

CURRICULUM VITAE
FRANÇOIS LATAPIE



2022

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FRANÇOIS LATAPIE

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PROFILE

Restaurant Industry Professional with over 40 years experience

- One- and 3-star Michelin rated restaurants in NYC as well as 4-star fine dining establishments
- Proven success in developing broad partner relationships; conducting bid processes to acquire new locations along with partner assessments; managing day to day operations; implementing effective cost controls; developing and enforcing schedules for effective operations, staffing, training, developing, planning menus and creating overall marketing strategies
- Developed and built strong branded concepts, including; "LA GOULUE," "ORSAY", "LYON", LITTLE FROG in New York City
- Social media photography, editing & management.

EXPERIENCE

THE SHOALS SUITES & SLIPS, SOUTHOLD, NY

- April-July 2022
- 4 months consulting to open the hotel.
- Food & beverage set up, food truck menu & recipes with chef François Payard.
- Gift shop set up, food and beverages program & displays,
- Wine list and wine program creation for Southold Social by François Payard.
- Social media photography.

LITTLE FROG BISTRO & BAR, NY

- 2015 – 2022
- Partnered with Celano Studio Design for design and branding.
- Owner, operating principal, full management of business, 2015 to 2022 (restaurant sold).
- Managed the complete built out, equipment purchase, layout & design.
- Pre-opening, opening and day to day on site management, including culinary & wine concepts.
- Created wine purchase programs, wine training guides, in charge of wine list managing, including wine research, sourcing, buying, and wine list editing.
- Created, conceived and managed the restaurant social media, including photography, contents, advertising, editing and uploading of all Little Frog food & beverage products.
- Created, conceived and managed all private parties and entertaining events at the restaurant, including creating multiple party packages, custom menus, live entertainment, special requests.

BAGATELLE GROUP

- Director of Operations, JANUARY 1 2014– 2015
- Working for the BAGATELLE Group as director of Operations, supervising restaurants in New York City, Los Angeles, St Bart, St Tropez, as well as up and coming projects.
- PROJECT MANAGER for BAGATELLE MIAMI (opening February 2015), VILLA BAGATELLE HOTEL, BAGATELLE MONACO, (opening spring 2016)
- Scope of work, opening and managing the new restaurants within the Group: BAGATELLE MIAMI in FEBRUARY 2015, which I am currently managing until moving into a new project.
- Project manager for BAGATELLE MONACO since JANUARY 2014, with an opening planned for SPRING 2016.

BAGATELLE MIAMI

- Project manager representing the BAGATELLE GROUP.
- Construction and design management. Pre-opening planning, parties, dry runs.
- Hired, trained and managed all FOH and BOH staff. Wrote all policies, handbooks and training manuals. Supervising all restaurant staff. Supervising all restaurant management, POS & reservation systems, menus and wine list, staff training and event planning.
- Brand management, bar and wine programs, special event planning.
- Responsible for restaurant strategy and planning for the BAGATELLE Group for restaurant BAGATELLE and

VILLA BAGATELLE HOTEL

- Brand management: Bar and wine programs. Designed and wrote Event packages for restaurant & hotel. Created Menu concepts for separate venues inside the hotel, such as a "Courtyard", "Roof Top Pool" and "Room Service".
- As a Director of Operation, representing owners in organizing the Hotel F&B operation, responsible for the rebranding of the hotel, including new construction, design, room amenities, and décor. Represents the restaurant in daily and weekly meetings regarding all aspects of the business.

BAGATELLE MONACO

- Project manager representing the BAGATELLE GROUP.
- Construction and design management. Supervising all kitchen and dining room design, including bar, dining room, night club & kitchen equipment, light and sound systems, POS and reservation systems, cellar design and overall restaurant architecture and design with all respected parties.
- Branding and Design consulting.
- As a Director of Operation, representing owners in organizing the future restaurant operation, responsible for overseeing new construction and design, representing the group in monthly meetings on site, regarding all aspects of the future business.

LE CIRQUE, CIRCO, SIRIO NY

- Director of Operations, May 1st 2012 – Dec 31st 2013
- Working for the Maccioni Group as director of Operations, supervising 3 restaurants in New York City, Le Cirque, Circo and Sirio Ristorante.
- As part of my work, opening and managing the new restaurants opened by the Group: Sirio Ristorante in October 2012, which I am currently managing until either going back to Le Cirque, or opening a new project.

SIRIO RISTORANTE AT THE PIERRE HOTEL

- General Manager & Culinary consultant, September 2012 – December 2013. Hired by The Pierre Hotel as restaurant General manager to represent the Maccioni Group in management. Finished light construction and design. Pre-opening planning, parties, dry runs. Hired, trained and managed all FOH staff, including managers, bartenders, servers and hostesses.
- Experienced in NY labor law, Experience in Union labor laws, Experience in HR dealings. Department head for the restaurant. Trained all staff including kitchen chefs, executive chef and pastry chef. Supervised day to day restaurant management, including POS and reservation systems, menus and wine list maintenance, wine ordering and cellar management, menu graphics and menu programming, daily staff training and event planning.
- Brand management, bar and wine programs, special event planning.
- Responsible for restaurant strategy and planning for the Maccioni Group and The Pierre Hotel. As a department head within the hotel, responsible for representing the restaurant in daily and weekly meetings regarding all aspects of the business.

LYON NEW YORK, NY

- Owner, Operating Partner, GM, April 2010 – February 2012
 - Press Achievements and Awards:
 - One Star, The New York Times – 2011
 - Two Stars, New York Post – 2011
 - Four Stars, Time Out New York – 2011
 - Award of Excellence, Wine Spectator – 2010, 2011
Partnered with Roman and Williams Design firm (Standard Hotel, ACE hotel, NYC) developed strong aesthetic and branding of a French Bouchon bistro "Lyon"
 - Conceived and managed the complete build out, equipment purchase, layout and design, pre-opening operational planning
 - Maintained strong management presence on dining room floor during high volume periods to a very discerning upscale clientele
 - Responsible for daily staff training seminars
 - Developed and designed artistic menus, visual marketing incentives for special events and promotions as part of overall marketing strategy
 - Responsible for purchasing and formatting POS systems
 - Responsible for all food and beverage purchasing to maximize cost efficiency
 - Analyzed daily F/B sales reports, P&L reports, writing and adhering to annual budgets and cash handling, and analyze trending financial data

ORSAY NEW YORK, NY

Owner, Operating Partner, GM, 1999-2008

- Press Achievements and Awards:
 - Two stars, The New York Times – 2000
 - Award of Excellence, Wine Spectator – 2001- 2008
- Negotiated to acquire real estate equity as part of restaurant acquisition
- Acted as Project Director in specialized areas, including architectural design
- Drove the design process to develop superior kitchen layout
- Responsible for purchasing kitchen appliances and negotiating machine leasing
- Responsible for purchasing and formatting POS systems
- Responsible for planning and directing staff training on wine, service operations and menu
- Developed and designed menu art and created marketing incentives for special events and promotions as part of overall marketing strategy.
- Yearly volume \$6.5 million

LA GOULUE NEW YORK, NY

Owner, Operating Partner, GM, 1994- 2007

- Press Achievements and Awards:
 - One Michelin star – 2006, 2007
 - Award of Excellence, Wine Spectator – 1995- 2008
- Hired all chefs for 13 years, oversaw and lead back of house kitchen team
- Monitored day-to-day operations to ensure compliance with established standards of product quality, and service
- Supervised wine buying and wine list marketing, assisted front of house training
- Directed daily operations in area of customer relations, food and wine costs, safety, sanitation, product preparation and recruiting/staff training
- Yearly volume \$8 million

CASSIS BISTRO MIAMI BEACH, FL

Owner, Operating Partner, GM, 1991-1994

- Press Achievements and Awards:
 - Two stars, The Miami Herald – 1992
 - Oversaw all menu selections, recipes, wine list selections/programs
- Monitored day-to-day operations to ensure compliance with established standards of product quality, and service

