



Eli Zabar's Crown Jewel Restaurant Returns

Closed for three years due to the pandemic, Eli's Table, adjacent to the market, reopens with its massive Old World wine collection

by [Melissa McCart](#) | Mar 23, 2023, 5:02pm EDT

Photography by [Alex Staniloff](#)



Eli's Table, the Upper East Side restaurant from Eli Zabar — across town from the famous Zabar's market that his brothers own — reopens tonight at 1411 Third Avenue, near 80th Street, adjacent to his own grocery, [Eli's Market](#). The seasonal restaurant returns after a three-year pandemic closure with dishes from longtime chef Moctezuma "Monti" Garcia, who's been working with Zabar for over two decades.

Expect dishes made with greens grown on nearby rooftops (owned by Zabar); white asparagus with egg and a vinaigrette; veal sweetbreads; or tagliatelle with peckytoe crab. Also on the team is wine director Kilian Robin, who's in charge of all wine purchases for Eli's restaurants and markets, with more than 50,000 bottles in the cellar, one of the largest collections of Old World wine in the city.

Homegrown institution Zabar's, the Upper West Side market, evolved from what Eli Zabar's father, Louis Zabar started as a delicatessen in the 1930s. The deli grew into an expansive market with an array of imports, housewares, and other products that both reflect and have helped shape how we eat. Zabar's, now run by Eli Zabar's brothers, Saul and Stanley, can see over 40,000 visitors in a given week.

Eli Zabar's separate businesses, by comparison, have 400 employees and see 2,000 to 3,000 customers a day across ten locations, among them a wholesale bakery that delivers to hundreds of restaurants, hotels, and markets, says Sasha Zabar, Eli Zabar's son.

In the 1970s, as Zabar's was expanding, Eli Zabar wanted to bring something to the table that showcased his love of French fare: It led him to break from the family business to start his own string of restaurants, beginning with E.A.T. Cafe on Madison Avenue that first opened in 1973. Today, his empire includes Eli's Market, Bar 91, Eli's Night Shift for beer, Eli's List for wine and spirits, and Eli's Bread.

Eli's Table opened within the market in 2003, originally under the name Taste — grab and go by day, serving housemade chips and creative salads or sandwiches; and fine dining at night with roast chicken or a nice piece of fish, along with a selection of interesting wines. In 2014, Eli Zabar rebranded the business as Eli's Table.

Then, as now, there is a greenhouse and rooftop gardens that total 20,000 square feet and today includes the space that used to be the Vinegar Factory. "I grow lettuces. I grow my own tomatoes. I grow lemons, figs, and strawberries," says Eli Zabar, who helps shape the menu based what's available and what he likes at his market.

The reopened restaurant has been updated with some physical layout changes, according to Sasha Zabar, who has hired a new manager and helped set up online sales. Over the next couple of months, the restaurant will host classes, dinners with winemakers, and "curated meals using the wine list as you would pull from a collection at a museum," Zabar says. But overall, it's still just a neighborhood restaurant, or that's what the Zabars want. "The kind of place where everyone knows you and what you like," says Sasha Zabar, "and you can eat a casual meal in an hour or come with a group and stay drinking wines from the list."

