

## EATING

# top picks

- Megu (p257)
- Peasant (p258)
- WD 50 (p262)
- Blue Hill (p265)
- Momofuku Noodle Bar (p264)
- Gramercy Tavern (p269)
- A Voce (p272)
- Oust (p276)

# EATING

Chowing down in New York City is not your standard affair. That's no surprise in a far-from-typical city, but still: lining up for an hour to consume a bowl of homemade soba noodles or a sugary cupcake? Forking over twenty bucks for a Kobe-beef burger? Trolling the greenmarkets on a 90-degree summer day just to find local organic gooseberries and artisanal tofu? Hell yeah! Getting exactly what you want in your belly is what the foodie scene is all about here, folks. And approaching the task with a sense of adventure is what makes it an utterly dazzling journey.

Speaking of journeys, the range of global cuisine you'll find here is staggering, able to bring you to several countries in a week – or even a day – if you so desire. So get ready to dive your chopsticks into some authentic Cantonese or Korean, sop up Ethiopian with a spongy shred of injera bread, pull apart a fresh lobster with your bare hands – and chase Turkish mezes, Spanish tapas or Mexican *torta* sandwiches with glasses of raki, sherry or *mezcal*, respectively. Some places take the international trip to the max, adding belly dancing, flamenco performances, New Orleans jazz, hookah smoking and even karaoke into the mix. And while you can always find the foreign food of your choice – especially if you're willing to travel to the outer boroughs (see the boxed text, p261) – other hankerings may be more fleetingly available. Just so you're prepared, here's a rundown of the current NYC dining trends (but keep in mind that the restaurant scene and its trends are constantly shifting here): authentic BBQ, heavy on the smoked meats; global small plates (paired with the perfect pour of wine); Korean fried chicken, served in whimsically designed to-go boxes; frozen yogurt joints; Israeli cafes; authentic Mexican, which has been in short supply for years; creative takes on *bánh mì* (Vietnamese sandwiches); and eating locally, with an emphasis on veggies and cheeses that are grown within a 50-mile radius, thus making chic diners feel very good about themselves and their reduced carbon footprint. Try it – all of it. You're bound to love it.

## PRACTICALITIES

### Opening Hours

Most places are open daily. Those that do have days off usually close on Monday; those that are open Monday are not usually filled with locals, who avoid eating fresh fish and sushi because there are no deliveries on Sunday! Meal times for the varied schedules of New Yorkers are quite fluid, with restaurants complying: many diner-type spots serve breakfast all day or at least start as early as 3am, to accommodate club-goers who rely on stacks of pancakes to sober up. Loosely speaking, though, you can usually find breakfasts served till noon. Lunchtime overlaps a bit, often starting at 11:30am and ending at 4pm, and dinnertime is anywhere from 5pm or 6pm until 10pm during the week and about 11pm on weekends. That said, there are scores of eateries that serve until midnight, 1am or even 2am or 3am; many stay open around the clock. Prime time for dinner is between 8pm and 9pm. Brunch, usually limited to Sunday, is generally served from 11am until 3pm or 4pm.

### Booking Tables

Most restaurants take reservations for lunch and/or dinner, although some do not accept them unless you have four or more in your party. For those places that refuse reservations altogether, expect rowdy waits that could last a half-hour or more. But hey, it's all part of the experience.

To avoid disappointment, always assume that a reservation is necessary – especially on weekends, when it's almost certainly going to be the case. Cheap-eats places are the exception, as people move in and out quickly (not to mention the fact that there is probably a no-reservations policy). The hottest eateries in town require reservations, and many times you'll be told that there's nothing available for weeks; if you know way ahead of time that you want to be able to experience Blue Hill (p265) or La Esquina (p259) before you leave town, for example, reserve your table before you even get to town – or at least the second you arrive. However, as much as New Yorkers like to talk about how you'll *never* get into certain places, there's almost always a way to do it. One trick is to accept a reservation at a