CULINARY EXPERIENCE, 1977 – 1986

Paris – LE CLODENIS, second sous-chef

- Los Angeles –LE ST. GERMAIN, executive sous-chef
- Palm Springs – LE VALLAURIS executive sous-chef
- Atlantic City –LE BISTRO DE PARIS, executive chef
- New York – LA RESIDENCE, executive chef (received two stars, The New York Times)
- New York – LA CASCADE, director of operations (received two stars, The New York Times)
- New York – LA CAVE HENRI IV, executive chef (received one star, The New York Times)

EDUCATION

ECOLE HOTELIERE, Avignon, France (Hotel & Restaurant Technical College)

- Major: BA in Classic French Cooking
- Minor: Restaurant Service and Management

SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft, Adobe Illustrator, POS operating systems (programming and use) including Action Computer, Micros Point of Sale, and Open Table reservation system
- Photography editing
- Social media management & posting, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
- Excellent interpersonal skills and customer relations
- Fluent in written and oral English and French

FRANÇOIS LATAPIE

Biography

François Latapie's diverse restaurant, cooking and geographical experience have enabled him to become a versatile restaurateur, managing many aspects of the constantly evolving restaurant business. François grew up in Paris and Avignon, France. He credits his parents with his sophisticated palette. At an early age, they exposed him to many different restaurants while traveling extensively. He was fortunate to visit top restaurants across Europe while staying at luxury hotels as his father worked across the now current EU. His parents' insights from living in several European capitals, added to his rich and diverse culinary upbringing.

Latapie began his career cooking in 1976 at the highly rated Montmartre restaurant "Le Clodenis". He worked there for two years and rose to sous chef. In 1978, he was drafted into the army, and rose to rank of Sargent. Once released from his duty, Latapie was courted by the owner of "Le St. Germain" and "Le Vallauris" and was flown to Los Angeles where he worked as a Chef from 1979-1981, until moving to the east coast. In 1981, Latapie moved to New York City. He worked as an executive chef at the 2-star rated "La Residence". He then moved to "La Cascade", another 2-star rated restaurant, where he worked with Guy Pascal, the owner and famous pastry chef, who became one of François' important life mentors.

Latapie left La Cascade in 1985 for La Reserve. While serving as a captain and assistant Maitre D, the restaurant was awarded 3 stars by the New York Times. In 1986, Sirio Maccioni, the owner of world famous "Le Cirque", hired Latapie, and continued to mentor him. Latapie was promoted to Maitre D, the highest dining room position in the restaurant at the time. While at Le Cirque with executive chef Daniel Boulud, who joined Le Cirque six months after Latapie, the team and the restaurant achieved the ultimate 4 stars rating twice in 5 years. Le Cirque also received numerous top culinary and service awards.

In 1991, Latapie moved his young family to Miami Beach and opened his first restaurant, Cassis Bistro, starting a new chapter as a restaurant owner. Cassis Bistro garnered 2 stars by the Miami Herald in 1992. Latapie sold Cassis in 1994.

Latapie then moved back to New York to become a co-owner and managing partner at La Goulue Restaurant. La Goulue was struggling and the all new management and changes brought by Latapie turned the cute Parisian bistro into a Madison Avenue powerhouse. Six years later, the same team opened Orsay, an art nouveau French Brasserie 10 blocks up from La Goulue, on emerging Lexington Avenue.

After the sale of Orsay to his partners in 2008, Latapie took to consulting. He helped his wife, Suzanne, with her charming restaurant, Bistro Chat Noir, now a new 'off Madison' must stop. Consulting credits also include the post opening and set up of Brasserie Cognac owned by the Serafina group, and the opening and set up of A Voce Columbus, owned by the MARC group.

In 2010, Latapie bought the old Café Bruxelles in Greenwich Village, and turned it into Lyon Bouchon Moderne, a Lyon cuisine bouchon concept based on classic Lyonnais style bistros, offering an artistic & sophisticated cuisine in a traditional décor designed in cooperation with the great Roman & Williams.

In 2015, Latapie bought the old Café du Soir (ex Sotto Cinque) in the upper east side, and, after an extensive renovation, opened Little Frog Bistro & Bar, a chic classic bistro designed in cooperation with Celano Studio.

LITTLE FROG

BISTRO & BAR



LYON

BOUCHON MODERNE





40 **pulsearts**

nypost.com

Come for the Lyon mains

New York Post, Wednesday, February 9, 2011

LYON is The Lion for grown-ups. Not that this enchanting new bistro on a picturesque West Village corner has anything in common with that chaotic, neo-tourist scene nearby — it's not American but nominally French, the space not vertical but linear, and the vibe throbbing but civilized.

Instead, Lyon, like The Lion, merely has a mood perfectly attuned to its clientele, and a setting that utterly becomes its location. Hopperesque from the sidewalk, it's

more like Renoir within, aswirl with life, color and rampant flirtation. The unpretentious, winning menu adds to the fun. Bring a hearty appetite and a taste for herbs, blood and butter.



Steve Cuozzo
Free Range

RESTAURANT REVIEW

LYON
 ★★

118 Greenwich Ave., at 13th Street, 212-242-5966

Golden light spills from the windows after dark. Inside, three distinct rooms are aligned in what seems a triangular luxury railroad car, with a soundtrack provided by the subway below.

Oak paneling warms the contours of a convivial bar, where you should have a juicy "lyonnaise" hot dog on a mustardy pretzel roll; a middle zone of big wooden booths; and a sexy dining room where curved ceiling moldings soften the angles and banquettes promote intimacy.

Road maps, books and vintage ceramic



Service is sweet at Lyon, where the French-American menu grows stronger by the week.

animals provide just enough cutes. Our loyalties were with the happy pig that perched over our booth, seeming to approve our every menu choice.

François Latapie, who launched the place with partner Penny Bradley, is my friend. I hope he'll forgive my saying that Lyon got off to a bumpy start in November, with dishes strange (chicken quenelles) and underperforming (hotel-quality risotto). Even now, pumpkin ravioli are not a strong suit and boudin noir is too noir for my normally blood-thirsty palate.

And, glasses too small for a ladybug to breathe in are not the ideal vessels for wine with the least complexity — I suggest you order lower-priced, delightful Beaujolais Grand Crus and avoid bottles over \$65.

But the house makes up for its flaws and flubs. It runs on Latapie's floor-roaming, ever-smiling élan. He was the force

behind La Goulue, and I wondered how he'd swap the Madison Avenue swells he knew as family for a sweaters-and-corduroys crowd. But watching him befriend Villagers who look blessed to find the place in their midst — not just boldfaces like Sarah Jessica Parker — you'd never guess he's been north of 14th Street.

His menu wants it both ways — the fatty pleasures of a simple Lyonnaise bistro known as a bouchon tempered by the "modern refinement" of seasonal and local tides. Such opposing impulses invariably yield clunkers, of which the clunkiest was a \$35, fancy-farm pork chop devoid of fat, blood or interest.

Yet most choices strike a suave middle ground, and chef Nick Leahy's kitchen has learned from early bloopers. Dreamy quenelles (\$14) are now made with pike. Escargot and risotto matured into a \$13 joy, the rice now properly nubly, fortified with garlic sausage and lent a strong

tease of spring by watercress and parsley. Unorthodox onion soup (\$13) is an "interpretation," Latapie says, of a Lyonnaise recipe itself different from the familiar article. The cheese is not on top but baked into a crouton. Leahy loads up the broth with braised brisket "kind of like flanken," one of my guests marveled — a satisfying meal in a bowl.

"St. Jacques" is no predictable coquille. Bay scallops are lightly seared, their buttery quality amplified by *beurre blanc* and seasoned with rosemary and mustard — a steal at \$29. Another bargain is sweet and flaky skate wing (\$25) given the classic brown-butter treatment.

