

Rated ★★★



David Burke & Donatella

Combines outstanding interior design, quick, efficient and personal service and food that makes for very smooth dining.



David Burke & Donatella a new contemporary restaurant is admirably suited to its midtown East Side location and high-profile clientele symbolizing perhaps the most discriminating public in town. At lunch and at dinner the slightly skippy tables are filled by patrons who have the taste, the experience and the income that qualifies them to appreciate Chef David Burke's eccentric signature dishes and overall suave ministrations. Founded December of 2003 by Mr. Burke, one time connected to River Cafe and lastly Park Avenue Cafe, and young winsome partner Donatella Arpaia, likewise proprietor of thriving East 52nd Streets Bellini, have jointly fashioned this place into the areas hottest modern American haute-cuisine venue. David Burke & Donatella combines outstanding interior design, quick, efficient and personal service and food that makes for very smooth dining. The room accommodates 100 clamorous guests sitting cheek-to-jowl. While affording little privacy, it does offer the opportunity to chat up neighboring customers. The stunning interior, vibrantly accented in deep shades of red is captivatingly shaped

with red shaded sconces, posh red banquettes, chairs, plush carpeting, especially spotlighted by a brilliantly flashy sculpture of blazing red glass rods above a red fireplace. Patchworks of huge mirrors nearly cover the walls. Even when packed (which is all the time) it simply throws off bold seductive sparks.

The food, it is almost superfluous to say, is remarkably good, even though the menu contains many of David's favorite off-the-wall items such as

crisp and angry lobster cocktail festooned with candied lemon, Bronx-style filet mignon of veal, and novel cheesecake lollipop trees accompanied by bubble gum cream (certainly an acquired taste).

The bill-of-fare is a model of compactness and is made up of predominantly culinary originals offered either a la carte or by way of tasting menus. Even hot baked Parker House rolls crowned by sourdough domes proffered in copper pans and sided by fresh butter flamboyantly sprinkled with course red salt is a unique encounter in itself. At dinner not long ago, there was a first offering of the chefs own tempting triple layered parfait of yellowfin tuna and salmon tartare arriving on a marble slab garnished with American sturgeon caviar. There was also interesting seared sea scallops "Benedict" prepared on two crisp potato pancakes topped with thin slices of caramelized Spanish sausage, chives and poached quail eggs, finished with lobster foam.

Main course selections included hand-roasted ginger rubbed salmon glazed with hot and sour Oriental sauce. It comes on a bed of compelling Chinese sausage, mustard greens and octopus slices, sided by red pickled kimchee cabbage. Pan roasted, semi-boneless Dover sole lightly coated in seasoned flour and brushed with a fine tomato mint butter is paired with somewhat heavy sourdough gnocchi



Lobster "steak", curried shoestrings, black honey and citrus fennel candy

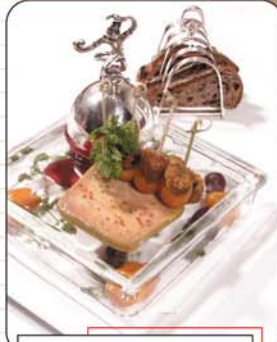
and crunchy zucchini chips. We found the fish moist, delicate and powerful, albeit people at the adjoining table said they found the sole thoroughly disagreeable. A favorite of Mr. Burke is his celebrated lobster steak enticingly teamed with curried shoestring potatoes, drizzled with spiced black honey and embroidered with citrus fennel candy. This nicely balanced meaty Maine lobster delight is molded with a lemon centered lobster-shrimp pureed mousse basted in butter while being grilled to a golden hue, and presented on a rack of potato and celery root puree with candied lemon zest. As for the noted "Bronx-style" filet mignon of veal attend by shiitake mushroom pistachio tortellini rolled in biscotti crumbs and showered in a beurre fondue, it's roasted until succulently tender then sauced in a reduction of aged Marsala wine veal gravy. There are salads for the waistline watchers that are complex and rewarding, and an array of intriguing singular desserts with an assortment of deliciously rich pastries for those who live recklessly.

There are many fine vintages in the cellar, as may be imagined, but the popular choices seems to be for the younger and fighter wines. At the present time of writing David Burke & Donatella have announced a forthcoming dim sum brunch featuring such Burke specials as his famed egg shell stuffed lobster hash, and egg and spinach ravioli with cheese, herb butter and shavings of black truffles.

*** David Burke & Donatella, 133 East 61st Street (bet. Park & Lexington), New York. (212) 813-2121. Lunch and dinner daily. Dinner entrees \$24 to \$38. Prix fixe tasting menu is \$65 per person. Accepts reservations and major credit cards. BT



David Burke's cheesecake lollipop tree



Foie gras terrine



Wild salmon with Asian spices



DBD6-ice cream and sorbet



Petits fours on "petit four"



Main dining room



Butterscotch panna cotta



David Burke



Crisp and angry lobster