

# COOL SPOT STAYS HOT

**AIX, ON THE UPPER** West Side, is assuredly a remarkable modern-French restaurant. It's exquisitely primed by chef Didier Viot, that should

## Restaurant Report

charge an arm and a leg for the food. Instead, owner Philip Kirsh keeps the lid on pricing. Good for him! One suspects a good chunk of profits comes from the bar/lounge seating 40, which bustles almost every night.

In the tri-level dining room, the decor makes a run at a warm provincial environment, and doesn't fall short of its goal. The nightly clientele, a mix of business and high-profile types fill booth-banquettes with a lively buzz, while servers never get harried even when over crowded.

Appetizers are appealingly unpredictable: crisped shrimp and basil brochette, with zucchini and radicchio salad in a tangy saffron mustard dressing (a must); a wonderfully modern presen-

**Sheldon Landwehr**



tation of foie gras sautéed with spiced crust and asparagus, then finished in a honey-citrus sauce; and the savory, flaky tomato tart, with green basil and pungent parm-esan coulis, yellow tomato sauce and supposedly (menu-touted) green olives, which we neither saw nor tasted.

One entree you can't go wrong with is the scrumptious, filling, paprika sautéed lobster, arriving triumphant on a plate of silky bacon mashed potatoes, and roasted yellow corn, under a fragrant garlic sauce.

Superbly cooked roasted duck breast with an almond crust, supports baby bok choy and a crispy crepe embracing caramelized onion drizzled with apricot sauce, which also works attractively.

Rhubarb pancake would be a smidgen off if it weren't for the sweet coconut sorbet—great stuff. Chocolate Irish cream soufflé, likewise a standout, takes seven minutes to whip up. For

something novel, sample Provence salad teamed with mint sorbet. Wine here is far better than average, with a good selection in all price ranges.

★★★ Aix, 2398 Broadway (88 St.), NY. (212) 874-7400. D-  
nightly. Entrees \$25-\$30. Sun.  
brunch. Acc. res., maj. cc.

**SCOOPS:** One with a desire for Spanish wine and tapas would look hard to find a more auspicious source than Azafran, a Tribeca newcomer....Ovo, known for Mediterranean food and wood brick oven, re-opened its doors to East Village dwellers....Big Apple foodies are heading to newly opened Fat Apples on the Upper East Side in droves....Pioneer is the Upper East Side's first authentic Western restaurant and bar.

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### WHAT THE ★★★ MEAN

- 0- Farkackt (Beneath contempt)
- 1- Unremarkable but acceptable
- 2- Good
- 3- Very good
- 4- Outstanding

### FOR THE RECORD

Restaurant reviews in this column are in no way paid advertising. Restaurants are selected at Landwehr's sole discretion and praised or panned accordingly. Also look for Landwehr in NY Resident and Black Tie International. Check-out his web site at [www.sheldonlandwehr.com](http://www.sheldonlandwehr.com)