



MARCH 2004



LOWER EAST SIDE

It was America's first melting pot of eastern European Jews, Italians, and of the Old World who arrived in the decades before World War I with their customs in tow. In the half of the 20th century, Latinos started settling in and Chinatown expanded to blur the border between the two worlds. The Lower East colorful, but life in its tenements wasn't so. And the area was certainly never chic. About a decade ago, a new wave of immigrants young and the trendy—began flocking to Houston Street, searching for a hip scene rents. But instead of driving all the old pla

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made with free-range eggs, organic, biodynamic produce, and wild seafood.

In a nod to the area's great pushcart tradition, Mark Isreal started baking doughnuts at home (from his grandfather's recipe but with organic ingredients) and distributing them on his mountain bike. Today, you can buy his oversize glazed treats at the **Doughnut Plant** (379 Grand St.; 212-505-3700), where all similarities to tradition end. At **Il Laboratorio del Gelato** (95 Orchard St.; 212-343-9922), Jon Snyder, who founded Ciao Bella (and sold it at the tender age of 25), mixes up luscious gelatos and sorbets in 12 different flavors daily, everything from licorice to blood orange. But nothing is more symbolic of the Lower East Side than the pickle. Traditionalists may choose **Guss' Pickles** (85-87 Orchard St.; 917-701-4000), which has been brining from the family recipe since 1910. But they're getting some fierce competition these days from **The Pickle Guys** (49 Essex St.; 888-474-2553), which has only been in business since 2002.



Orchard Street; cranberry gelato; lounging at 'inoteca; special-order "gold" treats at the Doughnut Plant.

atmosphere not far removed from *My Big Fat Romanian Bar Mitzvah*. It's gained a whole new audience, which sips vodka and tries not to think of *Saturday Night Live* while listening to Dani Lev belt out his favorite tunes. When you want to shift gears, the fast lane leads effortlessly across the time barrier to **Teany** (90 Rivington St.; 212-475-9190), owned by Techno musician Moby and partner Kelly. Primarily a vegan café, Teany offers tasty light fare along with teas, fruity beverages, wine, and beer in a serene atmosphere that's as far away from Sammy's as a cashew-butter sandwich is from krepelach.

Slimmed-down café **'inoteca** (98 Rivington St.; 212-614-0473) serves panini, tramezzini, and bruschette, along with other sandwiches that only newly arrived Italian immigrants would recognize. **Brown Cafe** (61 Hester St.; 212-254-9825) has the Lower East Side's best coffee, as well as simple fare

4917), the DJ spins an atmosphere both trendy and mellow. It rains Mojitos at **Paladar** (161 Ludlow St.; 212-473-3535), a percolating Nuevo Latino spot, while the crowd at **Bauhaus** (196 Orchard St.; 212-477-1550) is as stylish as the ultramod décor. And Ludlow Street, once clogged with pushcarts, has morphed into the street of dreamy boutiques. **Las Venus** (No. 163; 212-982-0608) is crammed with furniture and fixtures from the '60s and '70s and is even open till midnight on Saturdays. **Marmalade** (No. 172; 212-473-8070) sells funky vintage frocks and bags.

Spending the night in this part of town would once have meant sleeping on a Bowery doorstep. But all that's changed. Now, the sleek glass façade of the **Surface Hotel** (107 Rivington St.; 212-475-2600) rises above the fire escapes as it nears completion, ready to welcome a new round of immigrants to the neighborhood.—Maggie Ruggiero