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Weekly Food News: Early Edition



Today the Times's Frank Bruni marvels at Manhattan's **new wave of high tone restaurant openings** during a recession, and pins the trend not on entrepreneurial bravado but on the fact that it takes years to get a fancy eatery open, and most of these new places were envisioned in flusher economic times. It is true that in 2005, the top fifth of earners in Manhattan made 52 times what the lowest fifth make – \$365,826 compared with \$7,047 – comparable to the income disparity in Namibia. Yet thanks to tax cuts and stagflation, the income gap has only widened in the past three years. Dinner at Per Se is as unattainable as ever for New York's lower orders, but even with Wall Street turbulence it's unlikely the ranks of the well-heeled will thin to the point where a fashionable restaurant can't manage. Of course, chefs like Ken Friedman (The Spotted Pig) are artists and don't chain their muse to the vagaries of the economy: "I'm certainly not the kind who would look at the Dow. Does a writer write or not write a book based on the economic climate? Does a songwriter write songs that way?"

Bruni also chimes in this week with a review of Dovetail, chef John Fraser's (ex-Compass) new Upper West Side restaurant that most critics are swooning over. While the Sun's Paul Adams made the "busy and clever" place seem like the Wes Anderson of restaurants (but in a good way?), Bruni insists that Fraser and his pastry chef Vera Tong "come at their cooking with intellect and wit, but they seldom get too cerebral, too cute." He awards Dovetail a highly-coveted 3 stars.

Andrea Strong has expanded her website into a frequently updated blog where, among other things, you'll find a review of the trendy new Upper West Side wine bar and charcuterie venture **Bar Boulud** (pictured above). She raves like the others, deeming it a "magical Xanadu." Danyelle Freeman says the food and drink are worth braving the mob scene for, but just barely: "Trying to place an order can feel a bit like hailing a taxi in a thunderstorm." New York Magazine dissents, too, calling it a "disappointing misstep."

Elsewhere, the Post's Steve Cuzzo hearts the other **UWS newcomer, Madaline Mae**, for serving Southern-style peel-and-eat shrimp *on a copy of the Post*, but calls the jambalaya gluelike. **McSorley's turned 154** over the weekend; Jeremiah reports from the scene and gives thanks for the frat boys "because without them it would be a Starbucks." And beleaguered **Death & Co. owner David Kaplan** seemed optimistic about his liquor license turmoil when we checked in with him in December, but he now says his East Village neighbors are waging a vendetta that smacks of "modern-day McCarthyism" – a congregant from the nearby synagogue told the local Community Board that the black flag out front "smacked of Nazi propaganda." *Have you no sense of decency, East Villagers?*

Photo of Bar Boulud by Ryan Charles.

By John Del Signore