

# NYC

## THE INSIDE TRACK

Want to eat and sleep with the hipsters? Then let New York City resident **Ingela Ratledge** give you the insider info on all the latest hot spots

In New York City, staying up to speed on the best places to eat, drink and sleep is one sure way to win friends and influence people. Mention that you've had a meal at the latest hot spot and it will elicit naked envy from folks who follow restaurant openings and reviews with a fanaticism that would rival any stat-quoting sports nut. With so many places to sift through and finagle your way into, in this town – perhaps more than anywhere else – knowledge is indeed power.

As ever, NYC's dining scene remains religiously reputation-driven, and places that come with powerhouse pedigrees – such as those helmed by Keith McNally, April Bloomfield and Danny Meyer – are as in demand as ever. But thanks to an ever-growing foodie culture, these days there's just as much cachet in being hip to the newest bargain trend (hello bulgogi sliders) as in backing a thoroughbred. So read on for a selection of places that rule right now.

### THE PLAYERS

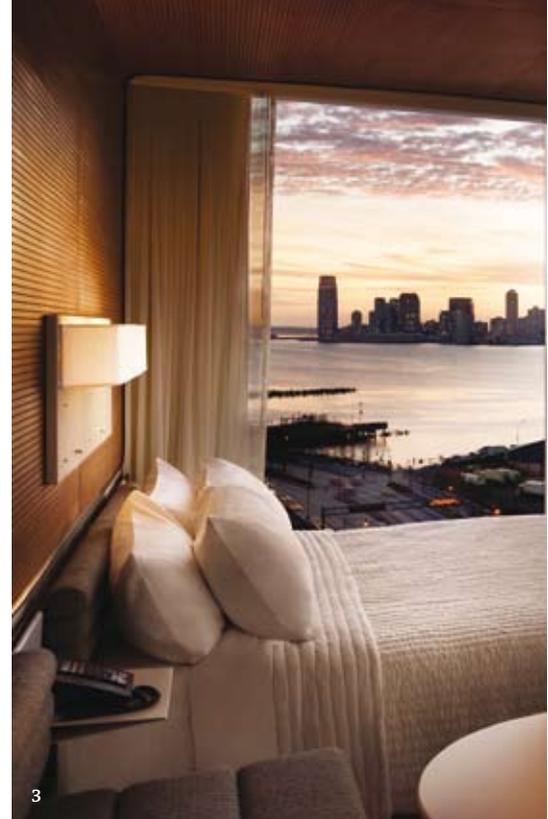
Since opening its doors in late 2010, Beauty & Essex has had the requisite recipe for

buzz: a Lower East Side location in a turn-of-the-century townhouse tucked behind a functioning pawn shop, with chef-patron Chris Santos in the kitchen turning out an extensive menu of small plates, such as oven-braised chicken meatballs and tuna

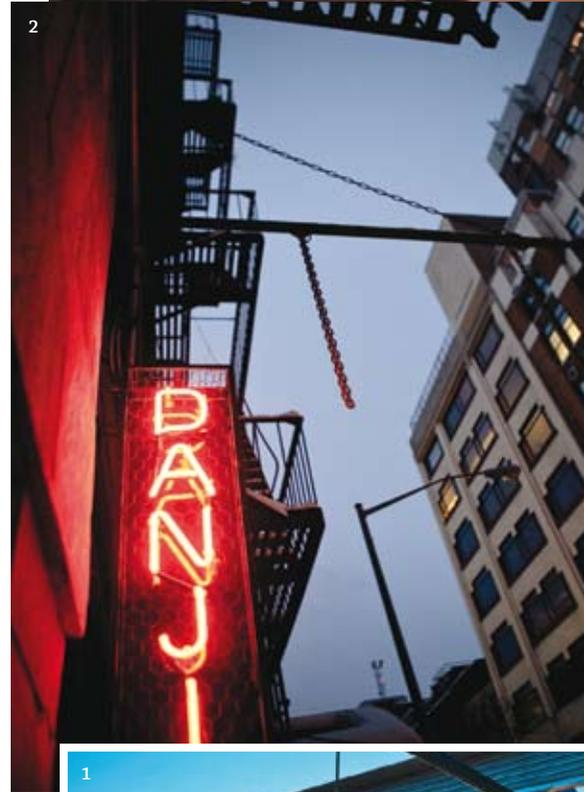
*Unless you're Madonna, you must typically book 30 days ahead, but walk-ins are accepted*

poke wonton tacos, for a beautiful crowd.

If it's name recognition you're after, then Keith McNally's Minetta Tavern is still just about the biggest game you can hunt. Luckily, this saloon-style bistro in the village has the chops – and homemade pâté, and dry-aged côte de boeuf, and much-ballyhooed \$26 (£16.60) 'Black Label' burger – to back up the hype. Accomplished cooking, gracious service and an inviting atmosphere make the soul-crushing reservation process worth your while. Unless you're Madonna, you must typically book 30 days ahead, but walk-ins are accepted and you may get lucky if you arrive early (ie before 7pm) or late. Can't even swing a seat at the bar? Console yourself at



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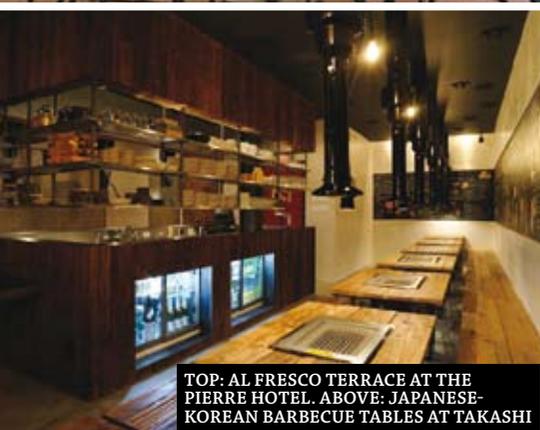


