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The Stately Upper East Side

Elegant architecture showcases cultural riches

BY BRUCE SANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHANNON STURGIS

On a sunny June day, bistro Le Bilboquet on East 60th Street was packed with smartly dressed men and women of all ages, many tanned from weekends in the Hamptons or other recent travels. Around the corner, elegant women who could grace the pages of *Vogue* slipped in and out of shops such as Barneys, Bottega Veneta, Moncler and Tod's.

There is no mistaking the tony vibe of Manhattan's Upper East Side, but it's far from one-dimensional. Amble west from Le Bilboquet and you'll find eager tourists lingering at the entrance to Central Park. Head north and east of 60th Street and Madison, and the neighborhood changes dramatically. Between 72nd and 86th streets on Second Avenue, the overflowing bars and crowded restaurants are reminiscent of downtown, if less edgy than the Lower East Side.

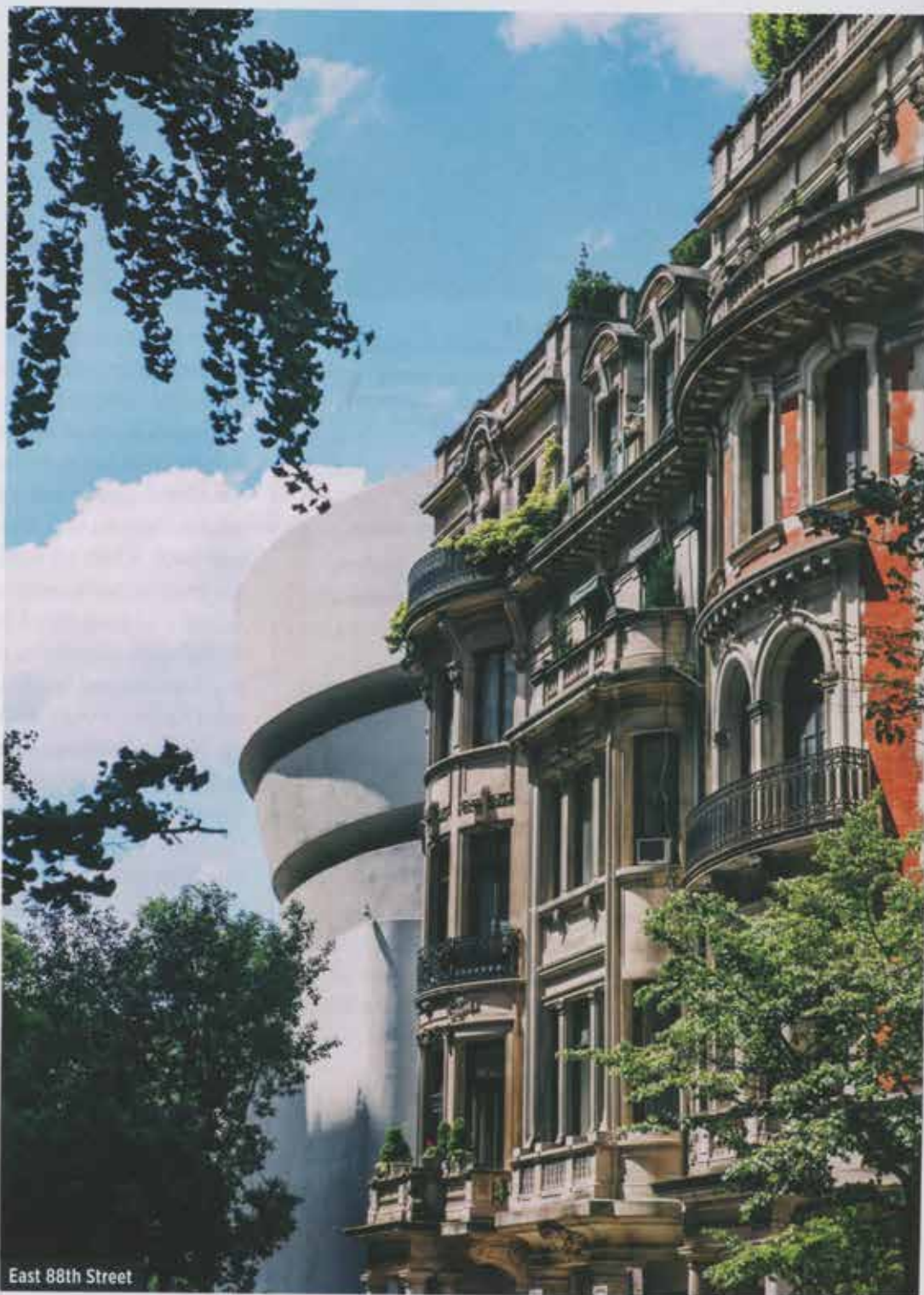
With the opening of the Second Avenue Q subway line at the beginning of the year, the Upper East Side is now easily accessible up to East 96th Street from Brooklyn, Queens and downtown Manhattan. Whether that changes the complexion of the neighborhood remains to be seen. The Q line has already increased residential property values along Second Avenue by 10 percent or more, according to Michael Vargas of Vanderbilt Appraisers.

