

Dining Out

With Sheldon Landwehr

Photos by *Rob Rich*

I must compliment Daniel Boulud, head master of Daniel Restaurant, on his artistry, and ease in preparing exquisitely unique, contemporary French-style recipes for the patrons of his elegant 65th Street rendezvous in New York.

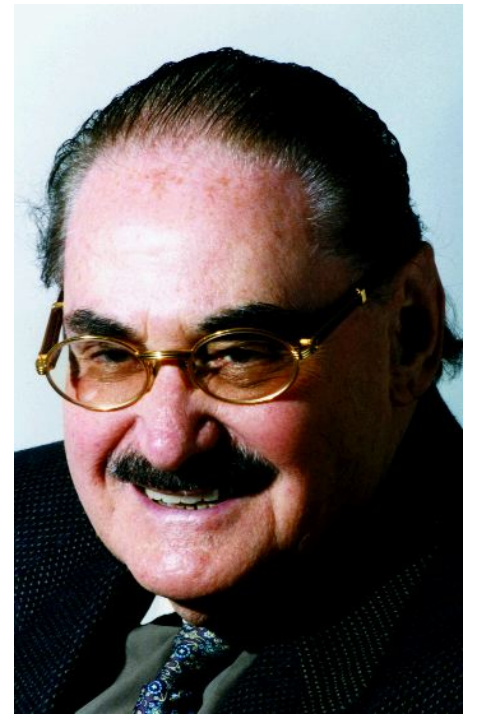
Naturally, when you own one of the most celebrated, expensive restaurants in the city, you have clout advantage. True, Daniel pays top dollar for his beef, lamb, veal, poultry, and seasonal game (which obviously contributes to the high cost of dining here), but all provisions are specially set aside for him. And he probably has first dibs on vegetables, fruits and other commodities, notably imported wines and spirits. So it's unlikely Daniel will go wrong with such a head start. Of course, knowing how to best utilize top quality ingredients is vital. Let me hasten to assure you that Mr. Boulud's skill and background are so well regarded that he is considered one of the most eminent, world-class chefs in his profession. Kitchen assistants such as executive chef Jean Francois Bruel, pastry chef Eric Bertoia and Bread-man Mark Fiorentino, as well as the remarkably disciplined staff out front, bring expansive qualifications to the table, and, of course, are all amply rewarded for their stellar performance.

If you plan to dine at this sumptuous temple of gastronomy, be sure to book at least a month in advance. Heavy table demand's, oftentimes compel management to overbook in order to appease pleas for accommodations, so one might be gently nudged at meals end to make room for other hopefuls. Part of the price for a Daniel experience. In any event, I would suggest going for the tasting menu which builds a well balanced selection, and should be one of the memorable repasts of a lifetime.

Few notable restaurants, even the so called greatest ones can match such Daniel masterpieces as: chilled charentais melon veloute; succulently spiced squab paired with figs, glazed radishes, spinach, foie gras, and almonds; tantalizing bacon wrapped monk fish coupled with lobster in jus Chambolle Musigny, Louis Jadot 1997;



Daniel Boulud



Eric Bertoia - Pastry Chef





Bacon Wrapped Monkfish with Lobster, English Peas, "Pont Neuf" and a Savory Jus

Photo: P. Medilek



Patrick Garrivier



Spiced Squab with figs, glazed radishes, spinach, foie gras, almonds and a purslane salad



silky rich duck and foie gras terrine flecked with pistachios; deeply-flavored Carolina shrimp interrelated with watermelon and avocado salad; sweet corn tortelloni in a lofty clam broth; or a drop-dead version of fork-tender, lemon-rosemary crusted rack of lamb, supported by grilled radicchio, honey glazed eggplant and sweet garlic. These are only a few items from one of the most lavish menus I have ever encountered.

Other significant offerings include roasted veal tenderloin, skillfully seasoned, sliced, and archly served with delicate veal cheeks and the freshest vegetables; sautéed frogs legs comes in a mix of tomatoes, olives, crisp potatoes, and sweet garlic-parsley coullis; sardine duo heightened by crunchy fennel and pepper confit, augmented by onions, raisins and nuts; and a luxuriously sauced grilled tuna.

Desserts offer the same bewildering array of possibilities, starting with a domed rolling cart dramatizing 25 aromatic, imported cheeses. A few unrivaled confections involve smoothly tart lemon pana cotta soothed by vanilla sorbet, strawberry melba hosting airy lime Chantilly, weightless mascarpone with caramelized hazelnuts topped with coffee ice cream, and chocolate marquise and praline cream mille-feuille. And these ethereal sweet treats are followed by trays laden with chocolates and miniature pastries. And finally, freshly ground coffee and imported tea that can not be improved upon.

I can venture to say that there may be larger wine collections in some of our older great cellars, but none that is better balanced.

Celebrating its first decade, Daniel serves dinner nightly except Sunday. The muster of menus include a 3-course prix fixe dinner for \$85; 4-course weekend tasting menu \$85; 5-course tasting menu \$120; 8-course degustation menu \$160; an a la carte menu available in the bar and lounge area, and these prices are not set in stone, but subject to change. The dress code is strictly enforced.

****Daniel, 60 East 65th Street, New York. (212) 327-3434. Dinner nightly. Closed Sunday. Accepts major credit cards.