouth about this place is its vibe—it's a casual yet upscale room where chic Tribeca diners enjoy well-cooked, snazzy presented food. It's also an excellent spot for a breakfast meeting—or for a fundraiser, as Barack and Michelle Obama can attest, having presided over a \$5,000-a-plate dinner to raise money for the re-election campaign last March.

377 Greenwich St./N. Moore St., 212.825.3797 \$\$\$

Marc Forgione

His dad, Larry, is considered the godfather of American cuisine, but Marc Forgione isn't riding any chef's coattails to stardom. A winner of the Food Network's *Best Chef in America*, Forgione emphasizes two things: a hefty respect for sustainable ingredients and a talented hand in the kitchen. His mastery of seafood plays out in the form of a kanpachi tartare appetizer with avocado, Sichuan buttons, toasted pine nuts and Saratoga chips. Belly up to brunch here, too: Sundays eat solely for the housemade French toast broche. If you're more the late-night type, head straight for the bar, where one evening in 2009 NBC's *Late July* Jimmy Fallon spontaneously began pouring Jägermeister shots for anyone with earshot, proclaiming they were all on him. 134 Reece St./Hudson St., 212.941.9401 \$\$\$

Terrori Tribeca

Following the success of Hearth and the original Terrori in the East Village, former Craftsmen Marco Canora and Paul Greco franchised the popular wine-bar concept on the cobblestone streets of Tribeca. Greco is, famously, a bit of a madman in NYC's wine world—and Terrori Tribeca, not surprisingly, is a place that for an entire summer served no whites by the glass except reading. Expect unknown vintners and thrilling vintage, all presented with friendly explanation. Bar à bic (risotto balls, cheese and charcuterie, Italian-ish salads) are designed to complement what you're drinking. As your weekend drives to a close, check out Meatball Sunday, which features a special prix fixe menu for two. 24 Hanson St./Greenwich St., 212.625.8465 \$

Thalassa

Before Mareia captivated seafood-faring New Yorkers (winning two Michelin and three NYT stars), there was Thalassa, whose name comes from the Greek word for "sea." The Greeks would have smiled upon Thalassa, which has been serving fresh, reliable Hellenic fare in Tribeca for more than eight years. It's too sprawling to be considered a hidden gem, but its range of fresh seafood, coupled with its organic Greek wine list and well-crafted Mediterranean cheese selection, make this a place worth visiting. Just ask