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LOADED NACHOS,
BEEF-TONGUE FRIES, AND
CHOCOLATE BABKA.

Baguette

MAISON KAYSER

1294 Third Ave., nr. 74th St.
212-744-3100

If you have any doubt that New York is in the midst of a bread renaissance, elbow your way into the snaking line at Eric Kayser's Upper East Side boulangerie. It's there, behind the frenetic cashiers, that you'll find Kayser's gift to our carb-starved masses: his baguette Monge (\$2.75), named for the Parisian street where the master baker and global juggernaut opened the first of roughly 80 shops some seventeen years ago. It's a beautifully simple thing, slightly swollen at the middle and slender at the tips, the crackly outer crust yielding to a moist, almost damp crumb, with enviably variable hole structure and a creamy hue that come from natural leavening, long fermentation, and the incorporation of a bit of roasted corn flour imported from France. Freshly baked, it tastes buttery without butter, rich and complex with a subtle tang.

Brunch

PARISH HALL

109A N. 3rd St., nr. Berry St., Williamsburg
718-782-2602

At its core, and absent all the post-yuppie cultural baggage, brunch is simply breakfast plus lunch. And what could be better than that? Nevertheless, there are those who claim to hate brunch. These poor souls have apparently never experienced a weekend afternoon in the spare-verging-on-spartan, skylit back room of Parish Hall. If they had, they would have encountered many exotic delights not typically associated with a New York brunch: an almost spalike, restorative vibe, spot-on \$9 cocktails, a crowd of all ages, happy families, non-squealing tots. They even take reservations. Of course, all would be moot if the food wasn't up to snuff. This is happily not the case. Even beyond the excellently eggy eggs, there are crisp-edged johnny cakes with bourbon-barreled maple syrup. Terrific housemade bacon and sausage. Savory oats mingled with roasted carrots, cauliflower, and parsnips. Two types of hash. A

porchetta sandwich. And a wait staff that care as deeply about the food they're serving (much of it sourced in season from the owner's upstate farm) as they do about how you're liking it. Like we said, Bizarro World brunch.

Dumplings

BIANG!

41-10 Main St., Flushing
718-888-7713

You know those pretty good five-for-a-dollar pork-and-chive dumplings? These aren't those. These are better. These are six-for-a-fiver, cooked-to-order lamb dumplings, and they're worth the splurge. (When, by the way, was the last time you found a Chinese restaurant that stuffed its dumplings with lamb?) Like chef David Shi's spectacular hand-pulled noodles, his dumplings have the same tender-chewy bite you associate with pasta produced by culinarily elite Italian grandmas. They're shaped like *Little House on the Prairie* bonnets and come two ways: in an invigorating sour broth that could clear a sinus at twenty paces, or sluiced with the house signature sauce (a soy-rice-

vinegar-and-chile-oil-based concoction so good you could slop it over an old sneaker and serve it on a bed of watercress to rave reviews). Get them both, one after the other, and you're pretty much in dumpling heaven.

Tuna Sandwich

CRAVE FISHBAR

945 Second Ave., at 50th St.
646-895-9585

The "yellowfin tuna confit sandwich" (\$15) Todd Mitgang serves for lunch at his perpetually bustling midtown seafood restaurant is not a typical tuna sandwich. It's not made with soggy supermarket bread, or smothered in too much mayonnaise, and it doesn't look like it's been sitting for days at the bottom of someone's lunch bag. The flaky yellowfin is cooked in the confit style, and comes to your plate more or less straight from the sea. It's tossed in a lemony vinaigrette, squeezed between slabs of toasty, house-baked focaccia, and dressed with arugula and fried artichokes for extra crunch. Devour this elegant monster in the traditional two-fisted way, or do what we do and