

Time Out
New York

2001

Eating & Drinking Awards

Our annual Eating & Drinking Awards, normally an opportunity to celebrate NYC's dazzling food culture, come at a sober time for our city. In the days after two hijacked planes slammed into the World Trade Center and left us paralyzed with shock and grief, we barely had the stomach to eat, much less the spirit to toast New York's heady restaurant scene.

But in the brutal hours and jittery nights following the tragedy, we learned that the local restaurant community has much more to offer than culinary genius and a fierce sense of style. We discovered that our restaurants—symbols of frivolity during sturdy economic times—can turn into emblems of selflessness, compassion and fellowship in our darkest days. Following the pandemonium of September 11, scores of restaurants around the city—among them several of this year's Eating & Drinking Award winners—donated their labor, food and facilities to help feed workers involved in the rescue effort and provide relief to victims' families. These donations came at an especially steep price, since most restaurants, already suffering from the econom-

ic downturn, lost enormous amounts of revenue—if not their entire livelihoods—as a result of the crisis, which not only destroyed lives and buildings but strangled food supplies and scared off customers.

The most generous restaurant owners completely abandoned their businesses for several days to help cook and deliver food. Some of the city's most prominent chefs and restaurateurs even set up shop on a ship docked on the Hudson near Battery Park City to coordinate relief efforts after the sealed-off streets of lower Manhattan made it impossible to operate in buildings near ground zero. Smaller restaurants came up with their own ways to contribute, some by giving away a portion of their proceeds, others by asking customers to pay their entire bill in a check made out to the Red Cross. The businesses that made sizable sacrifices for the relief effort are too numerous to list.

As the city reeled from the tragedy, countless neighborhood restaurants served as gathering places where strangers met and helped each other deal with their grief—to the point where kitchen staffers, already short on supplies, had to scramble to grocery stores

Best cheese plate

Artisanal

How often is a restaurant's cheesemonger as important as its sommelier—hell, even as its executive chef? At Artisanal, Peter Kindel presides over an enormous, rarefied list. The nearly 200 varieties at this festive 11-month-old brasserie—owned by Picholine's cheese-savvy Terrance Brennan—include sheep, goat and cow cheeses, ranging in texture from spoonable to rocklike; some are pasteurized and many others wonderfully raw. Not unlike a wine expert, Kindel travels the world (from Oregon and Holland to France and Tasmania) tasting cheeses and coercing producers into supplying him with their goods. Fromage aficionados will enjoy carefully choosing their plates from the cheese menu. Perhaps the Perail from France (a creamy sheep's milk) will make for a nice contrast with the Coolea from Ireland (a nutty-flavored, medium-firm cow's milk)? But the best thing to do is to step up to the cheese bar and have the monger himself design your plate. Taste a few, ask questions, explain what you like and don't, and then, back at your table, settle in for the best meal-topper in town.

2 Park Ave at 32nd St (212-725-8585). Subway: 6 to 33rd St. Mon–Fri noon–midnight, Sat, Sun 5pm–midnight.