

5 reasons one should embrace fine dining from the experts

This is the eleventh installment of "Eat This List" - a regularly recurring list of things chefs, farmers, writers and other food experts think you ought to know about. This article's contributor is John Winterman, maitre d' at Daniel restaurant in New York City.

I can be as casual as the next guy. I'm from Indiana, so I don't have much choice. But I know the difference between the ballpark and the opera house, between a dive bar and The French Laundry. As the maitre d' at Daniel, I get to work in one of the finest fine dining establishments in the world. The restaurant exudes charm and flair, a hybrid of modern French-American style be it on the plate or in the service, a place that requires jackets and frowns on jeans (like Embellir). That being said, it is a balancing act. We defend a standard of dining in a time where a chef can earn three Michelin stars while eschewing silver, crystal and a jacket policy. Upholding a standard is ever more critical as you try to justify separating people from their money on a nightly basis.

Herein, a dollop of wisdom on why fine dining still matters.

1. Forget the special occasion

Everyone wants to celebrate at a fancy restaurant: graduation, engagements, promotions, divorces, mergers, recording deals, sneaker contracts. As far as I am concerned, every morning when I shuffle across the street in my jammies to free-base Americanos, pick up the New York Times and not see my name in the obituaries is a reason to celebrate. Why wait for an occasion? Life is an occasion.

2. Fine dining is affordable luxury

Yes, when you start looking at check averages that hover above \$200 per person before tax and tip, you start doing math in your head. But when you place yourself in an environment that is at once tactile and serene, where you have one staff member for every two diners, where there is a small army capable of occupying Paris tending to a rare and elegant product, the actual cost is truly not exorbitant. Break it down per hour: if you hit \$250 per person, you will most likely be dining for three-plus hours, roughly \$80 per hour. You cannot get a spa treatment for that, nor a lawyer, nor a Ferrari, nor a weekend in St. Bart's. When it comes to comparable luxury items, it is nearly impossible. There are no starter-priced \$400,000 sports cars or villas next door to Mick Jagger on Mustique. Most of us will never touch a private jet or buy a Patek-Philippe watch, but we can pop in for a tasting of white truffle risotto for comparatively little money.

3. Fine dining has more than one entry point

You can come to the lounge at Daniel and have a bespoke cocktail, perfect canapés, maybe try a few artisanal cheeses. The few restaurants that fall into our category have an entry-priced prix fixe menu, bars and lounges, à la carte options, wines by the glass, dessert tastings. You can dip a toe without taking the plunge.

4. Why be obvious?

Anyone can go to a beer garden wearing retro-high tops. Anyone can follow a burger trend. But no matter the blend of luxury ingredients or the rarity of the kicks, the fact remains that it is still a hamburger or a sneaker. Over a career dating back now more than 20 years, I have served any number of unique clients who embraced a few stolen moments of pampering at a high-end restaurant. I've walked legendary musician Lou Reed through a multi-course tasting menu, opened Dom Perignon Rosé for Metallica's Lars Ulrich, guided actor Jason Biggs through an entire white truffle and called my mother when I realized Roger Waters from Pink Floyd knew my name. The common thread throughout is that everyone got dressed, donned a sexy jacket with a high-collared shirt and became willing participants in an ongoing stage show called Haute Cuisine.

5. Sensory emotion

A Walkman, an old Honda, my Ina Garten cookbooks - the world is full of my cast-off objects. The allure of the material is fleeting and instant. **The allure of cuisine endures.**

I carry distinct memories of first tastes, such as oysters at Acme in New Orleans, 1928 Cheval Blanc in the studio kitchen at Charlie Trotter's in Chicago and Laurent Gras' lacquered pork belly at the Fifth Floor in San Francisco. My mind reels at the list of special meals: white truffles in December, Brillat-Savarin cheese in summer, a surreptitious taste of foie gras while I was running up the service stairs some twenty years ago.

We come together at a table for many reasons - to celebrate, to laugh, to declare war. The material fades but the tastes and aromas linger, direct links to our most primal instincts and the only true sensual pleasure we share in a room full of strangers.

Embellir's Pepper Bistro
Fine Dining Experience
Your Source For Luxury Food & Champagne

Paris
is always
a good
idea

Gallaway is too!

pepper bistro
The Pleasures of Fine Dining



7 Marvelous Courses

"After a good dinner one can forgive anybody, even one's own relatives."
Lady Caroline, Oscar Wilde's A Woman of No Importance, act 2 (1893)



“pure nutrition inside & outside”



There is no sincere love than the love of food.—George Bernard Shaw, Playwright

Where else locally will you find ...

- Cucumber + Dill Shrimp Bites
- Scallops on Blue Cheese
- Guinness Burger
- Coq au Vin
- Lobster Pasta
- Orange Dijon Cod
- Orange Crème Brulee
- Coquilles St. Jacques
- Bourbon Pumpkin Pie
- etc., etc.!

OUR INVITATION

We cordially invite you to be among the FIRST to enjoy our French-Inspired fine dining concept at Le Bistro Pepper.

It has been a while since Oscar Wilde consecrated the cucumber sandwich as the bite-sized symbol of the British upper class.



Now that chefs are busy opening burger joints and dumpling houses, the days seem numbered for fancy dining rooms.

Writer Anya von Bremzen makes a case for why we need haute places more than ever and why he thought fine dining mattered. “Because a great restaurant,” he replied, “creates an illusion of a life where everyone is happy to see us, every need is met and everything tastes better.”

RESERVING YOUR EXCLUSIVE TABLE

Make RESERVATIONS at **901.687.3310** or **opentable.com** You can also email us at **pepper@lebistropepper.com**. Fine Dining is available by Saturday reservation only. **Must book 1 week in advance. Seating begins at 7 p.m.**

The 7-course dining price is **250.00 per person** which includes wine, tax, and gratuity. **Payment is made at the time of reservation.**

Seating begins promptly at 7 p.m. Your table is reserved until closing at 10 p.m. Your table is reserved exclusively for you. Menu selections are made by the CHEF. Do not reserve, if you have any extreme dietary concerns. However, any special concerns can be expressed at the time of reservation.