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Photographs by Robert Presutti for The New York Times

NEW ROOMS Tocqueville, above, moved down the block. The Tasting Room, top right, is now in NoLIta.

MOST restaurants intent on improvement make do with makeovers, repainting walls, rethinking menus and, by the current fiat of fine dining, unveiling arrays of small plates. They seldom relocate, at least not unless there's a feud with landlords or a plumbing crisis on a par with "The Poseidon Adventure." A change of address is too potentially unsettling to regulars, too potentially ruinous to the delicate chemistry that makes a place work.

Tocqueville and the Tasting Room, two downtown favorites with devoted followings and menus that emphasize the Greenmarket, took the risk anyway. Like lawyers who have just made partner or winners on "America's Next Top Pharmaceutical Researcher," they converted good fortune into roomier real estate. And they wagered that whatever part of their charm they owed to their intimate settings paled beside virtues that would be served by — or at least survive — newer, bigger stages.

They weren't wrong. Then again, they weren't entirely right.

Tocqueville didn't go far — from one end of the block of 15th Street east of Fifth Avenue to the other. The short distance, however, belies the extent of the effect. In its original location, Tocqueville's artfully composed dishes came as impressive surprises given the cramped, trapezoid-shaped room, whose big windows gave it the slightest inflection of a sidewalk cafe.

Tocqueville now has a proper vestibule, beyond which lies a proper lounge area, beyond which lies a proper dining room with yards of wavy silk hanging dramatically, like stage curtains, over a passageway to the kitchen. In other words, Tocqueville screams "serious restaurant" where it once only whispered those words. The adjustment of volume leads to a readjustment of expectations, and the pricey food seems only as good as it should be, given the refinement of the air around it.

The uneven caliber of servers stands out. Some of them struggle through recitations of a dish's ingre-

Tocqueville

★★

1 East 15th Street; (212) 647-1515; tocquevillerestaurant.com.

ATMOSPHERE Elegant rooms that can accommodate more than 100 people have replaced a far more intimate setting.

SOUND LEVEL Moderate.

RECOMMENDED DISHES Oyster chowder; sea urchin carbonara; salmon in cabbage; roasted chicken for two; squab; sirloin with rib roast; chocolate graham cracker mousseline; chocolate soufflé.

WINE LIST Extensive and varied in price, with a focus on Europe.

PRICE RANGE Lunch appetizers, \$14 to \$22. Entrees, \$26 to \$32. Three-course prix fixe, \$24.07. Dinner appetizers, \$14 to \$22. Entrees, \$29 to \$38. Desserts, \$9 to \$16. Tasting menus, \$90 to \$125.

HOURS Lunch or weekend brunch from 11:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. daily. Dinner from

5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and from 5 to 10 p.m. Sunday.

RESERVATIONS For prime dinner times, call at least three weeks ahead.

CREDIT CARDS All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS Entrance and main dining areas on street level; accessible restroom.

WHAT THE STARS MEAN:

(None) Poor to satisfactory
★ Good
★★ Very good
★★★ Excellent
★★★★ Extraordinary

Ratings reflect the reviewer's reaction to food, ambience and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

PAST REVIEWS From The Times, with additional capsule reviews by Times critics:

nytimes.com/dining

The Tasting Room

★

264 Elizabeth Street (Houston Street), NoLIta; (212) 358-7831; thetastingroomnyc.com

ATMOSPHERE A casual, loftlike hodgepodge of rooms, the biggest of which has the feel of a hastily erected tent.

SOUND LEVEL Quite loud when crowded.

RECOMMENDED DISHES Butterfish escabeche; conch fritters; scallops with brussels sprout salad; suckling pig ham; hen-of-the-woods mushrooms with ovoli mushroom purée; fruit cobbler; kabocha

squash cheesecake.

WINE LIST Extensive and interesting in its focus on unusual grapes and blends from enterprising American producers.

PRICE RANGE Appetizer and entree "taste" portions, \$8 to \$18. Appetizer and entree "share" portions, \$14 to \$32. Desserts, \$9.

HOURS 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

RESERVATIONS For prime dinner times, call at least a week ahead.

CREDIT CARDS All major cards.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS One short step up to entrance; ramp can be requested in advance. Accessible restroom.

dients or, when pouring sauce at the table, dribble it over the edge of a plate. Why attempt such fussiness if you can't ace it?

Tocqueville, which received two stars from William Grimes in The New York Times shortly after it opened in 2000, remains a haven of considerable pleasures, thanks to the high standards and palpably committed efforts of its chef, Marco Moreira, who owns the restaurant with his wife, Jo-Ann Makovitzky.