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DANJI PHOTOS: JAMES PARK



1 LA BIRRERIA ROOFTOP RESTAURANT AND BREWERY IN EATALY  
2 DANJI 3 CORNER VIEW ROOM AT THE STANDARD 4 OYSTER BAR AT THE DUTCH 5 BEAUTY & ESSEX 6 PANCAKES AT THE DUTCH 7 ACE HOTEL NEW YORK 8 DANJI 9 REDEARM 'PAC-MAN' DUMPLINGS



TOP: AL FRESCO TERRACE AT THE PIERRE HOTEL. ABOVE: JAPANESE-KOREAN BARBECUE TABLES AT TAKASHI

## FACT FILE



### GETTING THERE

Return flights from £396 in October with **Virgin Airways** (virgin.com) 0844 573 2460



### WHO TO TRAVEL WITH

**Virgin Holidays + Hip Hotels** (vhiphotels.co.uk)



### WHERE TO STAY

**Ace Hotel New York** (acehotel.com), double rooms from \$249 per night; **The Pierre** (tajhotels.com), double rooms from \$795 per night; **The Standard** (standardhotels.com), double rooms from \$295 per night



### WHERE TO EAT

**Beauty & Essex** (beautyandessex.com); **The Breslin** (thebreslin.com); **Danji** (danjinyc.com); **The Dutch** (thedutchnyc.com); **Eataly** (eatalyny.com); **The John Dory Oyster Bar** (thejohndory.com); **Le Caprice** (capriceny.com); **Minetta Tavern** (minettatavernny.com); **RedFarm** (redfarmnyc.com); **Red Rooster** (redroosterharlem.com); **Takashi** (takashinyc.com)



### FIND OUT MORE

nyc.gov, nycgo.com

The Dutch nearby, with a bracing cocktail, such as the Sullivan Street Fix-Up (don't ask), and some prime people-watching in a speakeasy setting.

If you love multi-tasking, make a beeline for Eataly, a marketplace for shopping and dining in the Flatiron District that houses artisanal vendors and seven restaurants, plus rooftop beer garden La Birreria. This Italian import has been instantly popular with the locals.

### EMBRACING THE ORIENT

In recent years, LA has had a slight edge over NYC when it comes to the calibre and cred of its Korean food. That's changing with the arrival of the likes of Danji, a 36-seat Korean tapas joint that's fast developing a cult following for its aforementioned bulgogi beef sliders. In the unlikely event that you can bear to spare an order on anything but sliders – the pork belly ones

are also a treat – you'll be rewarded with inventive plates such as poached sablefish with spicy daikon and kimchi bacon chorizo paella. For Korean food by way of Osaka, check out the Japanese-Korean barbecue (known as 'yakiniku') at Takashi in the West Village, where you can select thin-sliced, uber-high-quality raw meats such as rib eye steak and calf's tongue then cook them yourself on your tableside electric grill.

Of course, no trip to NYC is complete without Chinese food – and West Village newcomer RedFarm is beating Chinatown in both the style and creativity departments. Dishes such as shumai shooters and Pac-Man shrimp dumplings – dotted with little eyes to look like you-know-who – are served up at communal tables in a rustic farmhouse atmosphere.

Many tourists never make it as far north as Harlem, but it would be a shame to miss out on Red Rooster, a vibrant, airy restaurant that offers a blend of comfort and soul food classics (fried chicken, mac and cheese with collard greens) alongside options that reflect chef Marcus Samuelsson's Swedish roots (house-cured gravlax, Helga's meatballs with lingonberries). The crowd, too, is an eclectic combo, as locals mingle with

those who have gone out of their way to be there, including President Barack Obama, who hosted a fundraiser at the restaurant in March.

### SWEET DREAMS

After all that food, you'll need somewhere suitable to crash. Bypass the logistical headache of weeks of hotel research – only to discover that you've booked yourself into a bedbug-infested chain adjacent to the airport – and get Virgin Holidays + Hip Hotels to do the dirty work for you. Their 'travel gurus' will customise your itinerary, arranging airport transfers, securing tickets to shows, suggesting activities and scoring hard-to-get restaurant reservations – they'll even meet you for a chat at the London location of your choice, free of charge.

The participating hotels fall into a range of types and prices with the common denominator that they've all had the seal of

*'Travel gurus' will customise your itinerary, suggest activities and score hard-to-get restaurant reservations*

approval from *Hip Hotels* author Herbert Ypma, who has a soft spot for interesting architecture and desirable locations. For example, The Standard, a boutique hotel in the Meatpacking District, neighbours the High Line (thehighline.com), a set of defunct elevated train tracks that were recently converted into a public promenade, now one of the city's destination parks.

Another appealing *Hip Hotels*-sanctioned property is Ace Hotel New York in Chelsea, with rooms that start in the self-described 'cheap' category and go all the way up to \$999 (£638) for the 'loft' option. The Ace's on-site restaurants – April Bloomfield's British pub-food hit The Breslin and The John Dory Oyster Bar – are deserving destinations in their own right.

For those whose tastes lean more towards old-school luxury, check into residential-feeling, newly renovated The Pierre, which peers down on Fifth and Madison Avenues from its prime Upper East Side perch, just steps away from Central Park. And in case you fancy a taste of home, the swanky hotel recently opened a branch of London brasserie Le Caprice.