

THE VILLAGER

Bespoke Kitchen: Local food, expertly prepared

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Are you a locavore? Would you love delicious food — locally sourced — and prepared by one of the city's premier chefs? Do you maybe have some food allergies — let's face it, who doesn't nowadays? But most important, do you pine for fine cuisine, prepared in a style that's not heavy, but savory and tantalizing to the palate?

If so, add Bespoke Kitchen to your bucket list of new restaurants to visit.

Located in an intimate 1,600-square-foot space at 615½ Hudson St., Bespoke Kitchen was opened in September by longtime West Village resident Nicolas Bustamante. After working in real estate for years, Bustamante, who is originally from Peru, decided at midlife that it was finally time to fulfill his dream and open his own restaurant.

Bustamante brought on board renowned chef Franco Barrio, another Peruvian native. A past winner of the Food Network's "Chopped," Barrio is an alum of top New York City restaurants,



Chef Franco Barrio is famed for his tapas and his refined cuisine, honed in many of the city's top restaurants.

including Casa Mono, Picholine, Momofuku and Boqueria Flatiron, among others. Having honed his culinary skills in Barcelona, his specialty is tapas.

At Bespoke Kitchen, the top chef has now put his culinary talents and spin on a locavore-inspired menu that allows the diner to custom order protein (fish, poultry, meat or vegetarian), sauces (or “flavor profile,” as in light or rich) and various cooking techniques — hence the restaurant’s name.

In addition, before you order, waiters or Barrio himself — if you are seated in front of him at the chef’s counter, which you should be to get the full experience — will ask if you have any food allergies (such as nuts, gluten, shellfish or dairy), so that dishes can be customized for you.

For starters, Bespoke Kitchen boasts a delicious house-made charcuterie platter, featuring sausages, meats and pate. Ducks are not force fed to create the pate, a mousse, Barrio said.

On a recent visit, another “small plate” starter included grilled octopus with purple and gold potatoes and squid ink vinaigrette, also excellent. There is also ceviche — known as Peru’s national dish — featuring raw fluke, octopus and Hawaiian shrimp in a piquant sauce.

On any given week, the main dishes may be focused on whatever animal the restaurant has on hand. For example, young pigs were slated for the following week’s menu when The Villager recently visited. Barrio and his staff will use the entire animal throughout the week. Other dishes, from week to week, include succulent burgers on a brioche bun, fried or roasted chicken, a short-rib melt, pork belly ramen and gourmet-style pizzas.

There is a full wine list, plus an eclectic range of flavorful cocktails, featuring house-infused spirits, including a pumpkin rye martini, among others.

Bespoke Kitchen recently added a lunch menu, including soups, salads, ribeye chili and sandwiches — Cuban, turkey croissant, pastrami melt, burgers, figs and brie and the BK Veg (herbed cream cheese, cucumber, carrots, red peppers, red onion and spinach on wheat bread).

They are also offering a special Valentine’s Day wine-pairing menu for \$50, with Kumamoto oysters as an amuse-bouche, smoked salmon, seared duck breast, a choice of either Chilean sea bass or filet mignon, a cheese course and chocolate mousse for dessert. The meal includes a glass of champagne and two glasses of wine, each paired with a different course. They will also have a special Valentine’s cocktail, the “Apple of My Eye,” made with apple vodka and an apple slice.

For more information about Bespoke Kitchen, visit <http://www.thebespokekitchen.com/>. For reservations, call 212-989-3155.