Whether the dish is wild salmon wrapped in Savoy cabbage, lobster with spaghetti squash and a saffron emulsion, or roasted chicken with morels and a parsnip purée, Mr. Moreira's kitchen can be counted on to make the meat or seafood as tender as can be and to give it lively company.

In a city too enamored of pork three ways or multiple meditations upon lamb, Tocqueville's beef twofer

nonetheless proved delightful. Poetic in name and approach, it comprised a small "60-second sirloin" — seared on one side, nearly bloody on the other — and a "24-hour rib pot roast" with a contrasting, decadently spongy texture. The sauce on the rib meat had a hint of bitter chocolate, while parsnips on the plate carried currents of vanilla.

Tocqueville's Eurocentric wine list has interesting selections. Its desserts, though, can be precious; a toasted sesame pudding with an elderflower and shiso consommé comes to mind. And it didn't have its act together at lunch, when the front door went unattended, cod was mushy and an ostensibly truffle-bedecked risotto lacked flavor.

In terms of service, the relocated version of the Tasting Room, which more than tripled in size by moving from its 25-seat East Village nook to a hodgepodge of casual rooms in No-

Diner's Journal BY FRANK BRUNI

A blog on restaurants, trends and notes from the field:

nytimes.com/dinersjournal

LIta, almost never had its act together during recent visits. There was waiting and more waiting: for bottles of white wine to be chilled on the spot; for dishes to be cleared; for more food to arrive. Maybe the restaurant wasn't ready to grow this much larger.

The new space is a drag, but lost coziness isn't the culprit. Found ugliness is. In the rear room, the whiteness of the walls and shape of the ceiling suggest a hastily erected tent, and the clunky artwork could easily be on loan from an elementary school. When crowded, the room is noisy to boot.

And it's frequently crowded, because many New Yorkers rightly appreciate that no restaurant burrows more joyously into the earth or delves more deeply into the forest than the Tasting Room, which received one star from Mr. Grimes in 2001. Its mushroom mania and exaltation of esoteric, exactly identified plants are arguably unrivaled.

Ovoli mushrooms, mousseron mushrooms, tepary beans, tatsoi — they were all here and all handled with utmost care, emerging as the most generous and best parts of appetizers and entrees, which can be ordered in small tasting portions or larger sizes. But whatever they burnished — Montauk blackfish in one dish, Montauk tilefish in another — often had the feel and appeal of afterthoughts. The Tasting Room is like a vegetarian restaurant that won't come out of the closet.

Responding to what's available from local producers and to his own formidable energy, the chef and co-owner Colin Alevras changes the menu constantly, hitting highs and lows. His crunchy, salty conch fritters were kookily good: the Tater Tots of the sea. His heirloom pear and whey soup was Gerber's by a different name.

The star dessert was a kabocha squash cheesecake. While the wine list, once exclusively American, now has some European selections, its laudable focus is still on unusual grapes and blends from enterprising producers. So drink up. It's a way to fill the long pauses between courses.

THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 24, 2006

TABLES FOR TWO TOCQUEVILLE



1 E. 15th St. (212-647-1515)—“I bought you lockers for your furs,” the old song didn’t exactly go, but that’s what Marco Moreira and Jo-Ann Makovitzky have done here, in the new, bigger incarnation of their restaurant, which moved down the street from its old quarters in February. The black lockers, in the hallway between the front door and the small bar, are the most sensible and least elegant aspect of the place; it’s all up—way up—from there, starting with a drinks menu that features the delicious Rolle, a blend of house-infused apple vodka, Calvados, and lemon juice, served chilled and straight up and bringing forth, with its scent and its taste, a profound sense of paradise found.

The restaurant is just a hundred yards or so away from the mayhem of Union Square, with its hordes of young people running after a good time as if it were about to roll under a couch; here, by contrast, all is calm, and the clientele, most of a rather more parental age, bask in the flattering, warm lighting and dignified Upper East Side atmosphere (made even more pleasing by the absence of background music). The food is a class act as well. The appetizers, by and large, point toward the sea, and you could do no bet-

ter than the oyster chowder, a warm, frothy soup with plump oysters, little clusters of sevruga caviar, and slivers of applewood-smoked bacon.