Stretching from about 58th Street to 96th Street and from Fifth Avenue to the East River, the Upper East Side is home to some of Manhattan's wealthiest residents, especially in the blocks from Fifth Avenue to Park Avenue. As you head east, the mansions and townhouses give way to more modest apartments, and the streets and avenues are dotted with new high-rise developments. Restaurants, bars, dry cleaners, cobblers, bodegas, drugstores and other businesses line the avenues.

Third Avenue is the dividing line.

Most of the nightlife exists along its length and on Second Avenue.

Some of the city's best restaurants are on the Upper East Side. It's home to Daniel, which since 1993 has been the flagship of chef Daniel Boulud's empire. He got his start in the same space's kitchen, when it was Sirio Maccioni's Le Cirque.



East 88th Street



Upper East Side

GRAND AWARD WINNER*

1 DANIEL 60 E. 65th St. Telephone (212) 288-0033 Website www.danielnyc.com

FEATURED RESTAURANTS

2 FELIDIA RISTORANTE 243 E. 58th St. Telephone (212) 758-1479 Website www.felidia-nyc.com Cost \$\$ Best of Award of Excellence

3 FLORA BAR AT MET BREUER 945 Madison Ave. Telephone (646) 558-5383 Website www.florabarnyc.com Cost \$\$

4 THE SIMONE 151 E. 82nd St. Telephone (212) 772-8861 Website www.thesimonerestaurant.com Cost \$\$

5 SISTINA 24 E. 81st St. Telephone (212) 861-7660 Website www.sistinany.com Cost \$\$ Best of Award of Excellence

WINE AND FOOD RETAIL

6 ELI'S LIST WINE & SPIRITS 1413 Third Ave. Telephone (212) 717-1999 Website elizabarwine.com

7 ELI'S MARKET 1411 Third Ave. Telephone (212) 717-8100 Website www.elizabar.com/elis-market.aspx

8 SHERRY-LEHMANN WINE & SPIRITS 505 Park Ave. Telephone (212) 838-7500 Website www.sherry-lehmann.com

HOTELS*

9 THE PIERRE 2 E. 61st St. Telephone (212) 838-8000 Website www.thepierreny.com

10 THE SURREY 20 E. 76th St. Telephone (212) 288-3700 Website www.thesurrey.com

ATTRACTIONS

11 EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO 1230 Fifth Ave. Telephone (212) 831-7272 Website www.elmuseo.org

12 THE FRICK COLLECTION 1 E. 70th St. Telephone (212) 288-0700 Website www.frick.org

13 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART 1000 Fifth Ave. Telephone (212) 535-7710 Website www.metmuseum.org

14 SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM 1071 Fifth Ave. Telephone (212) 423-3575 Website www.guggenheim.org

* Grand Award profiles begin on page 163.

* Hotel profiles begin on page 193.

Eli's

Eli Zabar was born on the Upper West Side, one of three heirs to a growing New York City food retail destination called Zabar's. In the 1970s, he left his family business, moving to the Upper East Side. "My brothers are older; they're from a different generation. They had one small store and didn't have the room for me. When I got out of school, I had different ideas, and I had to express my own ideas," says Zabar.

Across the park, he has created an empire of food and wine over the past 44 years. "The Upper East Side is my world," he states matter-of-factly. "I live here; I work here. My family lives on the Upper West Side; that's the only reason I go there."

Zabar opened his first gourmet food shop, E.A.T., at Madison and 80th Street in 1973. His theory was that New Yorkers never go north, so when all those visitors to the Metropolitan Museum of Art were looking for something to eat, they would walk to Madison, turn south and find his shop.

At the time, not much in the way of specialty food shops existed on the Upper East Side. Citarella and Grace's Marketplace hadn't arrived yet, and Agata & Valentina wasn't founded until 1993.

