

Restaurants Focused on the Kitchen

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By David Porat

Eating out is not always about what the kitchen is up to — many larger restaurants are corporately developed to streamline the kitchen, focusing on the atmosphere or often the bar, where they more easily make money. Three new places are very much about the prowess and creativity of the kitchen, and who is in the kitchen. It is most satisfying for me when a restaurant is first about the food.



PROWESS AND CREATIVITY IN THE KITCHEN: Chef Kyle Beechum (right) and an associate plating food in the open kitchen back room at Bespoke Kitchen.

Photos by David Porat.

Newest on the list is Hight Street on Hudson, an import from Philadelphia. It opened for breakfast and lunch a couple of months ago and just started its dinner service. I had a very satisfying lunch there recently. It has a very pleasant, rustic and “woody” dining room that includes a well-crafted open kitchen. The restaurant is focused on local grains and has a prep bakery downstairs where it prepares all the bread and pastries served and sold to take home. The waitress explained that local chefs have been hired but are supervised by “High Street” folks from Philadelphia, where they own a few restaurants. The menu is well curated and has an assortment of unusual sandwiches and salads for lunch.

The theme of Bespoke Kitchen, also on Hudson Street but down the street a bit, is food created specially for you. You pick a protein including a fish or meat, and a flavor profile that could be rich or delicate, and the chef creates something just for you based on a good bit of locally sourced ingredients. There is a regular menu too, and a more traditional approach at lunch. I enjoyed a dinner and a recent lunch at the restaurant and can report many great tasting and smartly plated options. Chef Franco and Kyle Beechum—Chef de Cuisine—both have impressive resumes, with the latter focusing on charcuterie. Highlights include a generous portion of very tender Octopus and a home cured Pastrami sandwich.

Going slightly further downtown, Duet is a restaurant owned and operated by Chef Dmitry Rodov with his baker wife Diana assisting from her jointly owned bakery deep in Brooklyn. Dmitry is an engaging, passionate and hands-on Chef restaurateur. He is a Russian immigrant who came to the country with little and has worked his way up. He attended the French Culinary Institute and can cook his way “way around the world.” I found most interesting his Russian derived recipes including his Chicken Kiev and many home flavored vodkas. The restaurant is designed as a bistro on the ground floor with a very windowed space. A separate more formal upstairs space is also used for local events. In addition Chef Dmitry works as in a larger scale as an off-site caterer.

These three restaurants are all small and have a pleasant atmosphere couple with a very good wait staff and service. John at Bespoke Kitchen had been there just a few days when I went for dinner and described the menu with such passion that I thought he owned the place. For me, though, I am impressed because there is a good bit happening in the kitchen and it is about the craft of cooking—I am drawn to go back and I hope you do too.

Bespoke Kitchen
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