Many of the entrées double their interest by showing two facets of an ingredient—slowly poached salmon with salmon belly, seared on one side, and a casserole and filet of Chatham cod, for example. The grilled lamb T-bone, the favorite of the table, was accompanied by a moussaka roulade, a little package of lamb wrapped with eggplant and finished with a sparky red-pepper sauce. Roasted polenta cake with braised pineapple and a dollop of yogurt ice cream was the top dessert, beating out the chocolate chiffon cake, which seemed to have been taken directly from the refrigerator. The old-fashioned atmosphere of Tocqueville is winning, up to a point; that point was the moment, experienced by one threesome, that the waiter, ignoring the decidedly female name on the credit card, atavistically placed the receipt right between people named Robert and Charles. (Open Mondays through Fridays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner. Entrées \$27-\$36.)

—Nancy Franklin

House Beautiful

JUNE 2005



HERB CREPES FILLED WITH GREEN ASPARAGUS AND MORELS

Adapted from Marco Moreira, executive chef of Tocqueville, New York.

For the crepes:

2 large eggs

2 egg yolks
1 cup warm milk
½ cup melted butter
¾ cup flour
2 tablespoons chopped chives
Vegetable oil

For the filling:

½ pound asparagus, peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 ounces morels, cleaned
2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

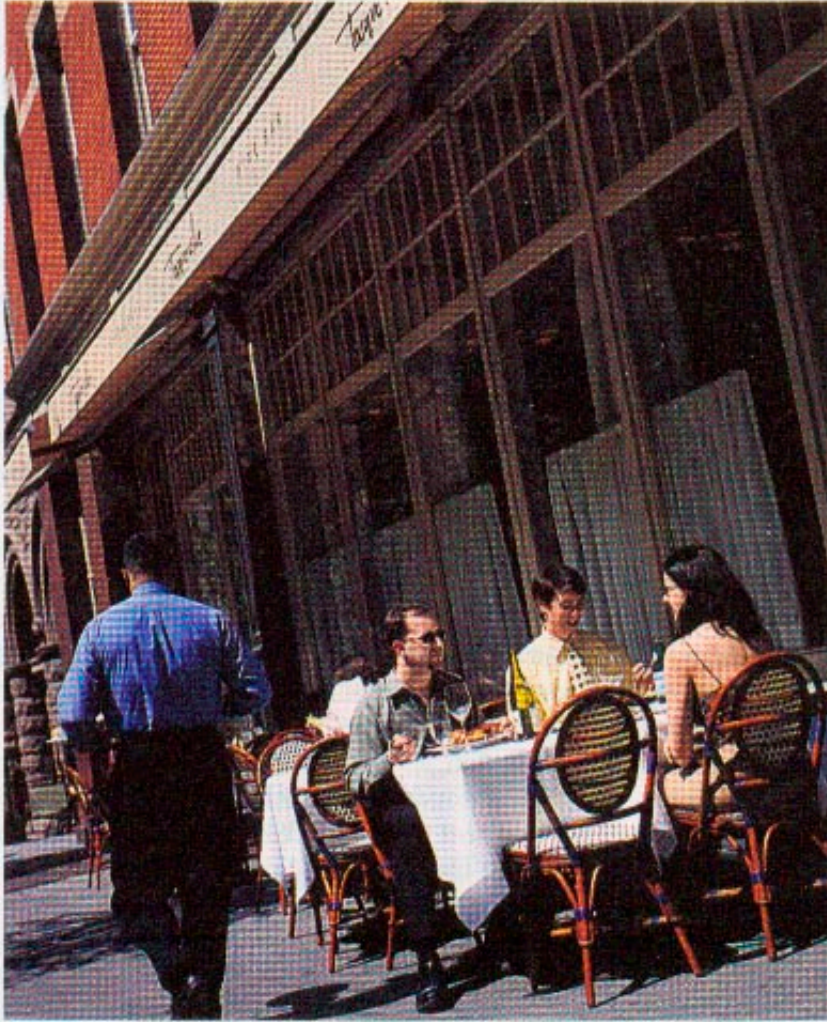
To make crepes: In a large bowl beat eggs, yolks, milk, and butter until smooth. Slowly add flour and mix until just combined. Stir in chives. Rub bottom of a copper Mauviel 12-inch crepe pan with vegetable oil and wipe out with paper towel. Place over medium heat. Ladle about 2 tablespoons of batter into center of pan. Tilt and rotate pan immediately to make batter run around edge and cover bottom of pan evenly. Cook until brown, about 1 minute. Lift edges with fingers or a spatula and turn crepe. Cook about 30 seconds. Turn out on a plate. Repeat process with remaining batter, stacking crepes between sheets of parchment paper. Makes about 6 crepes.

To make filling: Cook asparagus in salted water for about 3 minutes. Drain and place asparagus in a bowl of ice water.

