



The Gatekeepers: The Stanton Social's Abbi Miller

Friday, May 9, 2008



Krieger, 5/8/08

[The Stanton Social](#) hit the LES in '05 and has been crowded for almost its entire existence. The bi-level AvroKo-designed restaurant serves small plates in the ground floor dining room, has a bar and lounge upstairs, and is known as one of *the* places in the Lower East Side for throwing private events and spending more than you think you will on soup dumplings and kobe beef sliders. Problem is, the place is booked every night. If you want in, call ahead, show up with Derek Jeter, or make nice to Abbi Miller, the one person with the power to make some room in the resy book.

Abigail Miller (Abbi) reservation & events manager: We have 130 seats for dining, 40 in the lounge, and 12 at the bar. My favorites really depend on who I'm with and the time of day. For brunch, **upstairs is great because of the skylights.** Late nights with a few close friends I want to be on the ground floor in one of the booths—I like the center booth at the back, so I can see the whole floor. **8 PM on a Saturday night.** **What's the wait for a table?** We're usually booked solid, so anyone on the waitlist for dinner would be hoping that a table no-shows. It does happen, though, and the wait is probably at least 45 minutes unless they go up to the lounge instead. Tables there turn a little faster and we don't take reservations there.

Is there anything I can say to make my wait shorter? I'm really at the mercy of our reservation book, but we do our best to take care of everyone, and **if people are waiting a long time we'll pass out some comped appetizers.** Being patient and enjoying yourself while you wait can't hurt though. **How about gifts or cash to speed things along?**

I like nice things as much as the next girl, but if I tried to get you in sooner, I'd be dealing with the irate guests who might have to wait longer. **Send me flowers the next day** and I'll remember you next time! **Any attempted bribes?** I've been offered cash at the door, and I don't take it mostly because I can't do anything to make the wait go away.

Tell us about your favorite customers? In general, I like our Sunday night crowd. It's usually more local and bit more relaxed. And I really like the guests who take the 'Social' aspect to heart—you'll see people sharing a plate with a neighboring table and I love when people get that excited. **Any celebs been by recently?** We get everybody here. It's the Lower East Side so we see a lot of musicians and actors. **Mayor Mike** came in with a big group for his daughter's birthday recently. But I've never seen the dining room react the way they did to **Derek Jeter**. New Yorkers love that man.

How do you deal with VIPs, when there are no tables left to give? It really depends on the night. **Sometimes I know that I can squeeze someone in** without pushing the book too far back, but sometimes we make room in the lounge and get them comfortable until we have something in the dining room. **...the owner's friends?** They mostly know to call ahead. I've been working here since shortly after we opened, so at this point I know who we have to accommodate no matter what. **What about your friends. Do they get free drinks?** We always take care of industry people, one way or another.

What's the most outrageous request from a customer you've had to accommodate? We've gone so far as to change some of our furniture for a big fashion week event, and **making a fully vegan meal for Joaquin Phoenix wasn't easy**...cheese is my life, and our chef Chris Santos just got a tattoo of a heart with the word bacon across the front of it, but we have a bunch of vegetarian dishes that we tweaked to make them vegan. We also had a customer who asked to have all of our holiday decorations taken down for a private event the day after we had finished putting them up, so that was fun....

...that you couldn't accommodate? One guest wanted to fly a band in from France for her husband's 40th. Luckily the date didn't work out with their tour schedule, because I'm not sure we could have done it.

What's the one Gatekeeper tool you need to do your job? Peace and quiet in our tiny office that I share with the chef and all the managers is priceless. And a nice glass of red at the end of the day goes a long way. **When you're not at your restaurant, where are you eating?** I'm always here! If not, I'm somewhere that a friend is working or in Brooklyn—my biggest vice is pizza—Franny's is in my neighborhood and DiFara's is just a bus ride away.

The Stanton Social

Small plates, AvroKo, Cocktails

99 Stanton St., Lower East Side; 212-995-0099

Open Mon & Tues 5 p.m. - 2 a.m., Wed - Sun 5 p.m.

- 3 a.m.

