

devouring NEW YORK

ONLY IN NYC

"Only in New York, kids, only in New York," the trademark sign-off of New York Post gossip queen Cindy Adams, is an adage that applies to a certain subset of the food scene.

For starters, there's **Rice to Riches**, which specializes in rice pudding tarted up in two dozen off-beat and surprisingly tasty flavors, including French toast, maple-sundried blueberry and carrot cake.

When it comes to hot dog stands, **F&B gutfood** really stands out. Its *haute* dog selection includes salmon sausage topped with horseradish and chicken sausage dressed with corn relish. The sweet potato fries with garlic aioli are fantastic.

At **Beard Papa's**, the decor is Japanese mod, but the fast-food is decidedly French: Oven-fresh cream puffs are filled to order, assembly-line-style, with a decadent vanilla-bean custard or a daily flavor like mango, green tea or pumpkin.

And there's no bagel like a New York bagel. **Kossar's Bialystoker Kuchen Bakery** — which specializes in another NYC carb-laden delicacy, the bialy — rolls a textbook bagel, with a brown, crunchy crust and a center so chewy it gives the jaw an aerobic workout.



Scoops of gelato act as lures at **Il Laboratorio del Gelato**. Their vivid colors reflect their intense flavors.

THE COOLEST DESSERT

"Is there a restaurant in this burg that doesn't serve gelato?" asked my friend after about our 10th encounter with the stuff. He wasn't exaggerating — or complaining.



The entrance of **Rice to Riches** in Little Italy is aptly shaped like a grain of rice: The dessert spot serves rice pudding in an array of flavors.

The frozen Italian treat seems as ubiquitous as cheesecake and has a creamier texture and more luscious taste than its airier American counterpart, ice cream.

The scoop-shop summit is **Il Laboratorio del Gelato**. The postage stamp-size store exudes a clinical vibe; owner Jon Snyder even wears a spotless white lab coat. Snyder grew up working at his family's soft-serve ice cream franchise, started a gelato business at age 19, took a hiatus on Wall Street and, after Sept. 11, returned to his true passion.

Combining farm-fresh ingredients and an artisan's passion, he carefully crafts one small batch at a time. The effort shows. Snyder himself scooped up my double serving — lavender and black plum. The vivid colors and off-the-beaten-path flavors were so true to their origins, I was hooked. An hour later, I wanted to return for a crack at the tangerine. And the hazelnut. And the black mission fig. You get the idea.

WHERE MARCUS SAMUELSSON EATS

"**Sunhi Yasuda** has the best sushi in New York. **Sugiyama** for very authentic Japanese food — no sushi. **Pastis** has a great brunch, and I go to **Queen of Sheba** for great Ethiopian food. **Inoteca** is a favorite hangout in Lower East Side. **Per Se** is super-fine dining. And **Bread Tribeca** and **August** are great places for dining with friends." *Marcus Samuelsson is chef/co-owner of Aquavit, Ringo and AQ Cafe and author of Aquavit and the New Scandinavian Cooking.*

LOW-DOWN ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

New York constantly reinvents itself, and nowhere is this cyclical renewal more evident than in the Lower East Side. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, the neighborhood's immigrant-filled tenements were the most densely packed urban area on the planet. Today, the district's narrow streets are being rediscovered by the next generation of newcomers: Hip restaurateurs and their young, adventuresome clientele.

Landmarks from the bygone era — world-class smoked fish and other "appetizings" at **Russ & Daughters** and the incomparable **Katz's Delicatessen**, where Meg Ryan famously faked it in "When Harry Met Sally" — co-exist alongside an ever-growing host of trend-setters.

Teany, the tiny tea shop owned by Moby, emphasizes vegetarian fare, including vegan pastries so good you'll swear they snuck in some butter and eggs. At **wd-50**, chef Wylie Dufresne cooks with a mad-scientist fervor: foie gras terrine with cocoa nibs, anchovies and farragon cream, a signature dish, sounds dreadful but turns out to



Katz's Delicatessen, as much a New York icon as yellow taxis, has been serving mile-high sandwiches in the Lower East Side since 1888.

WHERE FOODIES SHOP

The highly browsable **Kitchen Arts & Letters** squeezes thousands of food and wine titles (and helpful, opinionated staffers) into tight quarters on the far Upper East Side. Out-of-print and antiquarian volumes are the specialty of the funky **Bonnie Slotnick Cookbooks** in Greenwich Village.

Tabletop's highbrow names all maintain New York City stores, but **Fishes Eddy** ekes out a presence on the more lowbrow end of the economic scale, its large inventory a kooky collection of vintage restaurant dishes mixed with clever exclusive lines.

Cheeseheads will fall all over **Murray's Cheese Shop and Artisanal**; both stock an enormous variety of superb-quality farmstead cheeses gathered from around the world. The pros at **Joe's Dairy** convert curd shipped daily from upstate New York into mozzarella so fresh it tastes as if it was made that morning, which it was.

The **Greenmarket at Union**

be magical, a seemingly discordant combination that sings in perfect harmony. Dufresne made his name just up the street at the sleek, seasonally-focused **71 Clinton Fresh Food**. A few blocks west, cover girls and their hangers-on turn for late-night noshes and weekend brunch to the classic comfort fare at **Schiller's Liquor Bar**. Until, that is, they discover the next hot neighborhood.



In-the-know New Yorkers flock to **Il Laboratorio del Gelato**, which dishes up the city's dessert-of-the-moment in flavors such as black mission fig.

