

Here Come the Chefs . . .

OF SPECIAL INTEREST

ADOUR Having left the Jumeirah Essex House, Alain Ducasse will open this restaurant as his new New York flagship at the St. Regis Hotel in the Lespinasse space, which had long been vacant. Named after a river near Mr. Ducasse's hometown in southwest France, it will have a wine-theme design by David Rockwell in burgundy and champagne hues and glass panels with a grapevine motif. Elaborate plasterwork on moldings and cornices will gleam with silver leaf, and the room's cloverleaf shape will lend itself to private alcoves. Tony Esnault, who was the last chef at Mr. Ducasse's Essex House restaurant, will be back. And where La Côte Basque once reigned, Mr. Ducasse will be opening **BISTRO BENOIT NEW YORK**. It will evoke tradition, starting with an entrance that copies the one at the famous Parisian bistro of the same name from 1912, now owned by Mr. Ducasse. On the second floor, one private dining room will be set in an 18th-century pharmacy from Bordeaux that Mr. Ducasse is having shipped over: *Adour, 2 East 55th Street, no phone yet. Late November. Bistro Benoit New York, 60 West 55th Street, no phone yet. February.*

ALLEN & DELANCEY Neil Ferguson, who was let go as chef de cuisine for Gordon Ramsay's restaurants in the London NYC hotel after working for Mr. Ramsay for about 10 years, will be the executive chef at this restaurant, which had been set to open last fall with the former Craftbar chef Akhtar Nawab. (He moved on to the E.U.) There will be hearty modern fare, like caramelized bone marrow with caviar and Muscovy duck with turnip confit. The place is done rather darkly in black tile, raw brick, distressed leather and vintage walnut, with 70 seats, a communal table and vintage artwork evoking the Lower East Side: *115 Allen Street (Delancey Street), (212) 253-5400. Sept. 17.*

BACK FORTY Peter Hoffman and Susan

POLISHING SILVER

Gray Kunz, below, outside Grayz. Above right, Sam Mason and his bartender, Eben Freeman, at Tailor. Philippe Massoud, bottom, will be the chef at Ilili.



DOVETAIL John Fraser, who helped Compass find its way after a rocky start, will open his own modern American place designed by Richard Bloch, which will feature a special sherry menu and, on weekends, afternoon tea: *103 West 77th Street. No phone yet. November.*

EIGHTY ONE Ed Brown, formerly the executive chef at the Sea Grill, will expand his repertory with carefully sourced ingredients, many of which have never been swimming, in an intimate dining room: *45 West 81st Street, (212) 873-8181. November.*

GRAFFITI After considerable delay, Jehangir Mehta, who has created some of the more unusual desserts in New

York, has finally joined the growing ranks of pastry chefs with their own places. He will have menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner, tea and sweets written on graffiti-strewn mirrors in this tiny spot with just 18 seats: *224 East 10th Street, (212) 464-7743. Sept. 19.*

GRAYZ Gray Kunz has turned the former Aquavit, in a Rockefeller town house, into a plush, gracious lounge and restaurant, with new twin entrances. Among the many components on the ground floor are an intimate bar with an open kitchen, a larger lounge and a private room. Downstairs, the place has been fitted with a dining room and a bar called the Speakeasy, and another private room with a soaring atrium sprouting a wall of greenery, and room for 80 guests. The menu offers small and large plates for lunch, cocktail time and dinner, many served on special little wooden presentation blocks, in tiny casseroles and bowls with petaled rims, adding visual allure to Mr. Kunz's take on oysters Rockefeller, tempura okra, weisswurst with homemade pretzels and berries with elderflower gelée, some with cocktails designed to match: *13-15 West 54th Street, (212) 262-4600. End of this month.*

ILILI Philippe Massoud, a third-generation Lebanese chef and restaurateur, is creating a two-story setting with floors of granite and walls paneled in cedar and copper for his brand of high-end Lebanese food, with some dishes touching on Phoenician outposts like France. Expect a full roster of Lebanese wines: *222 East 1st Street, (212) 213-2328. This*

about African food, "The Soul of a New Cuisine": *55-61 Gansevoort Street (Greenwich Street), no phone yet. October.*

MOMOFUKU NOODLE BAR With their move a block north, David Chang and Joaquin Baca have more than doubled the size of the original, with seating half at tables, half at a counter. Will there still be lines out the door? The same vibe despite more comfort?: *171 First Avenue (11th Street), (212) 475-7899. October.* Meanwhile, Mr. Chang said, as soon as the doors open here, he will address the old space, which became shopworn before its time, and turn it into **KO**, with 14 seats and a single set menu with Asian inflections and daily changes. Count on vibe: *163 First Avenue (10th Street), no phone yet. Late November.*

154 SOUTH GATE It may sound like a condo community in Boca Raton, but the former Café Botanica in the Jumeirah Essex House hotel overlooks Central Park, not the Atlantic. It's being re-designed by Tony Chi, and Kerry Hefernan, formerly of 11 Madison Park, will run the kitchen: *160 Central Park South, no phone yet. End of November.*

PAMPLONA Alex Ureña has turned his high-end, inventive Spanish restaurant into a more informal place, with a sleeker, more modern setting that hints of bullfight culture, and Basque-inspired dishes like chorizo with saffron potato, roast quail with braised white beans, and poached hake with salsa verde: *37 East 28th Street, (212) 213-2328. This*



ABOVE AND BELOW LEFT, CHESTER HIGGINS JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES