

Booted!

These five new Italian eateries are finding their way into Gotham's heart through—where else?—our collective grumbling stomachs. *by Amy Zavatto*



Maltagliati with pesto from Locanda Verde

WHILE THE DAYS of working-class Italian immigrants on steam ships bound for NYC's shores are long gone, the influence of Italy on our culinary map lives on. The proof? This brand-new crop of satisfyingly relaxed Italian eateries.

Civetta Ristorante

If you're like us and will happily hoof it for a great meal, you've probably already made multiple trips to 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue for a meal at the wonderful Sfoglia, co-owned and run by the talented culinary couple Ron Suhanosky and his wife, Colleen. (And for those of you who live up there, lucky you!). Now the talented pair have taken pity on Downtown and brought their gustatory prowess to Civetta, a rustic Italian gem on the border of Soho complete with big wooden tables, two levels (making the seating a little more ample than its uptown sister), Colleen's kick-ass bread that everyone loves to hoard and the kind of outstanding house-made pasta you've come to expect from the Suhanoskys (the executive chef is none other than Ron himself). *98 Kenmare St., 212-274-9898*



Locanda Verde

Still walking around with a heavy heart after Andrew Carmellini's departure from A Voce? Well, buck up, *paesano*—he's back and better than ever with two new partners (Ken Friedman and Josh Pickard), a wood-burning oven and 100 seats for you to plunk down in and experience his radicchio-salad-accompanied porchetta sandwich and killer roasted chicken. Even better, his rustic-Italian talents are available for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Speaking of breakfast, make sure you pop in for an espresso to go (made with a vintage 1961 Illy espresso maker—dig it!) and a morning treat by pastry chef Karen DeMasco, whose hazelnut sticky buns and polenta blueberry muffins will make you want to send her love letters forever more. *377 Greenwich St., 212-925-3797*



Trattoria Cinque

They weren't quite ready to rev their engines at the time of this writing, but if Trattoria Cinque is going to be as fun as its Ferrari-red chairs and '60s Italy retro engineering artwork implied in previews (all the work of architect and designer Garrett Singer), Tribeca is in for a delicious ride. Roomy and filled with cognac-colored booths, rare Tom Dixon hammered-brass lights, a gorgeous Carrera marble bar and a duo of cozy fireplaces, it's the kind of place you'll want to make your own. And its Milanese chef Mirco Grassini's dishes—like organic eggplant cannelloni and roasted halibut with olives, cherry tomatoes and potatoes—will have you high-fiving the five-of-everything menu. Tip: Don't miss the made-in-front-of-you Caesar salad. *363 Greenwich St., 917-868-9847*

Mussels from Spina



Spina

After logging hours in some of NYC's most-beloved Italian eateries (Felidia, I Trulli, Maremma) chef Roberto Patriarca has opened the long glass-and-wood doors to this new East Village fresh-pasta joint with offerings like gnocchi with roasted eggplant, tomatoes and smoked mozzarella and bright, savory, pesto-doused pappardelle. Grab a seat at one of the long, sleek slatted wood benches, spoon into some soft, olive-oil-drizzled *burrata* and definitely don't miss the very good (and really, it's a lot harder to find than you'd think) tiramisu. Note: Finger Lakes wine lovers will adore the surprising vino offerings here. 175 Avenue B, 212-253-2250

Piccola Cucina

The name may denote tininess (22 seats in 300 square feet), but the flavors in chef-owner Philip Guardione's seafood-skewed dishes are all big as can be. Guardione, who hails from Sicily and did part of his culinary training in Milan and Paris, keeps his flavors simple—a fact that should not be confused with somnambulistic technique. Case in point: the linguini with squid-ink, briny with a rich, deep undercurrent of sweet tomatoes (a trick that Guardione learned from his grandmother, who used to cook the *pomodori* down for seven hours before blending in the black, inky delicacy), is a dish that utterly delights. 184 Prince St., 212-625-3200



Swordfish from Piccola Cucina



PEARLY BLACK

A Uruguayan caviar producer employs sustainable methods for sublime results.

IF YOUR MOTHER-OF-PEARL spoons have seemed lonely lately, never fear: Javier Alcalde and his brothers will put them back in business. "The way we produce our caviar makes the difference," says Alcalde. What he's referring to is his sustainably produced line of gently salty, velvety-textured, sumptuous osetra caviar (\$102 for a 30-gram serving)—a singular treat that has become increasingly scarce due to overfishing and pollution in the Caspian Sea, where the caviar is normally found. Alcalde's father, Walter, took a gamble on cultivating caviar in his native Uruguay, and it turned out to be a stroke of genius.

"[He] founded the farm back in the early '90s due to dire environmental, economic and political situations in and around the Caspian region," Black River CEO Graham Gaspard says. "Over 80 percent of the world's caviar was being exported from the Caspian, Black and Siberian seas, and with the added stress, there was and is little chance of sustaining the wild populations there." In the 1960s, thousands of tons of caviar were exported every year. By the '90s the count had dropped to just over a hundred tons.

As it turns out, the conditions of Uruguay's Rio Negro are perfect for caviar production, and the outstanding flavor—combined with the Alcalde family's responsible farming practices—have made Black River the toast of the town. "This is a business and caviar is a fancy product, but my family realized the remarkable value of it, and how amazing it is to create a sustainable product," says Alcalde. "We will leave something in return to the environment—or at least leave it as we find it." Visit blackrivercaviar.com.—A.Z.