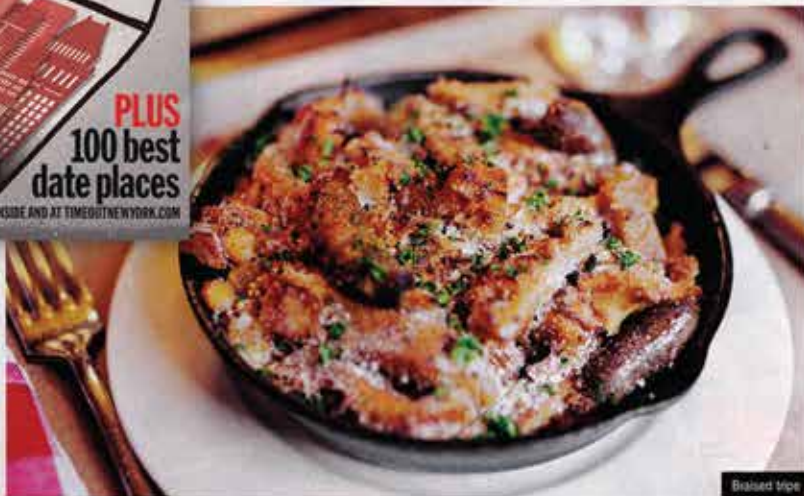
"I'm from the South of France," the waitress cheerfully announced. She charmed us into ordering the \$35 seafood casserole, a special. Head-on shrimp were jackknifed over pristine rouger filets, mussels and aromatic, herb-rich broth.

In fact, nightly main-course specials are the kitchen's real strength, and usually worth the extra cost. Duck maigret (\$36) was no typically overcooked pinwheel. Seared breast and braised legs arrived pretty and pink, gamy and drenched in jus. They were attended by polenta, Brussels sprouts, and caramelized pears and dried cranberries to lighten the heft without oversweetening.

After so many primal pleasures, desserts just barely get the job done. Go with bittersweet, coffee-tinted *pot de crème* sprinkled with *fleur de sel*. And where's the cheese? The lone choice, St. Marcellin in a gooey blur of olive oil and chives, wore thin after the first time.

But the place has improved by the week, and Latapie and Leahy will surely get around to fixing the final course — perhaps by spring, which one day will come. For now, on any of this long season's frigid nights, Lyon is my cup of *thé*.

scuozzo@nypost.com



Braised tripe

Vitals

Eat this: Cervelle de canut, charcuterie plate, quenelles, tripe, profiteroles

Drink this: Kick things off with a glass of Cerdon du Bugey (\$10), the Alpine bubbly that is a classic Lyonnais aperitif. Most of the food here is best suited to cold beer, like crisp, amber Gavroche (\$8), or chilled beaunois by the carafe (\$24).

Sit here: The bar area is ideal for solo dining, but the dining-room tables are just as convivial, and much better suited to cozy first dates—with more room to spread your feast out under the sepia lights.

Conversation piece: The decor at Lyon comes courtesy of Roman and Williams, the design stars behind the Ace and Standard Hotels, who sourced the old booze ads and Michelin maps from owner François Latapie's personal collection.

Lyon

Cock your beret: It's faux *français* at its finest.
By Jay Cheshes

Food & Drink

★★★★★
118 Greenwich Ave at 13th St (212-242-5966). Subway: 1, 2, 3 to 14th St. Tue–Thu 5–11pm; Fri 5pm–midnight; Sat 11:30am–4pm, 5pm–midnight; Sun 11:30am–4pm, 5–9:30pm. Average main course: \$24.

Sometimes evoking authenticity comes down to simply getting the ambience right: It's not a *real* French bistro we're looking for, after all. It's our fantasy of one.

Lyon, in the West Village, looks, smells and tastes like the city it's named for. This dream version of a *bouchon*—a traditional working-class restaurant you might stumble upon on the banks of the Rhône—feels conjured from Time-Life cookbooks, Jacques Tati films and flea-market finds.

The result is convincing and transporting, if not entirely right. The owner is French—François Latapie, of La Goulue fame—but his chef, Chris Leahy (BLT Prime), is Irish-American. The combination turns out to be oddly endearing: Latapie sets the Pastis-and-Gauloises tone of the place, lighting the wood-paneled walls with antique lamps and stocking its shelves with French booze paraphernalia from the '50s and '60s. Leahy, meanwhile, lightens and brightens the food for the 21st century.

The chef, not hamstrung by having grown up on this stuff, uses classic Lyonnais flavors as a starting point, tweaking tradition but not

throwing it out. He sets a properly reverential tone at the start, serving *cervelle de canut*, a creamy herbed *fromage blanc* cheese dip that's as emblematic of old-fashioned *bouchons* as the nicely chilled beaunois sold here in carafes. His house-made charcuterie is also traditional: top-notch *pâté de campagne* and peppery boudin noir served with crusty toast and seasonal pickles (*cipollini*, carrots, squash,

radish and fennel). These dishes make perfect elbow-on-the-bar bites. Enjoy them there before retiring to a table for the rest of the meal.

Lyon is the best kind of neighborhood restaurant, designed more for regular pop-ins than plan-ahead suppers. Even the heaviest classics have been transformed here into dishes that won't send you home in need of a nap. Instead of onion soup that's as much bread and cheese as anything else, Leahy serves an unconventional spin, featuring tender beef brisket in a delicious sweet-and-savory onion broth, with one long, dipable shard of cheese-slathered toast. His pike quenelles in lobster sauce are as fluffy as meringues; his tartly dressed Lyonnais salad with a poached egg

on top is more about bright, crispy greens than bacon and croutons.

Even the most adventurous *bouchon* dishes have been reborn new and accessible. Still iffy on offa? This is the place to take the plunge on braised tripe—delicious, tender and surprisingly light—tossed with piquant merguez nuggets and topped with crisp garlic bread crumbs. In Leahy's deft hands, it's as much everyday fare as the tender roasted chicken he serves with mushroom-herb butter stuffed under the skin.

Desserts (a delicate buttery Granny Smith-apple tart, hazelnut-ice-cream-filled profiteroles modestly drizzled in chocolate sauce) have that same hybrid quality, at once classic and not. You might not find these exact versions in the city of Lyon, but in its fictional West Village annex they come across as just right.

Vive la comfort food

What are wings, mac and cheese and hot dogs doing on a French menu? Chef Chris Leahy's clever cross-pollination reimaginings these all-American dishes through a Gallic lens.

SPICY BARBECUED DUCK WINGS

Leahy, whose family is from Buffalo, combines the town's beloved game-day grub with the French classic duck à l'orange for this sticky snack. He confits brined duck wings, fries them to order and bakes them with a spicy orange-ginger sauce until they glisten. \$8



MACARONI AND CHEESE

Lyon has its own traditional version of macaroni and cheese, made with small noodles in a white sauce. Here Leahy dresses it up with black-truffle shavings, wilted kale and a homemade Boursin-cheese béchamel, which hints at a Lyonnais speciality found elsewhere on the menu, cervelle de canut. \$14



traditions and New York's own iconic street meat, Leahy asked Brooklyn smokehouse master Hervé Katz to help him create a proprietary hot-dog blend. Katz folds black truffle into a spiced pork mixture, stuffs it in a natural casing and smokes the links. The haute wiener is served in a Payard pretzel roll with homemade sauerkraut, and gets an extra truffle boost from Dijon mustard spiked with the tuber's oil. \$9—Mari Uehara

LYON HOT DOG

In a nod to Lyonnais sausage-making





OK!'S TOP SPOT: LYON BOUCHON MODERNE



Even celebrities need a place to chill — somewhere inviting, with fabulous food, sublime drinks and casually elegant French decor. Voilà! Lyon Bouchon Moderne, in NYC's West Village, fits the bill. It's where **Sarah Jessica Parker** gets a true taste of France, then can walk home with très

magnifique leftovers! "We wanted Lyon to look beautiful, and it turned out better than we dreamed," owner François Latapie tells *OK!*. "Chef Chris Leahy's food is authentic Lyonnaise. People come in for a gourmet meal and stop for a drink at the bar."



