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NEW YORK CITY

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to recommend white wines under \$100 and he offered five excellent suggestions; we went with the firm, mineraly Domaine Tempier Bandol Blanc 2015 (\$95).

Per Se is not a showy restaurant. It would be easy to underestimate its reserved elegance, but its virtues are rare in New York: space, serenity, indulgence. Per Se takes its guests far above the cares of the world, and that is something few restaurants can offer.

Tribeca Grill

375 Greenwich St. Telephone (212) 940-3900

Website www.myriadrestaurantgroup.com/restaurants/tribeca Grand Award since 2002

In the 1980s, Tribeca, in the southwest corner of Manhattan, was a mystery zone even to most New Yorkers. Few could envision the missiles of wealth and celebrity heading for the sleepy neighborhood.

Tribeca Grill was the first shot of the future across the bow. It was the brainchild of actor Robert De Niro, who lived in the neighborhood, and Drew Nieporent, the restaurateur who had opened nearby Montrachet five years earlier.

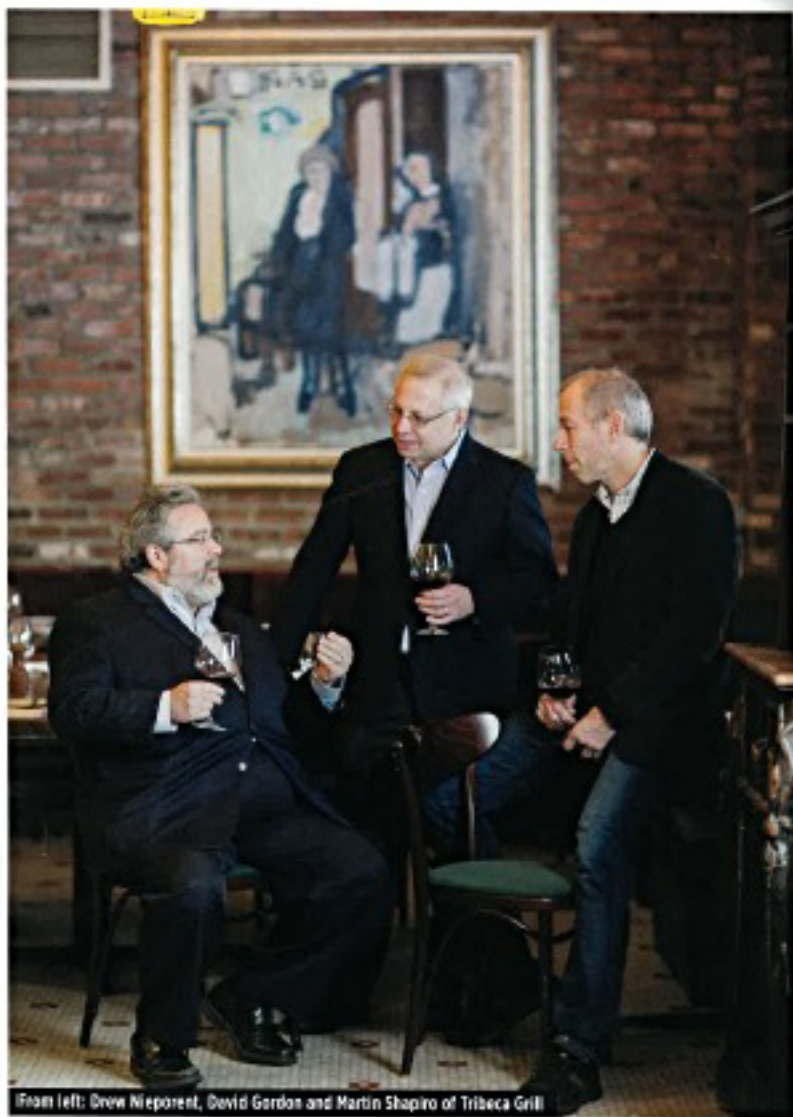
The opening night party in 1990 celebrated Liza Minelli's wedding; paparazzi lined the cobblestone streets. The space was still unfinished, but dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov didn't mind. "Oh, I like it this way," he said that night. "I hope they don't change it too much."

While the neighborhood has changed plenty since then—it's now one of the city's most expensive places to live—the restaurant is much the same. After the celebrity wave crashed and retreated, Tribeca Grill became a local institution, unassuming and dependable. Not least, it also offers one of New York's deepest wine lists, with 2,200 selections backed by a 30,000-bottle cellar.

The dining room, carved out of a century-old warehouse, pioneered an industrial aesthetic, with a big, open space broken up by tall columns and big windows onto the street. The centerpiece is a bar salvaged from Maxwell's Plum, and the main design touches are a series of large, colorful paintings by Robert De Niro Sr. The lights are low, the music soft, the simple wooden tables well-spaced. It's an easy place to relax in.

