



Bigger. Better. Faster.

After some relatively quiet years in reaction to 9/11, New York is back: bigger, better and faster than ever before. Alongside local heroes like Anthony Bourdain, both the big system players and the flourishing mini and micro restaurants are keeping the system moving. The big boys in the casual-elegance sector are exerting their influence on the fast-food market: players like Danny Meyer, for example, who is stirring up the pizza segment with his new concept Marta and its little sister Martina. Key trends are meatballs, veggie and organic food and new Mexican cuisine. Pierre Nierhaus reports.

Stimulus and provocation

Money, power, influence. There isn't a city in the world that embodies these three clarion calls as gloriously as New York. Celebrity guests, like the Obamas for instance, ensure plenty of publicity with their visits to Upland and Carbone.

Celebrity chefs are good for the image. Awards by restaurant guides, their own cookery shows and guest appearances on TV, cookery books etc. all find fertile ground in this city, with its eye for markets and media. When, however, the President of the United States operates hotels and restaurants himself, then that becomes a bit too much even for the Americans. Not to mention, when no less a celebrity than 3-star chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten has his flagship restaurant in one of these institutions, namely the Trump International Hotel. Only recently, restaurateurs Danny Meyer, Tom Colicchio and James Mallios Amali have lent their support to a complaint lodged by an employees' association against President Trump. They take the view that the President's meeting with other politicians in one of his own restaurants amounts to a clear case of unfair advantage. What is more, those who have the ear of the President might seek to gain advantage by choosing hotels and restaurants belonging to the Trump Group.

This is not the only hot potato that multi-restaurateur, Danny Meyer, is taking a leading role in serving up. Having already

made his Union Square Cafe a no-smoking restaurant, some ten years before the official no-smoking ban, he has launched a no-tipping policy in 13 of his restaurants in November 2016, thus making a practice that is common all over the country into a big no-no. In effect, Danny Meyer is being true to his own personal philosophy 'employees first'; the tip is included in the prices, so that he can ensure fair distribution amongst all the staff. Meyer has also demonstrated that he has the courage to change by closing his flagship restaurant, the Union Square Cafe, after 30 years and moving to 101 East 19th Street, further north, on Park Avenue. His fate has been that of many others: horrendous real-estate values and constantly rising rents are forcing restaurateurs, retailers and inhabitants from their native districts.

Talk of the town

Fine dining remains fashionable. The Major Food Group, which includes restaurants like Carbone, is one of the major players in the premier league (the clue is in the name), with Rich Torrisi, Mario Carbone and Jeff Zalaznich. The decision



Photos: Wojtech Herout (Skyline), nerthuz (Liberty), stock.adobe.com and Pierre Nierhaus

to invest a great deal of money in the remodelling of the former Four Seasons has not been taken without controversy. The closure of the legendary restaurant after more than 50 years was the sensation of 2016. The new project is the talk of the town. Its name, The Landmark, augurs well, promises to be the most spectacular opening of the year – some say of the decade – and will catapult the MFG still further into the lead.

The food-market boom

Food-loving New Yorkers, who do not have company canteens and who live in apartments with limited space, are keen on their food markets as places to meet socially. There are both indoor and outdoor versions – but all of them have a variety of culinary offerings and interesting locations to enthuse the customer. Some are also organised along the lines of a farmers' market.

The DeKalb Market on Albee Square in West Brooklyn is new. It comprises 40 units, including Aprea Lady, Bunker, Guss' Pickles and – something of a minor sensation – the first scion of Katz's Delicatessen, the original New York deli, founded in 1888 on Lower East Side.

New, too, is UrbanSpace Vanderbilt, only a stone's throw from Grand Central Station, in the Helmsley Building on Vanderbilt Avenue. Some really individual concepts, street and comfort food, bakeries with freshly baked items, coffee shops and favourite New York brands like Rob-

erta's, Amali, Ovenly, Delany Chicken, The Red Hook, Lobster Pound etc. find a grateful clientele amongst hungry employees and tourists alike.

