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EAT&DRINK
By Perrie Samotin

One foodie's picks for the best eats in New York



Photo credit: Aldo Sohm, Wine Director of Le Bernardin checks the color of a glass of red wine. (Dennis W. Ho)

At the esteemed French Culinary Institute, food writer Lauren Shockey learned a variety of key things, such as how to salt food properly and how to cook over high heat. She also discovered, however, that her real culinary education wouldn't begin until she actually cut her teeth at a restaurant.

This revelation led Shockey to apprentice in four high-end eateries around the world. She started in her hometown of New York City under wd-50's Wylie Dufresne (far left), then traveled to Vietnam, Israel and back to France. Shockey's experiences are recounted in her new book "**Four Kitchens: My Life Behind the Burner in New York, Hanoi, Tel Aviv, and Paris.**" Here, Shockey gives us her local picks for the best eats inspired by the places where she honed her skills.

For French food:

One of my main jobs working in Paris was shelling crab, so I have a soft spot for French seafood. And it doesn't get any better than **Le Bernardin** (155 W. 51st St., 212-554-1515). The tasting menu shows off the restaurant's best, but it isn't cheap, so save it for special occasions.

A new spot of mine for cocktails and casual dining is **Buvette** (42 Grove St., 212-255-3590), a West Village wine bar that serves small plates of French fare. All the charcuterie options are delicious, but I especially love the rabbit confit and the saucisson sec.

For Israeli food:



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Taïm (222 Waverly Pl., 212-691-1287) makes the best falafel outside of Tel Aviv, and it also offers another of my beloved Israeli dishes, sabich. Slices of fried eggplant are stuffed into a pita, along with hard-boiled eggs, hummus and chopped salad, all flavored with amba (mango pickle).

For Palestinian food:

Tanoreen (7523 Third Ave., Brooklyn, 718-748-5600) in Bay Ridge also dishes up excellent Middle Eastern cuisine. You can't go wrong with any of the meze, or small plates and spreads.

For Vietnamese food:

Thanh Da (6008 7th Ave., Brooklyn, 718-492-3253) is my top Vietnamese restaurant in the city. The flavors are spot-on, and they serve hard-to-find dishes like bun bo Hue (spicy beef noodle soup), banh xeo (a crispy pancake filled with shrimp and pork), and bun rieu (crab noodle soup).

I also like **Nha Trang** (87 Baxter St., 212-233-5948). My go-to order is the salt-and-pepper shrimp and chicken pho, which uses chicken stock, unlike many places that just add chicken meat to their beef broth.

For local modernist cuisine:

wd-50 (50 Clinton St., 212-477-2900) is the place for modernist cuisine or "molecular gastronomy." You'll find incredibly innovative techniques and exotic flavor combinations here that you'd be hardpressed to find in any other restaurant. Try the eggs Benedict, one of the restaurant's classic plates — you'll fall for the deep-fried hollandaise cubes!



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240 W 35TH ST.,
9TH FLOOR NY, NY 10001
646.293.9499 | FAX: 212.239.2828
CONTACT US AM-LETTERS@AM-NY.COM

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