The menu has always been straightforward and unfussy, focused on comfort food: salmon and scallops, roast chicken and grilled steaks. Executive chef Scott Burnett took over the kitchen in January and hasn't fixed what wasn't broken. At a recent dinner, the dishes were generous, homey and satisfying. The food never gets in the way of the wine, which takes the starring role.

The wine list is full of value. It opens with "Dave's Picks"—that



(From left) Drew Nieporent, David Gordon and Martin Shapiro of Tribeca Grill

would be wine director David Gordon, who joined the restaurant in its first year. It's an eclectic selection that rewards exploration, especially as most of these bottles are priced at less than \$100. I asked sommelier Daniel Jung to recommend a white and was very happy with a mineraly 2015 Grüner Veltliner Löss from Austria's Heidler (\$45).

But it is also rich in benchmarks. Tribeca Grill offers what may be the best selection of Rhône Valley wines outside France, with more than 200 Châteauneuf-du-Papes, including Château de Beaucastel in 10 vintages back to 1981 (\$375). They also offer almost all of Wine Spectator's Wines of the Year, back to the No. 1 from 1989, the Caymus Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Special Selection 1984 (\$600).

Tribeca Grill has never been about star chefs or dining as theater. It serves good food, offers great wine and invites you to relax in good company. After a quarter of a century, it fits the neighborhood like an old shoe, of the finest leather.



Bátard wine director Jason Jacobelt

gentle lighting. It feels as though it has been around for years.

Those with longer memories, however, may experience a palpable sense that evokes the space's earlier incarnations as Corton and, beginning way back in 1985, as Montrachet. Tribeca was only beginning to stir when owner Drew Nieporent hired chef David Bouley to create the neighborhood's first fine-dining destination. This small storefront on West Broadway has witnessed lower Manhattan emerge as arguably the most dynamic neighborhood in the city.

Current chef Markus Glocker and wine director Jason Jacobelt are maintaining the high standards set long ago, bringing their personal touches to a dining experience that remains a downtown mix of casual and creative. And they're working to soften the edges of a place that, as Corton, had pushed a bit too far into formality and experimentation.

"We're trying to bring a little bit of the old Montrachet back," Glocker told me. "A little more comfortable, a little more affordable."

The current menu offers options of two (\$58), three (\$75) or four (\$82) courses. Its four sections are divided into smaller dishes, pastas, main courses and desserts. The dishes are thoughtfully assembled and beautifully composed without being precious or skimpy.

Leber & Zunge might not sell if translated as "liver and tongue," but the dish itself was delicious, a terrine of pickled veal tongue and foie gras, savory and rich. Black bass was just

cooked through, accented by roasted shrimp and fennel, delicate and focused. Braised pork shoulder with savory cabbage hinted at the chef's Austrian heritage, but a touch of miso in the sauce widened its horizons.

Jacobelt's wine list, which holds Wine Spectator's Best of Award of Excellence, acknowledges Glocker's homeland with savvy selections from Austria, Germany and Alsace. It also takes a quick tour around the wine world, with stops in Greece (a Malagouzia from Alpha Estate is \$47) and California (a Dunn Cabernet Sauvignon 1997 from Napa Valley, \$360), for example.

But the heart of the list remains, as it has always been, red and white Burgundy. The offerings include top producers, top vineyards and top vintages, at prices that are reasonable considering the wines' quality and scarcity. There are a number of offerings priced below \$100, but those with deeper pockets can plunder a treasure cave. There are 36 grand crus whites, back to 1996 for Chevalier-Montrachet from Domaine Leflaive (\$1,775). Among reds, 17 bottlings express Clos St-Jacques, the fine premier cru in Gevrey-Chambertin, including a 1985 from Louis Jadot (\$825).

"In this restaurant, less has always been more," said Nieporent, reflecting on its long tenure. "We've spent the money on the cellar, the stemware and the food."

Those who love fine wine, appreciate Riedel wineglasses and want to eat well without pretension will find Bátard satisfying. It's a worthy descendent of its pedigreed predecessors, and Tribeca wouldn't be the same without it.

Harry's Cafe & Steak

A direct thread leads from Harry's back more than half a century ago, when lower Manhattan was a very different world.

Harry Poulakakos emigrated from Greece in 1956, when he was 18 years old. Two years later, he found work in a 24-hour restaurant at 60 Broad Street in downtown Manhattan. "After six o'clock in the evening, there was no one on the street," Harry recalled.

After a stint at Oscar's Delmonico's, Harry opened his own restaurant in 1972, in the basement of the India House on Hanover



Harry Poulakakos (standing) of Harry's Cafe & Steak