LYON COCKTAIL

Makes 1 cocktail

Ingredients

- 2 oz. Calvados
- 1 oz. Canton ginger liqueur
- splash fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. maple syrup
- 1/3 egg white

Directions

Fill cocktail shaker with ice, add all ingredients and shake. Strain into a martini glass.

For another signature Lyon Bouchon Moderne cocktail recipe, go to okmagazine.com.



easy diet and exercise plan can work for you, too!



LEARNING A WEDDING!



The New York Times

JANUARY 18th 2011

Dining Out



Lyon ★ 118 Greenwich Avenue (West 13th Street), Greenwich Village; (212) 242-5966.

The drop-off can be severe, if easily remedied. A tasteless hunk of market-priced wagyu, for instance, as soft and wobbly as panna cotta, is dispiriting even under its thin green peppercorn sauce, even with fries that are very good indeed. Replacing it with a rough little bavette or sirloin would do wonders. There is no place for a \$45 designer steak in a restaurant like this.

And here is the same sautéed ruff of skate you'll find at any number of restaurants across town, perfectly fine if a little drowsy under its sage- and caper-strewn brown butter sauce. Also a molded steak tartare of middling flavor, to which more fire could be added with ease. There are well-cooked scallops and sweet smashed potatoes. These are soft enough to cushion the blow if you fall asleep in the middle of the meal.

Lyon needs a quiet little showstopper instead of these. The poulet rôti you used to be able to get at Quatorze and still can get at Bar Boulud, for instance, would do the trick. Simple food that gets our attention without seeking it, or needing it, is why we go to restaurants of Lyon's ilk, after all, why bistros boomed, why people treasure the casual roughness of the true bouchon.

François Latapie, a former partner at La Goulue on the Upper East Side, opened Lyon last year, in the space that some will recall from its dark, railcar-ish past as Café de Bruxelles. (Chris Leahy is the chef, gamely executing Mr. Latapie's desires.) The space is beautiful. Roman and Williams, the firm that designed the room, ordered oak panels and detailed trim throughout the dining room, which runs along Greenwich Avenue, and placed enough inset slate boards and custom cabinets within them to have kept a finish carpenter in health insurance for months. The restrooms, downstairs, are papered with classic French cartoons.

It is a marvelous place to eat. The tables are set with red-checked napkins, the waiters and waitresses dressed to match. Each one is better looking than the last, worse at English, charming for that. They serve Beaujolais quickly, with gruff friendliness in tough little glasses, cold as a child's morning cup of milk.

The restaurant is warm and welcoming, already more a neighborhood draw than a publicist's undertaking, with celebrity sightings limited to Michael Moore and a war reporter or two. You might see young professionals crushed into a corner, catching up ("You're moving to Elkhart? Where is that, Illinois? Indiana?") or literary people polishing their eyeglasses in pairs as they talk about art. No fewer than three tables one recent night were populated by women eating salad and talking about the economy, everyone slugging down wine.

CAN a restaurant succeed without a signature dish? Lyon, in Greenwich Village, is trying.

The restaurant is a Manhattan take on a bouchon, itself a Lyonnaise take on a bistro. It serves the **salads** and snails and sticky bits of pork and beef that are requisite to Lyonnaise cuisine in a beautiful wooden room under yellow light.

Some of the food is excellent.

Compliments should ring for the rich, heady steam and flavor of the restaurant's onion soup, thickened with brisket and made silky with a kind of marrow jam, flavored with fontina and a deep bass note of demi-glace. The salad lyonnaise, with thick batons of bacon and a soft poached egg, is likewise remarkable, mustard-flecked, a model of the form. There is a good beet salad to start and a fine St. Marcellin cheese to finish, along with some lovely fried apple slices and a thick caramel sauce.

Best of all are the restaurant's offerings of charcuterie: a dense country pâté; some smoked beef sausage; a roulade of pig trotter; an excellent foie gras and rabbit terrine. To sit at Lyon's bar eating these, or a mustard-splattered hot dog off a pretzel roll, with just a hint of black truffle alongside a mound of sauerkraut, is to experience bouchon life as it ought to spool out in Manhattan in 2011, neither chic nor sordid, pleasant in the extreme.

The entrees need work, however.

Add the scent of Gauloises, a dog or two under the tables, and we might be down the street from the Hôtel de Ville, and not from poor, dark St. Vincent's, waiting for its fate. Lyon is that close to soaring.

But there need to be a few more things on the menu you'd want to eat again and again, more you'd return for with glee.

An appetizer of escargot with garlic sausage and watercress **risotto** sounds promising enough, it's true. But it is really watercress risotto (wild and green, tasting of a suburban lawn) with a few bits of snail and sausage. It is a deconstructed idea rather than a classic well made. Preferable would be the actual article, bubbling and garlicky in pale brown shells.

A starter plate of tripe with white beans arrives under a cloak of bread crumbs, perfectly cooked but pale of flavor, as if translated out of French and into the flat English of airport announcements and corporate phone trees. It is more texture than taste.

And while quenelles de brochet, that classic dish of the region, offers quivering assurance on the plate, the spoonfuls of fish mousse are served in a lobster sauce that ought to be a great deal richer. The dish could use some salt and a run under the broiler. (A bacon-wrapped branzino needs less, served almost mushy with its pairing of sweet leeks and fennel.)

There is for all this a passable lamb shank served with a white bean stew. Some fiery merguez sausage livens up the plate, as North African flavors have increasingly done for French cuisine: good. It brings warmth to a winter night. Discs of pig trotter with foie gras, green lentils, spinach and a spray of sherry vinegar make up a dish that does likewise, especially paired with friends and a pot of wine.

Restaurants are central to the process by which nature becomes a form of culture. At their best they are where we go to experience, and celebrate, the transformation.

Lyon is not that, not yet. But it is so pretty, and the staff is so winning, and the kitchen skilled enough that it is hard not to root for its success. An entree that every third person in the restaurant orders would be a good place to start.

ATMOSPHERE Charming and casual, with staff and cuisine to match.
SOUND LEVEL Moves from quiet to roaring as the evening progresses.
RECOMMENDED DISHES Salet lyonnaise; onion soup; charcuterie; rabbit and foie gras terrine; lamb shank; cheese, apple fritters.
WINE LIST Affordable, with a fine collection of Beaujolais.
PRICE RANGE Appetizers, \$10 to \$18; entrees, \$21 to \$45.
HOURS Sunday and Monday, 5 to 11 p.m.; Tuesday to Thursday, 5 to 11:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight; Saturday and Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
RESERVATIONS Recommended.
CREDIT CARDS All major cards.
WHEELCHAIR ACCESS The restaurant has a small ramp from the street. Dining room has very narrow aisles. Restrooms are down a steep flight of stairs.
WHAT THE STARS MEAN Ratings range from one to four stars and reflect the reviewer's reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.



ORSAY



The New York Times

September 27, 2000



A Metamorphosis on the Upper East Side

Orsay

By WILLIAM GRIMES

** [rating: two stars]

1007 Lexington Avenue (97th Street); (212) 247-6100

ATMOSPHERE: Inventive, internationalized bistro fare in a Paris-style brasserie.

NOISE LEVEL: Very loud.

RECOMMENDED DISHES: Crab salad with tomato sorbet, smoked duck with potato tart and goat cheese, salmon tartare with Stilton and walnuts, grilled rougets, filet mignon with pink-peppercorn sauce, half-smoked salmon with eggplant chutney, fig tart, raspberry napoleon.

SERVICE: Friendly and attentive.

WINE LIST: A thoughtfully chosen list of about 150 wines, mostly French and tilted toward Bordeaux and Burgundy, but with a decent showing of wines from Italy, Spain and Austria. A decent half bottle.

PRICE RANGE: Lunch, appetizers, \$7 to \$13; entrees, \$14.50 to \$28; desserts, \$8 to \$10. Dinner, appetizers, \$8 to \$14; entrees, \$15 to \$26; desserts, \$9.50 to \$10.

