

The essential guide to the city's best restaurants

**TimeOut**  
New York

# Eating & Drinking

**2004**

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**Plus**  
**100 TOP**  
**BARS!**



**Essential  
seasoning**  
Salt's  
Melissa  
O'Donnell  
creates  
must-have  
comfort  
food.



c vinegar. An exquisitely tender grilled  
er steak comes with Vidalia-onion rings,  
relish and cream-of-potato salad. There's  
one obvious choice for dessert: the gooey  
solitan banana split. Served properly in a  
banana boat, it will heal any traces of  
hood trauma.

## vival

**Frederick Douglass Blvd (Eighth Ave) at  
h St (212-222-8338). Subway: A, C, B, D  
125th St. Mon-Fri noon-3pm, 5-  
0pm; Sat 5-11pm; Sun 11:30am-3:30pm,  
3:30pm. Average main course: \$17. AmEx,  
Disc, MC, V.**

menu's description, "French-American cui-  
infused with Caribbean, Creole and Soul,"  
it explain such scattershot offerings as corn  
d mushroom (an appetizer combining diced  
brooms, onions, garlic, thyme, tomatoes  
chickpeas with corn bread, cheese and  
on-butter sauce) and gospel pasta soup (a  
tarian tomato-based soup). The one clear  
ern is a fondness for cream, which makes  
way into the sautéed shrimp, the artichoke-  
mushroom risotto and the unfortunately  
ed "crusted seafood." The food's not thrill-  
but the block can use the warmth of  
val and that of the new next-door Revival  
and Lounge, which hosts live jazz, poetry  
ings and DJ nights. Locals are stopping by.

## lito

**Elizabeth St between Houston and Prince  
212-334-7900). Subway: F, V, Grand St S  
roadway-Lafayette St; N, R, W to Prince  
to Bleeker St. 11am-12:45am. Average  
a course: \$20. AmEx, MC, V.**

most Nolita hot spots, the mantra is "see  
be seen." Maybe that's why, since 1997,  
ptively unassuming Rialto has been a  
rite among young locals. Owner Sam  
tinez (who also fronts the perennially  
ed Cafe Habana) has set a tone of simple,  
ed sophistication, with romantic red  
hs and rows of white tables. The front bar  
low-key midweek hangout for mojito-  
ing couples. The back, including the  
ded summer garden, serves American  
ine with a heavy Mediterranean accent.  
etizers are pure-blooded Italian and include  
ccoli risotto and a robust penne pasta.  
ées—like the unbeatable five-star steak au  
re, dressed in a seductively sweet cognac  
e—speed-dial France. On weekends, DJs  
up the beat.

## ver Diner

Diner box, page 37.

## ck Center Café

**W 50th St at Rockefeller Plaza (212-332-  
-0000). Subway: B, D, F, V to 47-50th Sts-  
efeller Ctr. Mon-Fri 11:30am-11pm; Sat,  
11am-midnight. Average main course: \$23.  
Ex, DC, MC, V.**

ck (as in Rockefeller) Center Café achieves  
at lesser tourist traps only dream of: New  
ers actually like eating here. The ample  
Mediterranean space looks out onto the skating  
and in the summer expands right onto it  
Rink Bar. Given the setting, the food is  
er than it needs to be, though you are pay-  
for the location. A bit of crab mixed with  
ron risotto, then fried, elevates the crab  
to a new level. Veal milanese is tender,  
o and greaseless, served with tomatoes and  
rtly dressed arugula salad. If you don't  
to skate off the calories, skip the disap-  
ing desserts.

**er location • Rink Bar & Cafe, 20 W  
h St at Rockefeller Plaza (212-332-7620).  
way: B, D, F, V to 47-50th Sts-Rockefeller  
May-Oct Sun-Thu 11:30am-10pm; Fri,  
11:30am-11pm. Average main course:  
AmEx, DC, Disc, MC, V.**

## 57

French for review.



**Family room**  
Locals with  
kids treat  
2nd Street  
Cafe like a  
second home.

## Salt

**58 MacDougal St between Houston and Prince  
Sts (212-674-4968). Subway: C, E to Spring  
St; 1, 9 to Houston St. Mon-Fri 6-11pm; Sat,  
Sun 11:30am-3:30pm, 6-11pm. Average  
main course: \$20. AmEx, DC, MC, V.**

Sam DeMarco protégée Melissa O'Donnell knows  
what it takes to create a successful neighborhood  
joint. This simple square room is suitable for solo  
eating (men with their jackets off and ties loos-  
ened perch at the bar) or group gatherings (two  
communal tables dominate the space). Like her  
mentor, O'Donnell has fun with foreign-cued  
American food: Spinach and goat cheese in a  
warm pancetta vinaigrette is a great mess of a  
salad that you can really bite into. Casually pre-  
pared in a good home-cooked way, entrées are  
built to satisfy: crisp cod on mashed potatoes,  
pork tenderloin wrapped in prosciutto. A popular  
option is the "protein + 2," a main dish and two  
sides for \$20.50, which pairs well with the selec-  
tion of boutique wines, many in the \$30 range.