In a medium skillet, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add morels and sauté over medium heat for about 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add enough water to cover morels by half. Simmer until liquid is evaporated and morels are soft, about 5 minutes. Drain asparagus. Place asparagus and morels in a bowl. Toss with remaining olive oil. Stir in Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper.

Assemble the crepes: Place herb crepe in the middle of a plate. Top with about 3 tablespoons filling and fold over. Serves 6. ●

This page: A crepe studded with fresh herbs makes a toothsome vehicle for asparagus and morels; brown ceramic plate from Takashimaya. Opposite: A classic combination of buckwheat crepes, smoked salmon, and crème fraîche gets a stylish and tasty embellishment with garlic chive blossoms; suede limestone in background from Ann Sacks.



Opening

Square Meal

For an elegant urban restaurant, **Tocqueville** is doubly blessed by its proximity to New York City nature (such as it is). Not only is it up the street from the Union Square Greenmarket—it also happens to face a trio of pear trees, the perfect

backdrop for the restaurant's new sidewalk café. And though chef Marco Moreira has devised a new alfresco menu of light, luxurious bites like Brazilian crab cake with malagueta-pepper-and-lime vinaigrette, a mini-burger with lobster and tomato relish, and haché lobster salad, we're most excited about the return of his prosciutto-and-asiago panini, accessorized with white-truffle oil and a sunny-side-up pheasant egg. (15 East 15th Street; 212-647-1515.)

Bosc Pears

IN SEASON

Pears and cheese are a natural combination, but few chefs are willing to keep things that simple. Tocqueville's Marco Moreira amplifies the delicate sweetness of the Bosc, a variety he likes for its sturdiness when baked or poached, by roasting it with butter and sugar. Then he dresses it up with crunchy fennel and frisée, toasted hazelnuts, and rich, creamy Cheddar from Connecticut's Cato Corner Farm.

R. R. & R. P.

MARCO MOREIRA'S
CATO CORNER FARM CHEDDAR SALAD WITH SHAVED FENNEL, FRISÉE,
ROASTED PEAR, AND HAZELNUT-BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

- 4 Bosc pears
- 2 tbsp. butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tbsp. freshly cracked pepper
- ½ cup aged balsamic vinegar
- 2 tbsp. sherry vinegar
- 6 tbsp. olive oil

- Sea salt
- 1 head frisée lettuce, stem and core removed, washed and dried
- 1 fennel bulb, washed, sliced paper-thin on a mandoline
- 2 tbsp. fines herbes (parsley, chervil, tarragon, and chives), finely chopped

- 2 tbsp. shallots, finely diced
- 8 oz. Cato Corner Farm Cheddar, sliced very thinly into 16 slices (available at Greenmarket)
- 1 cup hazelnuts, toasted
- ½ cup olive oil or canola oil
- ½ cup hazelnut oil



1.



2.



3.



Preheat oven to 375 degrees. (1) Halve pears lengthwise, and core. Spread softened butter over a rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle sugar and cracked pepper evenly over the butter. Place pears on pan, cut side down, and roast for twenty minutes. Remove pan and shift pears to ensure even caramelization, then continue roasting for another twenty minutes or until they turn golden brown. Remove pan from oven and set aside to cool. Meanwhile, reduce the balsamic vinegar by half in a small pan over medium heat, then set aside to cool. (2) To prepare the vinaigrette: Place the sherry vinegar in a medium-size bowl and add the olive oil in a thin stream, whisking quickly to emulsify. Season with salt and pepper and whisk again. In a small bowl, mix the frisée with the fennel, herbs, and shallots, then toss with the vinaigrette and season to taste. Slice each half of roasted pear in half again lengthwise, and place two slices off-center in each plate, filling the center with salad. Top with two slices of cheese. Crack the hazelnuts and mix with hazelnut and olive oils, then sprinkle over salad. (3) Drizzle with reduced balsamic to finish. Serves 8.

THE CRYSTAL BALL OF POP

What on View

THE CRITICS GO AT IT—FOOD COLUMN

ALL THE DISH BY BRAD GOLDFARB

THE SLOW-ROAST APPROACH TO COOKING UP A RED-HOT RESTAURANT



The hype surrounding a handful of new food establishments in New York City each year might make one think that the open-with-a-big-splash model is an aspiring restaurateur's only hope for success in the world's most competitive restaurant city. But for every klieg-light opening, a dozen other unveilings slip onto the scene quietly—restaurants choosing to perfect their cooking in the shadows, letting their reputations build over time. The following three operations may not have commanded splashy features in the local press when they opened, but their growing popularity is proof that sometimes slow and steady really can win the race.

