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In Search of New York's Best Brunch

October 4, 2005

Some make it a social occasion, others have a one-on-one date with the Sunday paper. Either way, brunch is an event in New York City. Many of the best places don't take reservations. So, line up with the natives and take in the sights as you wait.

If you're craving challah French toast or poached eggs, head for **Blue Ribbon Bakery** (*photo, right*. 35 Downing St., at Bedford St.). **Aquagrill** is elegant without being fussy; order from the classic brunch selections or exotic seafood dishes (210 Spring St., at 6th Ave.). A tasty organic French-Caribbean menu makes cozy **Ivo & Lulu** a destination in its own right (558 Broome St., between Sixth Ave. and Varick St.). **Jerry's** (101 Prince St., between Greene and Mercer Sts.) is a barely dressed-up diner with roots that go back to SoHo's art gallery days. Kids knock knees with models and Apple store aficionados, who come for salads and sandwiches in addition to brunch classics.



If you're on the Upper West Side, try the famous, caught-in-time **Barney Greengrass**, *the* place to go for bagels and nova (541 Amsterdam Ave., between 86th and 87th Sts.). Families should check out **Homer's World Famous Malt Shop** (487 Amsterdam Ave., between 83rd and 84th Sts.) for its doughnuts and French toast sticks. Bistro **Nice Matin's** (201 W. 79th St., at Amsterdam Ave.) tables outside are a delight; inside, it's very light and airy. **Sarabeth's** offers more casual yet still sophisticated food, including moist pumpkin muffins and great fresh fruit plates (1295 Madison Ave., between 92nd and 93rd Sts.; 423 Amsterdam Ave., near 80th St.). Upper East Sider **Jo Jo** serves transcendent brunch fare in a sumptuous town house setting. The hip and elegant **Aquavit** (65 E. 55th St., between Madison and Park Aves.) sets out a Swedish smorgasbord every Sunday---it's also great for people-watching. For the ultimate sumptuous (and pricey) hotel buffet---the one that has a bit of everything, including shrimp and a dozen desserts---head to the Essex House's **Café Botanica** (160 Central Park South, between 6th and 7th Aves.)

For what is arguably the best hot chocolate in town (plus homemade marshmallows), go to **City Bakery** (3 W. 18th St., between 5th and 6th Aves.). You can pick from the salad bar and order table-service entrées. Go to **Home** (20 Cornelia St., between Bleecker and W. 4th Sts.) for American basics plus a garden out back. For French fundamentals---croissants, eggs, and croque monsieur---try **Le Quinze** (132 W. Houston St., between MacDougal and Sullivan Sts.); sit up front for a sunny table.

In Tribeca, **Bubby's** (120 Hudson St., at N. Moore St.) presents a slightly

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Southern take on American standards; it's fresh-squeezed citrus juices and buttermilk pancakes draw crowds of all ages. Warm, welcoming, elegant, quiet, and spacious **Capsouto Frères** (451 Washington St., at Watts St.) caters to those who want room to breathe when they eat or who want to talk and---maybe---try the savory soufflés. Quirky and small, the Lower East Side's **Prune** (54 E. 1st St., between 1st and 2nd Aves.) draws brunchers with its legendary Bloody Marys (usually a dozen to choose from) and surprising food combinations. **Miss Mamie's Spoonbread Too** (366 W. 110th St., between Columbus and Manhattan Aves.), not far from Columbia University, is well known for its friendly staff as well as its fried chicken, grits, and cornbread. Former President Clinton dined there, and local politicians are sometimes seen elbow-to-elbow with the students who gather here.

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