

Restaurants

Verbena Blossoms... Venice in Season... Beets

Manhattan

Lower New York

Alison on Dominick—An impeccably turned-out room with blue banquettes and tender lighting. Perfectionist and owner Alison Becker Hurt makes sure that all is well. 38 Dominick St., nr. Hudson St. (727-1188). (E) AE, CB, DC, MC, V.

Baluchis—Indian fare served in a cozy, comfortable atmosphere in the center of SoHo. Have a seat on a patchwork chair amid fantastic imported treasures. 93 Spring St., bet. Thompson and Sullivan Sts. (226-2828). (M) AE, MC, TM, V.

Boom—Postmodern Asian in a rain-forest setting. Fans like the energy and are pleasantly surprised by how good the food is. 152 Spring St. (431-3663). (E) AE.

Bouley—Born to French parents and raised on his grandparents' farm in Connecticut, David Bouley knows the basics of classic French cooking, but he's given them his own signature style. Reserve weeks in advance, especially for Friday or Saturday night. There's a prix fixe at lunch and a six-course dégustation at dinner. 165 Duane St., nr. Hudson St. (608-3852). (E) AE, CB, DC, DS, MC, V.

Can—Pole position on SoHo's main drag. Inventive French-Vietnamese cuisine in an elegant, minimalist dining room. 482 W. Broadway, at Houston St. (533-6333) (M) AE, CB, DC, MC, TM, V.

Capsouto Frères—Landmark French bistro with talked-about soufflés. Flemish-style building hosts local business folks at lunch. Dinner is a New York mix of neighborhood regulars, tourists, and trekkers from uptown. Brunch on Saturday is and Sunday. Yes, that was Bruce Weber. 451 Washington St. (966-4900). (M) AE, CB, DC, MC, V.

Chantrelle—Spare and elegant, virtually religious, this TriBeCa restaurant is a favorite among those who want a Big Deal. Chef David Waltuck runs a grand kitchen—seafood sausage, cold fruit soups, and anything he does with truffles in season. Wife Karen runs the front room with class and warmth. 2 Harrison St., at Hudson St. (966-9660). (E) AE, DC, DS, MC, V.

The Cub Room—Fighting back from the scorching bar scene his restaurant became this summer, chef/owner Henry Meer (from Lutèce)—doing penance for the butter and cream of the past—is dishing up contemporary American fare to an impossibly diverse crowd. Yes, that was Ethan Hawke. 131 Sullivan St., at Prince St. (677-4100). (M) AE only.

Kaptein Banana—This French supper club serves fine French cuisine, but it is the dancing Barbies, waiters dressed in bananas, and artists "en travesti" (drag queens to you, honey) that give it the edge. An open mind and all your energy are all that's required for an evening you won't soon forget. 101 Greene St. (M) AE, DC, DS, MC, V.

Le Pactole—French cuisine in tremendous sur-



Ask Gael

On Gramercy Park

Just a cozy retreat, please.

Discreetly blooming now in tucked-away Irving Place is Verbena, with pressed herbs and botanicals everywhere, candles in nineteenth-century holders. Chef Diane Forley prepped at Gotham and Petrossian, so of course her tomato-arugula salad on tapenade toast climbs high and the warm salad of heads-on saltwater shrimp with favas rides on an obligatory artichoke griddle cake. But the wonderful crusted hot-and-sour pork chop is her own. And the lusty beer-braised beef ribs are impossible to stop eating. Warning: aggressive prices and a hellish din. (54 Irving Place; 260-5454.)

roundings, with a breathtaking view. 2 World Financial Ctr., on the balcony of the Winter Garden (945-9444). (M-E) AE, DC, MC, V.

Nobu—The great Nobu Matsuhisa—actually, he's young, good-looking, and incredibly hip—has arrived in TriBeCa. And New Yorkers haven't tasted Japanese cooking like this—unless, of course, they've visited Matsuhisa's restaurant in L.A. 105 Hudson St. (219-0500). (E) AE, MC, V.

Raoul's—The dull roar in this cave-like bistro—aging gracefully amid the high-strung Thoroughbreds of SoHo's restaurant racetrack—is a heartwarming sound. 180 Prince St., nr. Thompson St. (966-3518). (M-E) AE, MC.

Tennessee Mountain—An original 1807 landmark farmhouse, this BBQ joint serves up chicken, ribs, and a fried-onion loaf that you're not likely to forget. Bring those breath mints and Handi-Wipes for all-you-can-eat on Monday night. 143 Spring St. (431-3993). (M) AE, DS, MC, TM, V.

Zoe—Charmingly hosted, mega-designed, and packed at lunch. Contemporary American dishes,

crispy noodle-wrapped shrimp, wood-oven-braised lamb shank with herb gnocchi, spit-roasted monkfish with lobster-potato home fries. 90 Prince St., nr. Broadway (966-6722). (M) AE, CB, DC, MC, V.

South Street Seaport

Cafe Fiedermas—Soups, salads, sandwiches, and other cold fare served in a glass-enclosed dining room on the promenade, with a view of the passing herd and the occasional street performer. 1 Seaport Plaza (269-5890). (I-M) AE, DC, MC, TM, V.

Fulton Street Cafe—A teeming outdoor café on the cobblestone promenade is the highlight of this seafood restaurant. Stop by and watch the show. 11 Fulton St. (227-2288). (I) AE, CB, DC, MC, V.

Gianni's—A standout among the meager pickings at the Seaport. Good view of the people on parade, if that's important. Yes, an Italian menu. 15 Fulton St. (608-7300). (M) AE, CB, DC, MC, TM, V.

Harbor Lights—Comfort food in elegant French-ish environs with a breathtaking view of three bridges. Pier 17, 3rd floor (227-2800). (E) AE, CB, DC, DS, MC, TM, V.

Liberty Cafe—Stadium-size oyster bar with a panoramic view of the East River and the harbor. The attached dining room also offers seafood and an astounding view of the financial district, the harbor, and the tangle of masts of the *Peking*, *Ambrose*, and *Waverly* moored at the Seaport Museum. Pier 17, 3rd floor (406-1111). (M) AE, CB, DC, MC, TM, V.

Macmenamin's Irish Pub—If you're not impressed by a magnificent view of the harbor from the outdoor deck, there's pub grub, a wide selection of beer, and televised sports. Pier 17, 3rd floor (732-0007). (I) AE, CB, DC, MC, V.

North Star Pub—Stocked like a London pub, frequented by Wall Streeters and homesick tourists. Fish and chips and bangers and mash just about as close as you'll get to the real thing. 93 South St. (509-6757).

Ground Rules:

Here lie a few hundred of the city's more noteworthy restaurants, some New York advertisers among them. The price guide, admittedly imperfect, is as follows: (E) = expensive, \$35 and over per place; (M) = moderate, \$15-\$30 per place; (I) = inexpensive, \$15 and under per place.

Following each listing there is also a code indicating acceptable methods of payment: (S) = cash only, AE = American Express, CB = Carte Blanche, DC = Diners Club, DS = Discover, M = MasterCard, TM = Transmedia, V = Visa. "AE only" indicates that American Express is the only accepted charge/credit card.