Just next door can be found the Great Northern Food Hall on the ground floor of Grand Central Station. Meyers USA is the company behind it, with whom Danish restaurateur Claus Meyer is making his New York debut. Claus Meyer is a veritable institution in himself: he is the co-creator of Nordic Cuisine and co-founder of Norma in Copenhagen, at one time

one of the best restaurants in the world. He has assembled in Grand Central Station a selection of his concepts, all of them with Danish roots, including the sandwich concept, Open Rye, the craft bakery, Bageri, the Grain Bar, offering both sweet and savoury home-made porridge, served with beer and whisky. In the Almanak, it is vegetarian products that take centre stage, whilst the Brownsville Roasters hark back to a coffee



Great Northern Food Hall

Photo: Melissa Hom



roastery in Denmark. Also worth a look, in the walkway round the corner, are the Great Northern Deli and Danish Dogs with hot dogs and toppings made to Danish recipes.

The Pennsy, which has opened in Pennsylvania Station, provides an innovative food court with a café and bar (including a terrace). Only well-known New York restaurateurs set out stalls here. There are outlets belonging to Marc Forgione, Franklin Becker, Pat LaFrieda and the Cinnamon Snail Team, plus Mario By Mary.



Eataly

Every district has its own markets and special features. One particularly popular open-air market is the Smorgasburg Food Market in Williamsburg, with its view of the Manhattan skyline on the East River Waterfront. The Gotham West Market has found a home in Hell's Kitchen at the northern end of High Lane. The City Kitchen, which belongs to the Row Hotel, has a more central location, right on Times Square. And the Gansevoort Market has opened up in a new location in the Meatpacking District. Many of the individual operators also moved with it to the new location; others are new, such as Big Gay Ice Cream, Luke's Lobster, The Truffleist and Luzzo's Gnoccheria. Also to be recommended in the Meatpacking District is the Chelsea Market, in a former biscuit factory, where the famous Oreo biscuits were invented. The two Eatalys are firmly established in the premium segment; they are a para-

dise for lovers of Italian food and lifestyle. The Eataly Flatiron has now been joined by the Eataly Downtown on the third floor of the World Trade Center Tower 4. It offers a new range of food, including breakfast, and has a view out over the 9/11 Memorial. The new Eataly has chosen bread as its focus – and puts the bakery centre-stage, complemented by five restaurants, a mozzarella and salad bar, pasta and dessert buffets, a coffee bar and a veggie butcher.

The French answer to Eataly is Le District in the gigantic retail and food complex, Brookfield Place, in Battery Park City. Market stalls offer French products and foods and there are various snack concepts, restaurants and bars. Just a few steps further on, we find the best fast-casual brands, like Mighty Quinn's (BBQ), Black Seed Bagel (Montreal-style bagels), Dos Toros (Mexico), Parm (Italian) and Num Pang (pulled pork banh mi



Le District



Chelsea Market



Eataly



Shake Shack

sandwich) altogether in Hudson Eat. There is an exciting new development expected for 2019, with the launch of the Bourdain Market. The market takes its name from Anthony Bourdain, who has a wide-ranging interest in food as a celebrity chef, author and traveller. The launch of his new project has been continually delayed. Now it is scheduled for two years hence. The huge new market is expected to be twice as big as the Eataly

at Madison Square Park and occupy the entire Chelsea Pier 57. As well as shops and the food hall, the whole development also includes office space, which they have managed to rent to Google, amongst others. Bourdain wants to create a kind of farmers' market, bakery and oyster bar there, with, as a centrepiece, an authentic Asian food market. He is keen to introduce hitherto little-known Filipino cuisine, including its national

dish sisig, which consists of finely diced pork, boiled, grilled and then fried with pineapple juice, spices and vegetables.

Pizza deluxe

One of New York's major trendsetters is Danny Meyer. A multi-restaurateur, he has experience of the whole gamut of foodservice, from fine dining to system catering and has a talent for successfully

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Ghost Restaurants

www.butchersblock22.com

reinterpreting classic food in new ways. With his Shake Shack burger chain, he has expanded onto the international market and his BBQ concept, Blue Smoke, is one of the top locations in New York. Now it's pizza's turn. Meyer's pizza



The photo shows Frankfurt-based author Pierre Nierhaus in New York's renowned Katz's Delicatessen: the trend expert and consultant for the foodservice and hospitality sector is the author of numerous specialist books and in great international demand as a keynote speaker. His trend expeditions for foodservice professionals cover the foodservice scene in metropolises such as Bangkok, London, Chicago and NYC.
www.nierhaus.com

concept is called Marta and, with it, he is creating something of a stir in the pizza world, by replacing the usual toppings with seasonal elements and top-of-the-range products such as truffle oil. All the baking at Marta is done in a wood-fired oven. There is a cut-down version – without the wood oven – called Martina, in the fashionable NoMad Hotel.

