

food

Brooklyn's FINEFARE

When Babe Ruth played Yankee Stadium, a Nathan's hot dog cost a nickel. Watch a Nets game at the Barclays Center today, and a smoky beef brisket "Not Dog" from Brooklyn Bangers will run you \$9.75. Prices are up, but enthusiasm and nostalgia still reign supreme. SHIRA LEVINE

Those who plan their travels around the gastronomic demands of *le stomach* (or rather, *le palate*) should point their appetites east of Manhattan toward the borough of Brooklyn, now serving up the third course in its culinary revolution.

The first wave arrived with an influx of immigrants: old-school Italian restaurants and an array of Russian, Chinese, Pakistani, Senegalese, Caribbean and Turkish spots. Many of these are still quietly churning out extraordinary meals, ready to dazzle the taste buds of those lucky enough to discover them.

Then came the new classics—The River Café, Peter Luger's, Junior's—as Manhattan-trained and tortured chefs began to seek more space, cheaper rent, and a less frenetic lifestyle that allowed them to tinker with recipes and cultivate their own culinary visions. They predicted early on that diners would willingly surrender to the subway for a taste of the borough.

Decent prices and idiosyncratic variety peppered with all that extra space and a much more mellow vibe has proven to be the surefire

formula for giving Manhattan's more than 10,000 restaurants a run for their money. A new wave of chefs has arrived to elevate Brooklyn dining, at cozy-chic restaurants tucked away on leafy, brownstone-lined streets. The small-village vibe of neighborhoods like Park Slope, Williamsburg, Carroll Gardens and Boerum Hill is largely attributed to transplants who've cultivated urban versions of their own hometowns. On this side of the river, things feel familiar: utterly un-Manhattan, but right next door. Though many favorite foodspots started out as neighborhood joints, you'd now be hard-pressed to dine at any of the borough's five Michelin-starred restaurants without noticing the din of worldly accents.

Far from fancy, Brooklyn fine dining is back-to-the-basics. Understated décor will likely feature reclaimed wood, and paper menus change nightly based on what was locally sourced that day. Produce, meats, fish, dairy and baked goods are all Brooklyn born.

Here, we chat with a few Brooklyn chefs crafting delectable dishes, in the borough no longer considered off-the-beaten-path.



CHEF SAUL BOLTON
Saul, The Vanderbilt, Red Gravy

Saul just reopened in a very exciting new location: the architecturally majestic Brooklyn Museum. How did the site change come about?

It was serendipitous. After 14 years at our Smith Street place and wanting to redo and rehab Saul, we saw this as a great opportunity to be part of an iconic institution. We were able to keep everybody from the old Saul and just continue on in the new location—in a bigger space. To have that kind of continuity in your kitchen and in the front of the house is a gift.

Manhattan's Union Square Greenmarket is a destination for chefs as well as residents and tourists.

Which markets in Brooklyn should people check out?

We go to Grand Army Plaza on Saturdays. It's a badass farmer's market. Cadman Plaza in Downtown Brooklyn is Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The Brooklyn Heights farmer's market takes care of the more specialty, esoteric stuff, like fresh lima beans and shishito peppers. The best fish purveyor in New York is also in Brooklyn. And we have great cheese purveyors here, like Saxelby in Red Hook. My favorite is Stinky in Cobble Hill.

What do you make of all the attention Brooklyn has been getting?

I'm really proud of where I live and I love to share it. I can cook *foie gras* in Brooklyn just as well as I can anywhere in Manhattan, and now people realize it.

You're the man behind Brooklyn Bangers, which has become quite a successful enterprise.

We wanted to do an American gastropub where we were making awesome sausages and charcuterie. It morphed into more sausage-making equipment in the basement of The Vanderbilt. We started to sell them at the Brooklyn Flea, where some people wanted to buy them wholesale to serve at beer gardens and specialty stores. The Barclays Center approached us and we were like, "What the hell? Why not sell them at a basketball arena?" Next year we'll be in Citifield, MetLife Stadium, and the Prudential Center, and we'll be carried by [grocery delivery service] Fresh Direct.

What are your favorite restaurants in Brooklyn?

I love the tripe tacos at Tacos Matamoros in Sunset Park. I eat often at Al di La: great Italian in Park Slope. I also love Tanoreen's Lebanese food in Bay Ridge.