HOURS: Lunch, Monday through Thursday, noon to 3 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Dinner, 5:30 to 11 p.m., daily. Sunday brunch, noon to 4 p.m.

CREDIT CARDS: All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: A restroom on the first floor.

THE Mortimer's era is officially over. And Orsay has put the period on the sentence. Glenn Bernbaum, Mortimer's notoriously highbanded and cranky owner, made sure the restaurant would not survive him. He arranged to have the name retired at his death, two years ago, and barred his former employees from operating a restaurant on the premises. Undeterred, they moved two blocks south and created Swifty's, where the spirit of Mortimer's has migrated with surprising ease, along with the Mortimer's "in" crowd. In the meantime, the partners who run La Goulue bought Mr. Bernbaum's building, transformed it into a French brasserie and, in a final dismantling of the Mortimer's legacy, are serving very good food. Mr. Bernbaum must be wincing at the very thought of it.

Orsay is a brasserie with a difference, although there's nothing in the look of the place to suggest anything out of the ordinary. In fact, the restaurant looks as if it was ordered from a kit, with a lot of shiny brass, pristine leather banquettes, sparkling mirrors and authentic French waiter costumes. Somewhere, there must be a central supply house with a full-color catalog for New York's restaurateurs. Pastis sent away for the Provincial Cafe (Model 2992), paying a surcharge for the nicotine stains and cracked plaster. The owners of Orsay opted for Paris Brasserie, circa 1890. Disturbingly, it does feel very French in an exuberantly fake way.

The cuisine does not follow the script. Orchestrated by Philippe Schmit, the executive chef at La Goulue, it has a fresh, wayward bent and an international style that saves Orsay from being yet one more exercise in French nostalgia. Even the old standbys, more often than not, veer off in unexpected directions. Two healthy rougets, their skin grilled to potato-chip crunchiness, get a lift from the feather-light anchovy mayonnaise and four golden sticks of fried pureed potato touched with a hint of cumin. A scoop of crab salad, nothing more than pristine bits of meat freshened with flecks of mint, looks winsome on the plate, but there's no way to overlook the flashy redhead that comes with it, a hot-colored, ice-cold sorbet with a throbbing tomato flavor.

A whiff of vanilla adds richness and complexity to thick pink slices of salmon with a black pepper crust, but that's only the beginning of the adventure, salmon-wise, at Orsay. In a special section of the menu devoted to tartares, one's eye alights on a very strange dish labeled "le Britannique," with a shocking list of ingredients that includes Stilton, walnuts and Yorkshire pudding. I ordered with fear in my heart, but the Britannique is a triumph, a timbale of succulent salmon nuggets with nearly invisible bits of Stilton and walnut delicately interwoven to create a lovely interplay of unexpected flavors. The Yorkshire pudding beats anything I've had in England. Less successful, although cleverly presented, was a tuna tartare flavored with tequila and cilantro and served in a silver goblet with a salted rim and a lime slice. Tequila doesn't do a whole lot for tuna.

Another area of the menu worth lingering over showcases Orsay's hickory-chip smoker, which gives a dark, woody bite to salmon that's half-smoked, then grilled and served with eggplant chutney. Dense, deeply flavored duck sausage gets the full-smoke treatment. Served with a rustic potato tart and aged goat cheese, it makes a full-throttle cold-weather starter.

Oddly enough in this traditional setting, it's the traditional brasserie and bistro dishes that disappoint. Hanger steak is ordinary and rather tough. The T-bone is a better bet, but it is strictly a meat-and-potatoes affair. Braised veal short ribs, tender and flavorful, get bogged down a bit in a sticky-sweet sauce. Filet mignon, buttery-textured and enrobed in a thick pink-peppercorn sauce, hits it just right.

Gilles Ballay, the pastry chef, plays his hand a little more conservatively than Mr. Schmit, limiting his flights of fancy to small embellishments. He shrewdly plops a scoop of tamarillo sorbet next to his very fine fig tart. Piquant and acidic, the tamarillo helps to cut the gooey sweetness of the figs. His restrained raspberry napoleon, with just a few pastry layers defining the form, is a perfectly executed classic. Warm apple tart is flawless, but the prune and Armagnac ice cream that comes with it is almost fiery with alcohol, and Black Forest cherry cake may be one of those desserts best left to the Germans and Austrians.

The Upper East Side, like a nervous poodle, can be finicky in strange ways. It's very hard to know when food matters to the well-tended, well-traveled and insular group that moves at its higher reaches. Did they embrace Le Cirque for the cooking or for Sirio Maccioni? The same people who dote on Daniel ate the food at Mortimer's with every appearance of pleasure. It's all very puzzling, but one thing is clear: on the Upper East Side, when you're in, you're in. And Orsay, with a team from La Goulue that obviously knows the territory, is definitely in. The right sort of people, after some preliminary sniffing around, have obviously decided that Orsay is O.K. In another year or so, they may even notice that you can't get meatloaf at 75th and Lex anymore.



CRAIN'S

NEW YORK BUSINESS®

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Brasserie shows raw talent in its tour de force tartares

Orsay's duck confit, steak frites béarnaise are also big winners; gazpacho not so hot

BY BOB LAPE

ON THESE WARM SUMMER nights, attractive and affluent Upper East Siders spill happily from the art nouveau interior of brasserie Orsay to the Paris café chairs and tables outside on East 75th Street. The former Mortimer's never had it so good.

There are still famous faces in the booths or at the bar, but Orsay draws a notably younger mix to its much more vibrant setting and delightful, if more expensive, food. Some neighbors bring the whole family. Others arrive in twos, fours and octets, celebrating a birthday or promotion with a swirl of hugs and Tiffany turquoise wrappings.

We may all celebrate Jean Denevy's arrival in New York from Paris in 1965 to pursue a career as an hotelier. He opened his first restaurant, La Goulue, in 1972. He has since unwrapped a remarkable series of handsome, atmospheric and successful dining treats—La Comptoir, L'Absinthe, Le Colonial, Orsay and L'Escale, among them.

Co-owners François Latapie and Régis Marinier help guide this robust 2-year-old as they have other durable French hospitality haunts. The point man at Orsay is managing partner/maitre d' Craig Pogson. The talented kitchen team is led by chef Philippe Schmit, who

easily made the 12-block transition from La Goulue, after earlier stints at Le Bernardin and Park Bistro.

Step beyond Orsay's sedate façade into the Denevy-designed slice of period France, with rich woods, ornate moldings, antiqued mirrors and a floor of small tiles in an intricate pattern. The renovation of the Mortimer's space is said to have cost \$5 million. With the sidewalk café, it seats 160 guests.

Pleasant and professional servers move with brisk precision to deliver towering plateaus of shellfish with three sauces (\$67.50), or to alert patrons to the specialty of the house—tartares.

Each of six flavor-dense variations of chopped tuna, salmon and beef has its own theme and complementing lift. The tequila and coriander-laced tuna tartare called Le Margarita, for instance, is served with tortilla chips. Le Breannique is salmon with Stilton cheese and walnuts to slather on

Yorkshire pudding. Bruschetta toast may be spread with Le Verdi, beef tartare blended with Parmesan

and pesto. These are great starters, priced from \$12 to \$18 for two.

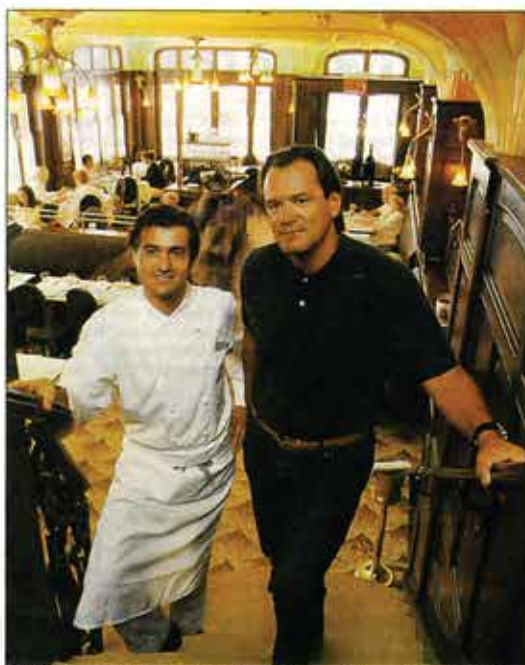
Several soups stand out among

Orsay hors d'oeuvres (\$8.50-\$18.50). If it's available, try the chilled sweet red pepper potage with a sneaky, spicy finish. Gazpacho is less compelling. Available every day is Marseilles-style fish soup with garlicky rouille.