Over the years, Eli evolved from sandwich maker to baker, grocer and restaurateur, satisfying his passion for food and wine and offering specialty products for gourmets and enophiles. Taste, Zabar's previous bistro in this space, was redesigned in 2014 as Eli's Table, and Randall Restiano joined as wine director.

Today, Zabar's enterprises occupy five major locations on the Upper East Side, between 79th and 91st streets, from Madison to York Avenue. There are four outlets of the upscale take-out deli



Eli Zabar (left) and wine director Randall Restiano at Eli's Table

Eli's Essentials, and there's Eli's Night Shift, a "grab 'n' go" by day, serving coffee, pastry and sandwiches, which converts to a bar at night, featuring wine and cocktails, plus craft beers made exclusively in New York's five boroughs.

Zabar's philosophy has served him well over the years. "I like to make things and I like to reuse things," he says. The 20,000-square-foot Eli's Market, founded in 1998, at 80th Street and Third Avenue, is the core operation, along with the commissary and event space located at the Vinegar Factory on East 91st Street. If the farm-grown strawberries or peaches available at Eli's Market begin to lose their freshness, they go into pies, tarts, sauces and even syrups for cocktails, for use in the take-out shops, restaurants and bars.

In mid-May, the fresh strawberries at Eli's Market came from a farmer in Big Sur, Calif. Peppery arugula is grown in greenhouses on the rooftops of Zabar's bakeries on 91st Street. The market boasts an extensive cheese section and fresh seafood, and the olive oils are from wineries in Italy.

When you can't get fresh tomatoes in season, Zabar grows heirloom varieties in the greenhouses—a perfect example of his resourcefulness. Realizing that the residual heat from the baking ovens was being wasted, Zabar built a greenhouse on the roof, utilizing the heat to grow tomatoes. It took time and a learning curve, but now he grows tomatoes from April through July and September to November. The greenhouses also supply fresh herbs and lettuces for the restaurants.

What sets Zabar's enterprises apart from other gourmet food shops and cafés is the focus on multiple locations in the same area. Each spot has its own feel and a slightly different focus, but the top-quality ingredients and Eli's hands-on approach comprise the overriding philosophy.



Eli's List

This narrow store next to Eli's Table and above the market stocks a focused collection of European wines, reflecting owner Eli Zabar's personal taste. Since 2014, the 600-selection wineshop (and the list at Eli's Table) have been run by wine director Randall Restiano.

The inventory is not only specific to Europe, but to traditional styles and indigenous grapes, with an emphasis on sustainable, organic and biodynamic farming. There is no Bordeaux, no super Tuscans. Zabar's love for Champagne is evident right inside the door. Along with several small growers, there is a selection of Pol Roger, his favorite house. Next comes an eclectic mix from Spain, including several labels from the most recent wine trip to Galicia, and rosé from Domaine de la Citadelle in the Luberon, close to where Zabar has a home.

Small, traditional producers are well-represented, like Roagna and G.B. Burlotto from Barolo, Cascina delle Rose from Barbaresco, and Domaine Arlaud and Christophe Buisson from Burgundy. A central table offers featured wines, and there is a \$25-and-under section.

Eli's Table

Eli's Table is the restaurant conjoining the market and Eli's List. With a focus on farm-to-table ingredients, the menu changes daily to match the 20 or so wines by the glass, which also change daily.

On a spring Tuesday, you could start with English pea crostini, move on to crispy octopus, celery and parsley salad, and finish up with Maryland soft-shell crabs.

Wine director Restiano offers the wines as a 2.5-ounce or 5-ounce pour, or you can order the whole bottle. In addition to sparkling, white, rosé and red, he also listed an "oxidized" Vernaccia from Sardinia and an orange wine from France's Languedoc region.

There is a section of aged wines available from the Coravin system, ranging from \$13 to \$25 for a 2.5-ounce portion, or the options "Conditional Trust," "Pure Trust" and "Blind Trust," where the food and wine choices are made in consultation, or Restiano and his staff choose both the menu and the wine pairings for you.

Eli's Table has added wine classes every two weeks, and it is a destination for New York sommeliers and industry people. Though it may find a wider audience, Zabar's goal for both Eli's Table and Eli's List is to cultivate a neighborhood clientele. "We're here to educate," he explains. "We've been [to the wine regions], we know the growers, we've felt the soil. We're doing it right, to be as real as possible."