Inspiration from the 'Old World'

So far, (almost) everything that is new and exciting has come from the USA. But in recent times, we have seen a change of direction. Concepts from Europe are successfully finding a foothold. These include Yo! Sushi, Pret A Manger, Zuma and Hakkasan from London, Joe & The Juice from Denmark, Exki Nature's Kitchen from Belgium and the Kayser Bakery from France.

Mexico is back

For a long time, the word has been that Mexican food in New York can't hold a candle to that of the West Coast. But The Black Ant in East Village, El Atoradero in Central Brooklyn and the fine-dining restaurant Cosme in Flatiron are changing that image. Modern, up-market style spurs the revival of this ethnic cuisine. In the Cosme restaurant, Enrique Olvera is assisted by Daniela Soto-Innes, currently one of the most influential women chefs. She was featured in the short film 'La Cocinera', which was shown at the 2016 Tribeca Film Festival.

Girl power

Young women are in the ascendancy amongst entrepreneurs. With her Baked by Melissa concept, Melissa Ben-Ishay has managed to find a successful niche in the hotly contested cupcake market. A former employee in an advertising agency, she turned her passion for baking into a livelihood in 2008. Today she runs 13 outlets and an online shop. Her successful concept is built on mini-cupcakes that can be enjoyed in a single bite. Melissa draws a comparison between the artistry of her bakery with the world of fashion and creates cupcakes for special occasions like the New York Fashion Week or the launch of a new perfume, for instance. Celebrity chef, Chloe Cascarelli, who founded the vegan fast-casual



chain By Chloé in collaboration with the Esquared Hospitality Group, is also responsible for an all-dessert restaurant on Bleecker Street, Sweets by Chloe.

Organic food

Our whole understanding of fast food is currently being changed by a new generation of foodservice professionals. A leading example of this is provided by the creators of Sweetgreen, who are pursuing a clear objective: healthy food, a life that is worth living and a win-win situation for customers, society and businesses alike. Launched in 2007, the brand is, today, represented on both East and West Coasts and stands for neighbourhood restaurants that are integrated into their local district and serve freshly cooked dishes made from sustainably produced ingredients. Restaurateur Danny Meyer has been so enthusiastic about it that he has invested some of his own money. Another successful brand is Organic Grill, launched in 2001 and serving vegetarian, vegan and organic dishes.

Virtual restaurants

A mega-phenomenon in the USA are virtual restaurants, also known as 'ghost restaurants'. These are restaurants without a restaurant – simply production facilities, which sell their food entirely through delivery services. Providers such as Butchersblock22.com, who deliver to Midtown Manhattan and Brooklyn, are proving to be very popular. The customers choose from amongst a variety of dishes on the menu, as in a traditional restaurant. The entire ordering process is completed over the telephone or on the restaurant's web page. The challenge, then, is to get the food to the guests in people's homes exactly as it would be served in a restaurant in terms of temperature, presentation etc.

The districts of the moment

Williamsburg in Brooklyn is definitely on the way up. The East River separates Williamsburg from Lower Eastside and the

East Village in Manhattan. The district is enjoying an upgrade, with a younger and significantly better-off population. As a consequence, 'organic' has become an important issue, just as rustic barbecue like the backyard concept Fette Sau. Peter Luger and his steakhouse also belong to this tradition. Williamsburg's restaurant and music scene is decidedly animated, making it an attractive place for New Yorkers, always on the lookout for something new.

A lively gastro scene is also developing in Lower Manhattan around the World Trade Center complex, which was built on the site of the former Twin Towers there. The complex is organised in a spiral and consists of six buildings, including the One World Trade Center, the highest building in New York. In the One World Trade Center, with its total of 104 floors, there are offices on 69 of them, a viewing platform right at the top, as well as restaurants and a shopping mall on the lower ground floor. The new Eatery Downtown has found a home in Tower 4. ■



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