CHEF PAUL LIEBRANDT The Elm at King & Grove Hotel



It was a big deal coming here from Manhattan. Your success there and your culinary background in London and Paris make you a bit different than other chefs that have crossed the East River.

I think it was a natural progression. To be part of an exciting, youthful and creative area is a risk, but it is one that makes sense. For me, this is a nice project that is approachable and fun. It's exciting to be here in

Williamsburg and be a part of the changes here. It's certainly an area everyone is flocking to, so it's exciting to be a part of that momentum. This isn't the Williamsburg of a decade ago.

But traditionally you haven't followed trends.

I'm not a trendy person. I always have my own voice. I was in kitchens since I was 15 and that's how I was trained. You have to be true to yourself. I came here for the project, not to be a pioneer or whatever. That isn't me. I want to reach the clientele I would have never reached with Corton. The Elm is sophisticated casual. It has elements of fine dining, but I don't say it's fine dining. This is in Williamsburg, but this is project not about being on trend.

Will you work with The Elm to bring another Michelin star to Brooklyn?

I'm not thinking about Michelin stars. I'm focused on giving customers a different view of what I've been doing and what they've already been getting in Brooklyn.

Since you're still exploring, what is your favorite place to eat in Brooklyn so far?

I love Roberta's in Bushwick.



CHEF ZAHRA TONGORRA Brucie

What does it mean to be a chef in Brooklyn?

It is profoundly exciting. Being a chef and also the sole owner, your emotions span the spectrum from exhaustion to elation, heart warmth to heartbreak. Now more than ever there is a lot of pressure to be innovative and relevant amongst such amazing talent throughout the borough. Some days it feels surreal that anyone knows my name or eats at my restaurant, and other days I feel really on top of my game and like I really belong where I am.

There is an obsession right now with Brooklyn-born gourmet food items.

It's very cool when you can sustain doing these specialty things. I like when people do one thing really well. I hear people saying how ridiculous kale is, but we are awfully lucky to have access to natural foods and exciting foods on the regular. Brooklyn is a community that supports the ritual of food. I love moving back to the very basic idea of eating as we were always intended to.

The word "trendy" is often used when describing Brooklyn cuisine. How do you feel about that?

Honestly, I love seeing trends, but Brooklyn as a place to eat is not a trend. It's awesome when a chef starts using an ingredient heavily and then it becomes a thing. I love seeing how it then spreads from hood to hood, and how they each make that "fad" ingredient their own by using it differently. There's a friendly competitive spirit here in Brooklyn, and that's what has driven the greatness of the Brooklyn food scene today.

CHEF LISA GIFFEN Maison Premiere



Tell us how your family heritage has influenced you as a chef.

I was born in Korea, but I was adopted and grew up in Germany. My culinary heritage comes from my parents. My dad is from the Midwest, and my mom is from Northern California. They come from agriculture backgrounds, so a kitchen rich with vegetables and meats are part of my heritage. My family loves food.

Maison Premiere is distinctly French, and your past work under famed chefs like Alain Ducasse, Dan Barber and Ed Brown was also French influenced. What is it about French cuisine that inspires you?

I've been classically French trained, so it's something I know well. I have

worked for mostly French chefs or chefs who learned from French chefs, and I love the discipline and dedication it takes to learn this cuisine. Many of the techniques have been used for hundreds of years, which I find pretty amazing; they withstand the test of time.

How would you describe Brooklyn's food scene to those who haven't experienced it?

Brooklyn is like Manhattan's rebellious sibling. Raised the same, but doing it their own way. Most of the chefs who have settled into Brooklyn worked in Manhattan for many years, so we all have a sense of what the highest standard is. In Brooklyn you retain those standards, but you can put your own spin on it. In Brooklyn you aren't

blasted for not being a certain way.

Could Brooklyn ultimately steal Manhattan's culinary thunder?

Manhattan will never fail to be what it is, this great Mecca of food, culture, luxury and innovation. Brooklyn, however, is the place to be all of that, but on your own terms.

What is one of your favorite Brooklyn restaurants?

I enjoy St. Anselm in Williamsburg. They have such great affordable meats and some wonderful seasonal sides.

Why do you think there are so few notable women chefs?

It's not necessarily that there are so few women chefs. It's more, "Why are women chefs so unrecognized?" It's 2014!