TOCQUEVILLE

15 East 15th St., 212-647-1515

Four-year-old Tocqueville has never been about making a big splash, nor is it the sort of place to look over its shoulder (it's a good thing: perennial favorite Union Square Café is just around the corner). Which may be one reason why the operation is not just going strong, but continuing to gather steam. With its yellow walls, shantung curtains, and comfortable high-backed upholstered chairs, "quiet" is the operative word here, making Tocqueville the ideal setting for lingering and for real conversation. And if you find your dinner companions momentarily silenced by what they're eating, so much the better. Deftly folding elements of Japanese cuisine into a menu that would otherwise be best described as French and American, the kitchen here turns out the kind of full, fresh flavors that encourage lusty eating and lustful glances at your neighbors' plates. For starters there's the terrific foie gras terrine with quince purée, the sparkling selection of sashimi, and the angel-hair carbonara reimagined with sea urchin, while entrée standouts include seared diver scallops paired with foie gras and the schmaltz-roasted chicken breast with lardons and root vegetables. Desserts offer plenty of suitably rich endings, but it's the restaurant's house-made mint ice cream that takes the proverbial cake—sometimes the softest voice makes the biggest impression.

Brad Goldfarb is *Interview's* executive editor.

The New York Times

The Truth Behind the 'Market Menu'

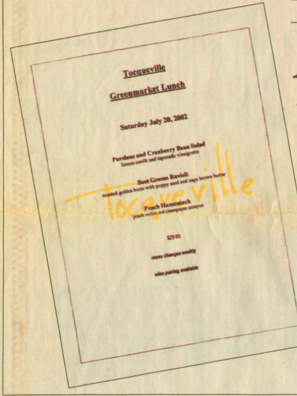
Despite what restaurants say, diners are eating globally, not locally.



Norman Y. Loew for The New York Times

BY REGINA SCHRAMBLING

HERE AND THERE Toqueville's salad has local corn and zucchini; the lobster is from Maine and the bacon from the Midwest.



AROUND this time last summer I was in northern Italy, staying for three meals with a couple who lived no more than three minutes' walk from the market in Padua. In the morning, the wife strolled there, and a recipe on her mind. Whatever turned up on her rough-hewn table was whatever perfection had caught her eye: eggplant or zucchini, rabbit or fish, peaches or figs. Next day, she got up and did it again.

That is what most Americans would consider market-based cuisine: spontaneous, local, seasonal. And it could not be further from what so many New York chefs are promoting this summer on their tables.

At a time when local corn is drought-stunted and tomatoes are still being harvested mostly from greenhouses, there's a bumper crop of "market menus." More and more restaurants are seizing on the romance of those two little words to conjure an image of chefs out in the dewy hours with wicker baskets, picking up the sleekest trout here, the sweetest cherries there and dainty bunches of opal basil over there.

One question is never addressed in this warm and fuzzy new trend. Exactly what market are they talking about? Dean & DeLuca? This city has not had a serious central market selling fruits, vegetables, meat and seafood since the downtown Washington Market closed in the 1950's. The wholesale markets that remain are all specialized: Hunts Point in the Bronx for produce, the Fulton Fish Market downtown, a few beef and poultry dealers hanging on amid the restaurants and galleries in the meatpacking district. And chefs working 12-hour days are unlikely to browse the aisles at all those places.

Instead, 30 years after Alice Waters pioneered the notion of cooking locally and seasonally in this country, chefs are simply shopping globally. What market there is comes to them, in FedEx boxes or crates hand-carried by boutique farmers. And while New York chefs are farther and further from the food chain, they are increasingly billing themselves as worshipping at the altar of the fresh and the local. No matter that all the reasons for eating locally lose their meaning in this new, lopsided equation, from the environmental cost of trucking and flying food long distances to the aesthetic issue of flavor. The word "market" on a menu has taken on the cachet "Mediterranean" had a few years ago, at the height of the grilled

Continued on Page 2



Tony Contino/The New York Times

The Truth Behind the 'Market Menu'

Continued From First Dining Page

vegetable and olive oil frenzy.

The Greenmarket at Union Square is the closest thing New York has to one-stop shopping for seasonally aware chefs, and many of them are devotees. On Wednesday and Saturday mornings white jackets stitched with names like Gramercy Tavern and Craft are everywhere as chefs hoist huge bags of Swiss chard, arugula, carrots and baby fennel or trundle giant flats of peaches, tomatoes and strawberries back to their kitchens.

But even in the best of times a chef would have to be a wizard to produce meals seven days a week from only the local fruits, vegetables, herbs, seafood, meat and cheese sold at Union Square four days a week.