## Salt Bar

**29A Clinton St between Houston and Stanton  
Sts (212-979-8471). Subway: F to Delancey St;  
J, M, Z to Delancey-Essex Sts. Mon-Thu 6pm-  
2am; Fri, Sat 6pm-3am. Average main course:  
\$20. MC, V.**

A dish of salt is set on every table in this chef-  
owned restaurant, but the place is geared more  
toward drinking than eating. A sister to Salt in  
Soho, Salt Bar attracts young professionals who  
don't seem to be from the neighborhood. The  
limited menu combines '70s throwbacks (bacon-  
wrapped dates, spinach salad and brie baked in  
puff pastry) and more modern fare (mushroom  
bread pudding and shrimp satay with peanut  
dipping sauce). Barbecued baby back ribs are a  
sweet non sequitur. You won't forget that this is  
a bar: The cocktail menu lists exotica like a  
guava fizz and martinis made with kiwi, hibis-  
cus, chamomile or passion fruit.

## Sarabeth's

**423 Amsterdam Ave between 80th and 81st  
Sts (212-496-6280). Subway: 1, 9 to 79th St,  
Mon-Fri 8am-10:30pm; Sat 8am-4pm,  
5:30-10:30pm; Sun 8am-4pm, 5:30-9:30pm.  
Average main course: \$19. AmEx, DC, MC, V.**

The pots of award-winning jams at the counter  
and the displays of luscious pies might lead you  
to expect rough-hewn homestyle cooking from  
this well-loved eatery. But while the food is whole-  
some and healthful, it's light and adventurous  
too—with options like hazelnut-crusted halibut  
over an apple-celery-root puree. You'll need  
patience to endure the long brunch lines, though  
the pumpkin waffles and almond-crusted French  
toast live up to legend. Sarabeth's also serves  
afternoon tea, with finger sandwiches and scones.  
The restaurant is cute, yes, but not cloying.

**Other locations • Whitney Museum, 945  
Madison Ave at 75th St (212-570-3670).  
Subway: 6 to 77th St. Tue-Fri 11am-4:30pm;  
Sat, Sun 10am-4:30pm. Average main course:  
\$18. AmEx, DC, MC, V. • 1295 Madison Ave  
between 92nd and 93rd Sts (212-410-  
7335). Subway: 6 to 96th St. Mon-Sat  
8am-10:30pm; Sun 8am-9:30pm. Average  
main course: \$19. AmEx, DC, MC, V.**

## Sardi's

**234 W 44th St between Broadway and Eighth  
Ave (212-221-8440). Subway: N, Q, R, W,  
42nd St S, 1, 2, 3, 9, 7 to 42nd St-Times  
Sq. Tue-Thu 11:30am-11:30pm; Fri, Sat  
11:30am-12:30am; Sun noon-7:30pm. Av-  
erage main course: \$26. AmEx, DC, MC, V.**  
Sardi's has been a Theater District institution  
since 1921, so the red-coated waiters certainly  
know how to get you out in time for your cur-  
tain. The soundtrack in the bi-level bar and din-  
ing room consists of show tunes; the decor  
includes caricatures of showbiz greats (Lucille  
Ball, Jackie Gleason). Choices on the meaty  
menu are limited, and the food is heavy—can-

nellonis come drenched in cheese-and-cream  
sauce; crab cakes are egregiously enormous, but  
happily heavy on crab. You'll regret having  
cleaned your plate when your food coma hits  
during the first act, so skip the show and get  
your culture from the Chocolate Symphony:  
semisweet chocolate mousse, chocolate ice  
cream, a crunchy chocolate bar and a giant  
chocolate-dipped strawberry.

## Sarge's

See Deli box, page 44.

## Schnäck

**122 Union St at Columbia St, Carroll Gardens,  
Brooklyn (718-855-2879). Subway: F, G to  
Carroll St. 10:30am-11pm. Average main  
course: \$5. Cash only.**

This neodiner revels in its playfully ironic  
decor: Warhol-like stacked chili cans, an old  
Dodgers poster, yellow and red banquettes that  
evoke squishy mustard and ketchup bottles. A  
\$2 quickie—a \$1 mini burger with a \$1 "child-  
ren's portion" of beer—is one of the best  
deals in Brooklyn. The burgers are done right:  
You can order up to five patties stacked on  
a single bun, with a full array of toppings  
("schnäck sauce," spicy onions, chili, kraut).  
Classic Philly cheese steaks and a *cubano* sand-  
wich are also solid. Be wary of some of the  
fancier entrées, such as the dry turkey schnitzel  
and the flat tofu Reuben. Stick with diner  
basics, and don't forget your bowling shirt.

## Second Avenue Deli

See Deli box, page 44.

## 2nd Street Cafe

**189 Seventh Ave at 2nd St, Park Slope, Brooklyn  
(718-369-6928). Subway: F to Seventh Ave.  
Sun-Thu 8:30am-10:30pm; Fri, Sat 8:30am-  
midnight. Average main course: \$11. AmEx,  
MC, V.**