It's not the *humble surprise* of James Bond films, but *humble à l'avocat* is a suave salad of avocado and crabmeat with cilantro. Lush foie gras terrine comes with fresh brioche.

I'm addicted to duck confit, so the least expensive entrée is to me a plateful of joy. It holds two meaty, succulent duck legs, a garlic beignet, and greens that almost hide sliced potatoes lyonnaise.

Working from a global palette of inspiration, chef Schmit adds lemongrass and coriander to bouillabaisse, ginger and Thai basil to chicken poillard, and barbecue sauce on a potato-crust pork chop. Monkfish goes Iberian, with chorizo, Spanish olives and



CAFÉ SOCIETY: Chef Philippe Schmit (left) and co-owner François Latapie cater to well-heeled Upper East Siders outside and inside the 2-year-old Orsay.



Cuisine: Modern French brasserie

Wines: 180 choices

Dress: No code

Noise Level: Loud

Price Range: \$20.50-\$30.50; Brunch, \$24-95

Wine Markup: 100%/11-200%

Credit Cards: All major

Reservations:

Recommended

Hours: Lunch, Mon.-Fri., noon-3 p.m.; Sat., noon-4 p.m.; Dinner, Mon.-Thurs., 5:30-11:30 p.m.;

Fri.-Sat., 5:30 p.m.-midnight, Sun., 5:30-10 p.m.; Brunch, Sun., noon-4 p.m.

★★★★ Outstanding

★★★ Excellent

★★ Very good

★ Good

artichokes.

There are steaks, of course. Filet mignon with a whiskey-and-peppercorn sauce is popular here, but I'd go back for steak frites with letter-perfect béarnaise, even though the first one was far from rare as ordered. The fries may not be golden, but they are crispy, seasoned by a confident hand, and ideal for plunging into the béarnaise.

Desserts (\$8) are rich in artful presentations and intensity of

tastes. House-made ice creams are impressive, with a show-stopping caramel. There are various fruit tarts and strudels. If you prefer the plump-style apple tarte tatin, here is a fine one. The saffron ice cream that comes with it is overly aggressive. A seemingly modest raspberry napoleon with pistachio cream proves it isn't size that counts.

Soufflés are offered on weekends, baked to order or frozen. Guava was the flavor of the day recently, just another thoughtfully engineered surprise from a restaurant with real French flair and follow-through. ■

@ Be sure to read Bob Lape's reviews at www.craainsny.com

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POST-MORTIMER'S

The longtime habitués of the clublike Mortimer's restaurant at Lexington and 75th Street in Manhattan were inconsolable when its grouchy but lovable (OK, not to everybody) owner, Glenn Bernbaum, died two years ago and it shuttered its doors. But two blocks south, it has almost been reincarnated in the form of Swifty's, at least to the extent that the same crowd goes there (Upper East Side WASPs and wannabes). So what's become of the old Mortimer's? *Alors*, it is now Orsay—a French brasserie that seems twice the size of the former dark, dank place (knock down a few walls, repaint, install an oak bar, antique mirrors and brass railings—*et voilà*). It is also twice as busy and, some would say, twice as noisy, too (a sure sign of success, according to the ever-convivial, ever-present François Latapie, one of Orsay's three owners). The place buzzes, and Philippe Schmit's food rises above typical bistro fare. The crowd is not as young or as hip as the one at Pastis or Balthazar, but remember, this is uptown, after all, and more Chanel than Helmut Lang (or, for that matter, Helmut Newton). The only thing missing? The pungent aroma of twenty years of Gitanes. 1057 Lexington Avenue, New York City; 212-517-6400.

PAMELA FIORI



François Latapie at Orsay

NEW YORK

In Living Color

Rising from the gray mediocrity of Mortimer's, Orsay is an unexpected oasis of comfort and culinary verve in the stolid heart of the Upper East Side.

By Hal Rubenstein

The space at the northeast corner of 75th and Lex sat dark and abandoned for more than a year, a blemish on the rosy-cheeked complexion of the Upper East Side. Hordes of locals openly mourned their banishment from this site, giving it the epic gravity of Clubhouse Lost. But driving by the desolate storefront lifted my spirits almost as high as seeing the restoration of Grand Central Terminal. *Ahhk*. Never again to have my neighborhood associated with that boarding-school slop called chicken hash. Never again to acknowledge that a room as comfortable and flattering as La Guardia's baggage claim is regarded as a bastion of urban chic. Never again to be trapped in a space orchestrated by a man who thrived on spite and self-loathing like a vegetarian downing a T-bone at Tad's Steak House on the sly. Never to hear anyone offer to "meet me at Mortimer's" again. What joy. What rapture.

So willing was I to proclaim this spot high burial ground for everything wrong with social interaction on the Upper East Side -- the land that fun forgot -- that I was about as eager to welcome Orsay to the neighborhood as Martha Stewart's Westport neighbors probably would be to welcome her back into theirs. I chuckled at the delays, peering into the gutted space and wondering whether they had contacted Temple Emanuel with respect to *dybbak* removal. I sneered at the deliberately unsalable Tandy Craft antiques-kid-stained exterior, which resembled one of those newly remodeled Boulevard Montparnasse bistros designed to food tourists by the busload. Objective as one tries to be -- and as much as I admire owner Jean Denoyer's perseverance, and almost blush at the galleyness of co-owner and general manager François Latapie's charm -- I went to Orsay with my back up so high you couldn't tell the length of my sideburns.

Living up here for so long, however, I realize there are some things you can't expect a restaurant to alter. The Upper East Side is the most self-contained section of town, one where the residents not only prefer remaining safe in their gardens but really don't appreciate strangers from around town coming to smell the roses. Consequently, nightlife has always been as ethnically diverse as a squash tournament at the New York Athletic Club (though, oddly enough, it is less likely to be segregated by age). So it was no surprise on our first night at Orsay to count nineteen blue blazers with brass buttons (take that, Helmut Lang!), all but one worn with either khakis (no flat-fronts) or gray flannels (in August), all with loafers (seven with tassels), about half with no socks. After 29 years of living in New York style's black hole, you learn to look beyond. And unexpectedly and blissfully, what you see at Orsay is an environment as buoyant as any I've encountered in this neighborhood.

Close your eyes and it almost sounds like the meatpacking district. Open them and... well, at least you can see that Orsay is quite the stunning illusion: a beautifully executed mahogany-paneled, swirl- and flourish-laden, Art Nouveau-drenched transformation of a former Skinner box, with floridly romantic plaster arches framing a ceiling that might inspire more raised eyebrows if it weren't for all the Botox below. Besides, it's not like there is nothing to see atop the tablecloths. For all the decorative extravagance of the makeover, and a staff whose congeniality, intelligence, and deportment exceed those of many they are called upon to serve, Orsay's most significant mood modification may be its rejection of the neighborhood's bland, boarding-school palate. La Goulue's chef, Philippe Schmit, has fashioned a menu that, though extensive, is as clean-lined as Orsay's glass is beveled but has just enough fiery blasts to wrench patrons out of their complacency, just as surely as if they had to fix a flat tire.