CONSIDER the \$29 Greenmarket lunch Marco Moreira served a week ago Saturday at his restaurant Toqueville on 15th Street. The red and yellow tomatoes and the basil in the salad had been hand-carried from Union Square, but the hearts of palm layered with them were from Provence, Mr. Moreira said. The zucchini and corn with the main course were also locally grown, but the lobster had been trucked in from Maine by one of his two seafood suppliers, New York Fish House and Down East Seafood, and the smoky slab of bacon enriching the dish was from Niman Ranch in the Midwest. For dessert, four cherries put the local touch on a Twinkie-like cake; the vanilla in the sour cream ice cream had a Mexican passport.

Mr. Moreira said he started offering the Greenmarket lunch last spring "as a challenge to my cooks and my customers." Many Americans are oblivious to the origins of their food, and he could be opening some eyes. But his staff can simply pick up the phone to find enough supplementary ingredients to keep the romantic notion alive.

Union Square Cafe on 16th Street has served a Greenmarket lunch for years, and for years my first stop on the way to buy my eggs and chives has been to read the menu posted outside and compare it with what is available down the block. On a recent Saturday one of the few correlations was the raspberries in a dessert sauce.

Michael Romano, the chef and a co-owner, said the menu was started as a way to showcase Greenmarket ingredients back when they were a novelty but was never intended to comprise only what could be bought there. "The philosophy here has always been to use certain key elements, sort of milestones, that are local and seasonal, like corn," he said. "We don't use it except when it's in the market."

The vagaries of the Greenmarket always make building a menu around it dicey, but this year the market is a husk of its former

self. Drought and freakish weather have hurt crops, and construction in the park and along Broadway has limited the number of vendors. As a result, chefs like Jonathan Waxman at Washington Market are apparently having to eat their publicists' words.

Last spring, when Mr. Waxman's restaurant opened in Greenwich Village, press releases went out boasting that he and his kitchen team would "use only the freshest, most pristine ingredients available at the Greenmarket each morning." Yet the night I ate there, in June, I had smoked salmon and caviar on red pepper pancakes and soft-shell crabs with tomato sauce. Only the asparagus with the main course could have come from anywhere near Union Square.

By last week, Mr. Waxman sounded as if he had faced the frustration that Manhattan is not Berkeley, let alone Barcelona, with its dazzling Boqueria central market. And he was not dealing well with California withdrawal: life in this climate, with its short and unreliable growing season, would stymie even Alice Waters. "We do as much from the Greenmarket as we possibly can," he said, but it has not been easy. "I feel terrible for everybody," he said, "but the corn looks terrible, the gooseberries don't have any flavor."

"I'm adamant about buying local," he continued, "but there are obviously some blanks that need to be filled in." Mr. Waxman, unlike other chefs, would not name his suppliers for those many blanks but said most of his seafood comes from Long Island, his chickens from Quebec and his red peppers from Florida. Twenty-five or so purveyors deliver to him six days

a week, he said. He and his cooks do make forays to Union Square, he said, but "the Greenmarket is not like Europe."

OTHER menus indicate that the spirit is willing but the market is weak. The menu at Patio Dining in the East Village is a visual and verbal testament to the chef Sara Jenkins's allegiance to the Greenmarket. She said she shops at Union Square four days a week and at a satellite market on 10th Street on the fifth, looking as much for fresh ideas as for ripe melons.

When a friend and I ate at her restaurant a few weeks ago, though, my meal could have earned mileage credits. While an appetizer of sautéed ventricle was a Greenmarket standout, the veal in the vitello tomato came from Skate Creek Farm in Pennsylvania; the Copper River salmon was from the Pacific Northwest; and the "forbidden black rice" with it, an Asian variety, was straight from Kalustayan's in Little India.

Ms. Jenkins said she bought as much as she could at Union Square, including some cheese and fish, although she avoids the meat because it is frozen. And when she gets prime produce, she steps out of its way. On a recent night her dessert was a ripe Greenmarket peach, presented on a bowl of ice with only a serrated knife for garnish.

The advantage to focusing on that kind of perfection goes beyond the fact that "it tastes really good," Ms. Jenkins said. Diners tend to notice a difference in her food because of the raw ingredients, she said. "Whether people get it or just think I'm magic, I don't know."

Other chefs are equally devoted to the Greenmarket but never mention the word on their menus. Bill Telepan of Judson Grill in Midtown, who can be spotted shopping in Union Square most market days, has served what he terms a market menu for years. "When people hear that, they hear seasonal, and so do I," he said.

