

Dining In New York City: More Than Just a Meal (Part 1 of 2)

by Jill Koenigs, PassPorter Guest Contributor

For the past several years, I have been meeting two friends from England in New York City for a girls' weekend. We spend our days shopping and sightseeing, but the main reason that we choose New York City as our meeting spot is to relish in the unique and varied food offerings of this great city.

This year two of my girlfriends from South Carolina joined us for a cold and frosty weekend. Once introductions and hugs were exchanged between my two sets of friends, the five of us were soon off to our first dining destination, Florent in Greenwich Village. I had eaten at this quirky French bistro/24-hour diner years ago with my husband, so I was eager to share it with my friends.

After a quick subway ride, we strolled down a practically empty West Village street anticipating a long and leisurely lunch. The only other people sharing the street with us were two men who were slightly ahead of us. In our quest for lunch, we soon passed them. At that point, one of my British friends recognized the men as Sir Paul McCartney and his driver. She lives in a village nearby to Sir Paul, and has friends who know his driver, so the two Brits felt comfortable introducing themselves. The three of us from South Carolina stood politely to the side not wanting to rush him with fans, but we were close enough to feel his Beatles aura.

When they had said their goodbyes, they rejoined us. At first we were all speechless, but then we turned into five giggling and chattering teenage girls. By the time that we were seated in Florent, we were practically giddy. A bottle of white wine was immediately ordered to toast our greatest celebrity sighting ever soon followed by a delicious lunch of mussels and pommes frites (French fries). What a fantastic way to start our trip!

That evening, we stopped for a drink at one of our favorite places -- The View atop the Marriott Marquis in Times Square. The View is a rotating restaurant and lounge that gives you the most amazing nighttime view of the city (and the elevator ride to the top is an event in itself). You are literally in the midst of Manhattan's skyscrapers and you almost feel as if you could reach out and touch one of the buildings sparkling with lights. One of my friends from South Carolina had never been to New York City, so we wanted to give her the full effect of this dazzling city at

night. The drinks are expensive at The View, but they are also strong so one drink should carry you through one full rotation of the lounge. The cocktail napkins are even imprinted with the names and locations of the skyscrapers that you pass, so you have a wonderful souvenir to take with you.

The same friend who had never been to New York City also wanted a real deli pastrami sandwich so our choice for dinner was Carnegie Deli. We were seated in a back room where the walls were covered with photos of celebrities (some more famous than others) and the tables were adorned with bowls of complimentary whole dill pickles. Our server was a most engaging gentleman who told us that he was also studying to be a chiropractic assistant. Throughout the meal, he went around to each of us and cracked our necks. It may have been one of the oddest dining experiences of my life. After eating a gigantic and delicious egg salad sandwich with fried onions, I left Carnegie Deli with a full stomach and a relaxed neck.

We pride ourselves on going to "out of the ordinary" spots that may not be on every tourist's itinerary. On this cold and blustery March morning, we took a train through Brooklyn to Coney Island. All of the rides and attractions were closed for the winter, but we had fun just walking on the beach and down the boardwalk taking in what this place must be like in the heat of summer. One of the few places that were open was Nathan's, the original hot dog stand that hosts the hot dog eating contest every July 4th. We stood in line with businessmen and construction workers to order from the vast menu. Coney Island may have been dead at this time of year, but Nathan's was hopping. Hot dogs are not one of my favorite foods, so I ordered a shrimp basket instead. Everyone else in my party gave the hot dogs two thumbs up.

(For the conclusion of Jill's culinary weekend in New York City including stops at Junior's Cheesecakes and Bobby Flay's Mesa Grill, check back next week.)

About The Author: Jill is a proud member of the PassPorter Message Board where she loves writing trip reports about her latest Walt Disney World vacation and exchanging advice with fellow PassPorters. In her real life, she works in the Information Technology department of an insurance company and enjoys reading and cooking. She loves nothing more than being in her happy place with her husband, Thom, and their two daughters, Mary Devall and Maddie.

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