Though there are fresh oysters, sweetly sharp glistening Spanish mackerel, a brawny ostrich carpaccio spiked by a soy vinaigrette, lush pillows of black plums tenderly buffering sautéed foie gras, and a wonderfully spicy trio of herb-stuffed summer vegetables for appetizers, the freshest, most appealing beginnings on Orsay's menu are a series of tartares. Beads of fresh tuna are brisky splashed with cilantro and tequila. Fragrant salmon is enhanced by Stilton and daubs of Yorkshire pudding (the gravlax that comes pepper-encrusted and with vanilla may sound more appealing, but it's too reticent and demure). There are four beef tartares. The classic has enough onion and capers not to disappoint, another gets an exotic cast from curry and coconut, a third has the bracing lift of harissa and fennel, while the last is warmly comforted by pesto and Parmesan.

Not everything works as well: There is the powerful aroma of smoked duck dominating a goat-cheese-and-potato tart, peppered and moist Maine crabmeat is backhanded to oblivion by a scoop of tomato sorbet, and a potentially lovely goat-cheese ravioli can't come up for air because of too much olive oil. Let's see how long calf's-foot-and-tongue cake can maintain a footing in the land of lobster salad. Try it. You may not like it. But try it.



Speaking of lobster, a whole one showered with tabbouleh and arugula will cure you if that tongue cake leaves you mute. Thai bouillabaisse is equally lush and vibrant with cilantro and lemongrass. The kitchen runs out of short ribs too often, and there's a good reason why. But the pork chop in a foisty honey barbecue sauce is a formidable second choice. Of the grilled fish, the mullet with tapenade was the strongest, with only a little lemon needed to bolster the nutlike meat. Steamed bass with gazpacho held more interest than the tuna niçoise. Though stuck in an odd construction, the scallop "Lasagna" is excellent. Of the three steaks on the menu, the hanger steak fits the mood best, except that it doesn't come with French fries. Order them. As for chicken, there is only a roasted breast with succulent burnished-umber skin and a lovely corn ragu. If you miss your hash, you'll have to bring your own battery-operated grinder.

Desserts are pretty delightful all around. Chocolate tart should stop being a special this instant: It's too good to ever go into exile. A lovely fresh-fig tart has a bonus of tamarillo sorbet. Try paying attention to the roasted peaches after you've tasted the sweet-corn ice cream that accompanies them. The chocolate-caramel bombe is nowhere near as complicated as its explanation on the menu, and a raspberry napoleon is simple -- as it should be.

In case you haven't guessed, East Siders don't like to share. So your friends who live here are not going to tell you about Orsay. Or they'll say it's no big deal. Don't worry -- they'll meet you down at Pastis. No way: Get in a cab. Come up. They'll get over it. You may even like it up here, if only to eat, or at least antagonize the spirits. Glenn Bernbaum, who owned Mortimer's, loathed "out-of-towners" in his space. He'd have hated the whole town's coming to 75th and Lex. If for no other reason, come for that one.

Orsay, 1057 Lexington Avenue, at 75th Street (212-517-6400). Lunch, Monday through Thursday noon-3 p.m., Friday through Sunday till 4 p.m.; dinner, Sunday through Thursday 5:30 p.m.-midnight, Friday and Saturday till 1 a.m. Appetizers, \$7 to \$25; entrées, \$13 to \$28. All major credit cards.

For the past several months, all around town, with horrifying and painful frequency, I have found myself sitting next to a table where at least one diner -- though more often several -- has chosen to speak at a volume that might qualify for hog calling at the Oklahoma State Fair. These people were not drunk. Or angry. Rather, their window-rattling pitch is what they considered to be the acceptable level for dinner conversation. They were out, they had space and a story to tell, and they wanted to be heard. And so they were -- by virtually everyone in the room.

Perhaps we've discovered yet another outlet for entitlement, or all that following into cell phones (often at that next table as well) has set a new standard for conversational tone. Or maybe we've all read one too many times that we New Yorkers use restaurants as our dining rooms. Whatever the reason, too many people are talking as if they were in their own homes. Well, you're not.

Restaurants are public places, full of people who don't know you and -- no offense -- probably don't care to. It's bad enough how much said at our own tables with our own friends winds up feeling like way too much information. We don't need to hear your sagas, deal closers, breakups, conquests, family troubles, or heartfelt admissions, too. If I want to hear jokes, I'll go to Caroline's. Mike Meyer's Linda Richman said it best: Talk amongst yourselves. It's a good idea -- especially if you're not as funny as he is.





Michelin® Guide 2006

Recommends:

La Goulue



French

Few places in Gotham say "Paris" more than this venerable bistro, opened in 1972. Named for the shameless 19th-century Moulin Rouge dancer immortalized in paintings by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, La Goulue re-creates La Belle Epoque with framed vintage posters, lace cafe curtains, brass railings, and a light fixture signed by Art Nouveau furniture designer Louis Marjorelle.

The menu, too, respects the time-honored bistro tradition with well-rendered classics. Succulent skate wing is seared golden and sauced with lemon butter and capers; profiteroles are filled with vanilla ice cream and drizzled with chocolate sauce perfumed with orange zest. While you're enjoying your meal, indulge in a bit of star-gazing; celebrities like Pierce Brosnan, Rod Stewart and Uma Thurman have been known to dine here. From spring to fall, the few tables on the sidewalk terrace afford great people watching.





RESTAURANTS

John Mariani

A Bistro for the 1990s

IN MY CALLOW youth, I thought it the height of sophistication to take a Sarah Lawrence girl to one of the little French bistros in New York's Theater District, where, for less than \$20, we would linger over onion soup, coq au vin, and crème caramel amid yellowed stucco, faux timbers, and shiny copper pots. There were sleeker, more expensive establishments on the East Side, but the menus were much the same, and you always felt you had stolen away to a Montparnasse bistro like those Hemingway described.

Then, in the late 1980s, a new breed of bistro was invented in New York: Places like Park Bistro downtown, Jean Claude in SoHo, and, especially, Jo Jo uptown broke with the cliché menus and decor of the past and offered an innovative cuisine that set off a nationwide bistro boom. But not until now have any of them so successfully integrated the fondest traditions of the family-run French bistro with the chic modernity of 1990s New York as has **La Goulue**.

Ironically, La Goulue (named for the Moulin Rouge dancer immortalized by Toulouse-Lautrec) has been around for years, distinguished mainly by its snobbishness, its dull food, and a clientele increasingly long in the tooth. Then, last year, the bistro moved to 746 Madison Avenue (212-988-8169), and when François Latapie, former maître d' at



Le Cirque, and his wife, Susan, joined up with longtime owner Jean Denoyer, La Goulue took wing.

Striking a fine balance between Parisian savoir faire and New York swagger, the Latapies have worked to attract a younger, more fashionable crowd that brings a welcome joie de vivre to the little restaurant. The long, partitioned dining room,



Gallic style, New York chic: La Goulue's glowing main room; the goat-cheese, potato, and smoked-duck tart (top); salmon in pastry.



dark wooden panels, lace curtains, squeaky brown leather banquettes, brass appointments, and zinc bars brought from the Terminus Est recall such beloved Parisian bistros as Chez Georges, Chez Pauline, and Le Balzar. The service staff matches the brisk efficiency of its Gallic counterparts minus their notorious bourgeois hauteur.

None of this would matter if the kitchen merely mimicked the usual bistro fare. But the Latapies have hired a brilliant young chef, Philippe Schmit, to create a menu that respects the homey virtues of good bistro cooking while shaping them into a personalized cuisine as satisfying as any in Manhattan. His mastery shows in the precise rendering of his finest dishes: upside-down tart of warm goat cheese, potato, and smoked duck; delicate ravioli stuffed with wild mushrooms in chestnut broth; pastry-wrapped salmon à la Provençal; braised duck glazed with cardamomtinged honey. Short ribs of beef are imbued with syrupy meat juices, and chicken is roasted to perfection and served with mashed potatoes studded with porcini. Cheeses are impeccably ripe. Desserts are irresistible bistro classics: puffy profiteroles lavished with ice cream and chocolate sauce; a caramelized, buttery apple tart; and a chocolate tart warm from the oven.