But this is a world where everything is in season somewhere. And on a recent Friday night the \$38 market menu comprised prosciutto made from duck from the Hudson Valley with fava beans from the Greenmarket, a soft-shell crab from Blue Ribbon Seafood at the Fulton Fish Market with zucchini from Union Square, a rib-eye steak from Niman Ranch with an array of baby vegetables mostly from Paffenroth Farms at the Greenmarket, and an elaborate dessert made with cherries from Locust Grove Farms, also at the Greenmarket. The potato cake with the beef, though, was formed of Idaho potatoes for two reasons, she said: "those make the crispiest potatoes" and "no one has local russets right now."

American chefs like Mr. Telepan are taking a cue from both Alice Waters and the chefs they learned from in Europe. French chefs, by contrast, automatically seem to be ordained as high priests of the market whether they actually leave the kitchen or not. Gabriel Kreuther at Atelier on Central Park South, for instance, has been widely praised for his brilliance with Greenmarket herbs and vegetables — "Combining Greenmarket produce with Continental flair, Atelier is shooting off sparks at the new Ritz hotel..." read the headline of Adam Platt's

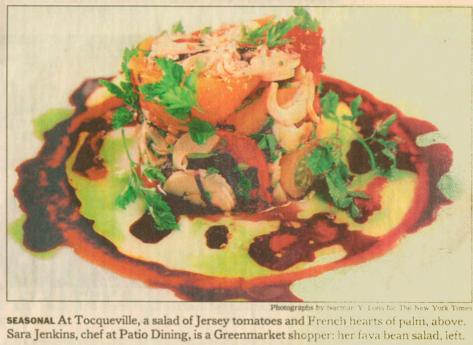
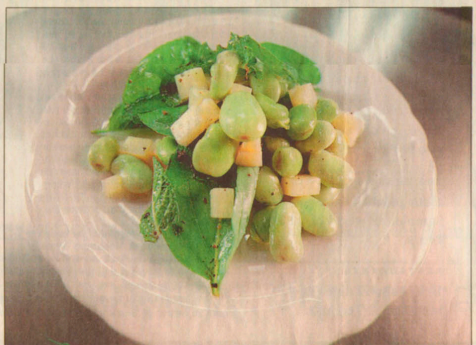
review in New York magazine. But Mr. Kreuther says he buys relatively little at Union Square.

Local growers come to him, many of them specialists who developed a relationship with him while he worked at Jean Georges. One brings herbs like wood sorrel and hyssop three times a week, others deliver an array of vegetables. Frogs' legs come by FedEx from Florida, and shrimp is delivered by Pierless Fish, sometimes two and three times a day. Beef and lamb come from Gachet & Gachet in the meat district, rabbit and chicken from D'Artagnan.

"You can make it easy and work with only one or two companies," Mr. Kreuther said. "The more companies you have, the harder it is. But you get better quality."

The concept is the same as trekking to a market and buying peas from one farmer, zucchini from another, blackberries from a third. But one experience is lost, as Peter Hoffman of Savoy in SoHo pointed out. He offers a chef's market menu that changes weekly, after he heads to the Greenmarket and what might be available close to home: green tomatoes for a gazpacho, smoked trout for salad, apricots to accompany veal. But that inspirational journey eats up a morning.

"It's social time, chatting, talking, learning," Mr. Hoffman said. "I spend an hour to an hour and a half there three times a week. But I know what the payoff is. It's an incredible learning experience to eat three green beans from three different people. We as chefs are divorced from that."



Photographs by Norman Y. Loew for The New York Times

SEASONAL At Toqueville, a salad of Jersey tomatoes and French hearts of palm, above. Sara Jenkins, chef at Patio Dining, is a Greenmarket shopper; her fava bean salad, left.

Wine Spectator

www.winespectator.com

cheap shrimp in the past five years—about 88 percent of all shrimp consumed in America is imported, and approximately half of that is farmed. But now we're also seeing outstanding shrimp at the top of the market—upwards of \$20 a pound. Chefs especially covet red Spanish shrimp, Maya brand white shrimp from the Pacific Coast of Guatemala and giant tiger prawns from the South Atlantic. The terms prawn and shrimp are essentially interchangeable, though Americans tend to use the latter.

Supermarket shrimp are most likely black tiger (or just tiger) shrimp, farmed primarily in Thailand but also in Indonesia, India and Vietnam. They are generally gray or a blue-gray color with black stripes. Though they may look fresh, they have been frozen, as have about 99 percent of all shrimp. If cooked properly, they can have passable flavor.

However, Empress International of Port Washington, N.Y., farms a variant of the tiger prawn in Madagascar, under less stressful, lower-yield conditions. As a result, these Xcellent brand head-on shrimp (called "gambas" by the importer) are far superior to the farmed tiger shrimp from Asia. Simply Seafood in Seattle started selling giant ocean-caught tiger prawns (14 to 18 in a 2.2-pound block) earlier this year. These mini-lobsters are meaty and sweet and are perfect candidates for summer grilling.

Shrimp freeze better than fish, though the sooner they are frozen the better. Maya head-on shrimp are frozen "within 15 minutes of catch," says Domingo Moreira, president of Ladex Corp. in Miami, which sells the shrimp. They, along with the fresh Louisiana shrimp, are the finest I've ever eaten. Big and beautiful, with an orange-pink shell when cooked, they have a sensuous, buttery flavor that requires no other seasoning except some salt. Browne Trading of Portland, Maine, freezes Maine sweet shrimp and sells them after the short season in winter when they are available fresh. Sweet is the operative word for these morsels, which are like ocean candy.

At Tocqueville restaurant in New York, chef Marco Moreira (no relation to Domingo) uses those fresh sweet Maine shrimp as part of a sashimi plate with creamy sevruga caviar dressing and fresh grated wasabi. He also pairs jumbo Hawaiian prawns with seared tuna, broccoli rabe and garlic emulsion. "Shrimp on the menu pushes a button with people. If a dish includes shrimp, it sells out," Moreira says.

Though her everyday shrimp is a frozen Gulf white, Ronnie MacQuarrie, executive chef of Southpark restaurant in Portland, Ore., tries to get seasonal fresh shrimp, such as Alaskan spot prawns, when she can. "They're softer, with a sweeter flavor, more like lobster," says MacQuarrie, who tosses the prawns with fresh pappardelle pasta, fava beans and a



Shrimp dishes sell out at New York's Tocqueville restaurant. Here chef Marco Moreira combines fresh sweet Maine shrimp with creamy sevruga caviar dressing and wasabi on a sashimi plate.

clementine beurre blanc.

Shrimp are sold by size, which is measured by the number per pound. For example, a pound of 26–30 shrimp will contain 26 to 30 shrimp. Shrimp labeled U-10 are fewer than 10 to a pound. Look for firm and moist (not soggy) shrimp with no off odors, especially ammonia. The shells should not have black spots or yellowing or feel gritty. Shrimp heads are lopped off not just to pacify the squeamish, but also because they deteriorate faster than the body. Use head-on shrimp within 48 hours of purchasing, or remove the head and put the shrimp on ice over

a drip pan (this may preserve them a few days more).

Boiling is the simplest way to cook shrimp, but keep four things in mind. First, leave the head and shell on for added flavor. Second, cook the shrimp in a court bouillon or with a crab or shrimp boil mix. Third, put the shrimp in at the boil, let the water return to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Shrimp that are 21–25 count will take about two minutes to cook after the broth returns to a boil (larger shrimp take five minutes or more). Taste one shrimp. It should be firm and juicy. Then remove the shrimp to a tray to cool. Rinsing dilutes the flavor.

Keep those shells on when grilling, too. Baste with oil or butter and grill two to three minutes on each side, longer if the shrimp are unusually large.

When eating head-on shrimp, grab the body in one hand and the head in the other. Twist off the head. This will give you some meat and the pink pancreas from the head. Suck on the head, then peel and eat the body.

Shrimp, as with most seafood, requires wine with some acidic backbone and little or no oak. That makes Riesling a natural. Drink a kabinett style for lighter presentations and a spätlese for richer dishes—an Alsatian Pinot Gris also worked well with the richer dishes. A Dry Creek Sauvignon Blanc did a creditable job, though a Marlborough New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc was better. For scampi, I liked Pinot Grigio, Verdicchio and, surprisingly, a Mâcon-Villages. Prosecco is a great choice for shrimp hors d'oeuvres. These are but a few options. Combined with all those shrimp, that puts us way ahead of the Model T owners.

Sam Gugino, Wine Spectator's *Tastes* columnist, is the author of *Low-Fat Cooking to Beat the Clock*.

HOW TO GET IT

Browne Trading Co., Portland, Maine, (800) 944-7848; www.browne-trading.com (Maine sweet shrimp) ♦ **Empress International**, Port Washington, N.Y., (800) 645-6244, (Xcellent shrimp) ♦ **Farm 2 Market**, Roscoe, N.Y., (800) 663-4326; www.farm-2-market.com (fresh Louisiana white shrimp) ♦ **Ladex Corp.**, Miami (800) 990-6292 (information on Maya shrimp) ♦ **Simply Seafood**, Seattle (877) 706-4022; www.simplyseafood.com (giant deep-sea tiger prawns)