If you go to La Goulue, get there a few minutes before your friends, order the house aperitif—Champagne with *crème de mûre*—and take in the bonhomie of the place. Within moments, you'll feel you are already part of something small and fine, a place your friends will believe you belong and have greedily kept to yourself. ■

MELANIE ACEVEDO



UPPER EAST SIDE **RESTAURANTS**

If there are many for whom New York is America, and some for whom the Upper East Side is New York, there still others who will attest that La Goulue is the Upper East Side.

It makes sense because *la goulue* means "glutton" in French. This neighborhood, known as the "silk stocking district," has its share of indulgences. The Upper East Side boasts the most expensive residential real estate in the city, with luxury apartments overlooking the East River and

SoHo, Greenwich Village and the West Side have all succumbed to bistro-mania. But the Upper East Side ultimately redefined the concept.

As Madison Avenue brownstones gave way to a succession of glamorous shops and boutiques, a surfeit of bistros, trattorias and sidewalk cafés became the perfect venue to see and be seen, for this is an area where casual means a cashmere coat.

Founded by trendsetter Jean Denoyer in 1973, La Goulue verges on institu-

70th Street to its present location.

"The menu was convoluted, its execution was even worse and our regulars were in retreat," recalls Latapie. He hired chef Philippe Schmidt, a veteran of some of France's leading restaurants, including Jacques Cagna, Le Nôtre and Dutournier. "We agreed upon a menu with a contemporary appeal—wild mushroom ravioli in a subtle minestrone broth, carpaccio of tuna with lemongrass, flash-cooked salmon with tapenade. Schmidt even improved upon



Daily specials make a bistro.



General manager and partner François Latapie is the Gallic heart of La Goulue.

stately co-ops with liveried doormen lining Park and Fifth avenues. It houses a striking concentration of museums and is a mecca for luxury goods. Discussions of financial windfalls and Hamptons real estate linger in the air.

Since the middle of the 19th century, a successive wave of French migration has spawned a wealth of relatively inexpensive but good bistros that have won over New Yorkers to the delights of unfamiliar hors d'oeuvres, entrées and entremets.

La Goulue is adorned with elegant touches such as this beaux arts light fixture.

tional status not because it regularly fills with pretty faces but, rather, because it has skillfully navigated the challenging currents of the New York restaurant scene.

Much of the splendid turn-of-the-century paneling that graces the present-day La Goulue came from Denoyer's family restaurant in Paris. But the ambience is very of-the-moment, with celebrities mixing unobtrusively with regulars.

General manager and partner François Latapie, who runs La Goulue with wife Suzanne, was born in Paris. A former chef and restaurateur, Latapie is credited with reinventing La Goulue, which had entered a slow decline before it moved from East

La Goulue's signature cheese soufflé with the addition of Parmesan shavings and truffle oil. The response was highly enthusiastic," Latapie says.

Latapie revitalized La Goulue's wine list—it now numbers more than 130 selections—with astute auction purchases. "I have one customer who comes in three times a week, and all he drinks is [châteaus] Mouton, Latour or Cheval-Blanc. Other clients only want to sample the latest releases, such as Dunn Cabernet Sauvignon." Latapie accommodates all, and even selects interesting house wines such as Menetou-Salon, a white from an obscure district of the Loire Valley.



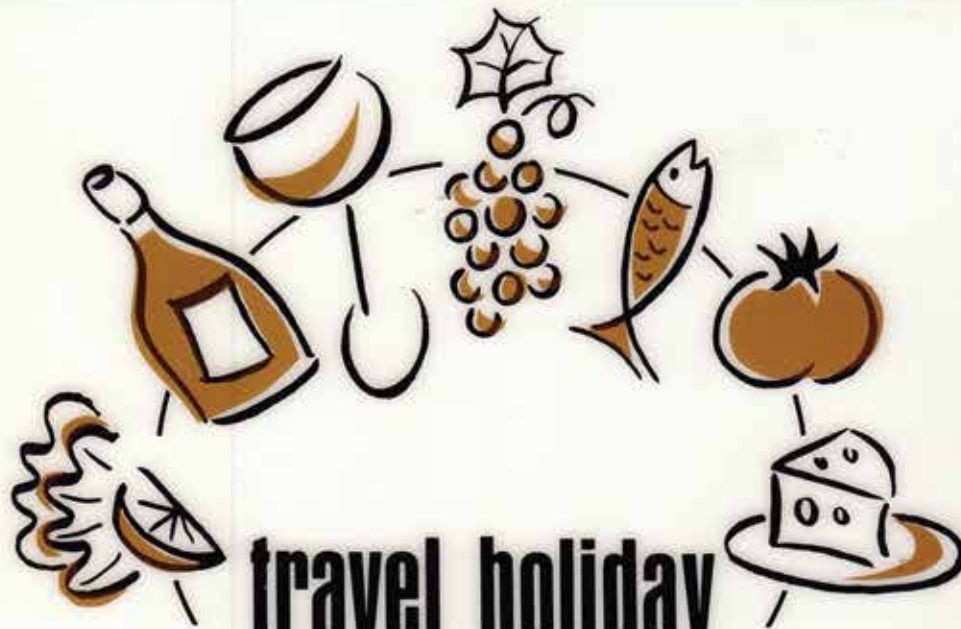
MIAMI **T**

he buzz of South Beach continues despite 1992's big event, the killer hurricane that wrecked suburbs to the south yet spared the Art Deco District. This is where whims of the moment blow: Retro looks drew crowds to WPA, then SoHo came to SoBe at I Tre Merli. Pack dining creates restaurants du jour—and an hour-long wait for Cuban flank steak at Larios on the Beach.

But the keeper of the year was Cassis, a bistro where stars landed on an ever-changing menu created by François Latapie (once at New York's Le Cirque). His stage is a cathedral room of textured walls, gilt-edged mirrors and a noisy bar serving SoBe's most diverse crowd.

90 TRAVEL & LEISURE • JANUARY 1993





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Good Value Dining Guide

HONORS

Cassis Bistro

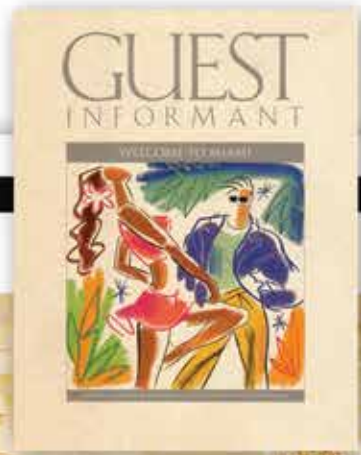
AS A RESTAURANT OF TRUE VALUE —
IN FOOD, SERVICE, AND SETTING

Pat Haegle

Patricia A. Haegle,
Publisher

Maggi Simmons

Margaret Staats Simmons,
Editor in Chief



Cassis Bistro

MENU HIGHLIGHTS

- Capucin Roti*
- Linguine et Homard*
- Canard Croustillant*
- Black Angus Steak*
- Snapper with Shitake Mushrooms*



Discover some of the finest cuisine around at Cassis Bistro. They've got everything from Black Angus steak with sauce au poivre, or fresh, tender snapper with shitake mushrooms and thyme. The Linguine et Homard (with lobster in brandy sauce) and canard croustillant (crisp duckling in blackberry sauce) will have you planning your next visit. In addition to a world of dazzling dishes at Cassis Bistro, you'll just love the comfortable atmosphere. Sparkling chandeliers, the large oak bar and high ceilings set the stage for a perfect evening. On Tuesday you can enjoy Night Club Nite, an added attraction that adds to the pleasure. Friday is Euro-Nite, so get ready for the fun. You'll see why Miami diners and visitors alike all flock to the spot where fine dining is a matter of course.

*764 Washington Ave.,
 Miami Beach
 531-7700*

*Open daily,
 6 p.m. to midnight;
 Fri., Sat. and Tues.,
 until 2 a.m.
 major credit cards.*

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