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DINING OUT

Sensational seafood

Observing Lent? Try the fresh catches at these city eateries

BY EMILY MATHEIS
Special to amNewYork

With Lent fast approaching — it's less than a week away — the devout have several fish-filled days ahead. Here are some top city seafood joints, from established favorites to those just breaking in.

Atlantic Grill
1341 Third Ave., at 77th St., 212-988-6200
Last year Zagat voted Blue Water Grill's Upper East Side cousin one of New York's top 50 restaurants. Try the Maryland crab cakes with grilled corn salsa topped with chipotle remoulade.

Aquagrill
210 Spring St., at Sixth Ave., 212-274-0505
Since opening in 1996, this chic but friendly SoHo raw bar/seafood spot has earned nine Best Of awards, including the Village Voice's Best Suck & Slurp Oyster bar and three Zagat best brunch awards.

Blue Fin
1567 Broadway at 47th



A seafood theme fills the menu and the walls of The John Dory. (Photo: www.johndory.com)

St., 212-918-1400
The experience at Blue Fin is multisensory. Located in the Times Square W Hotel, the restaurant offers great seafood and views from its floating staircase.

Blue Water Grill
31 Union Square W., at 16th St., 212-675-9500
Unique creations — such as the lobster and shrimp club

sandwich, with cucumber, avocado, tomato, and bacon on a brioche roll — made this the golden child of the 2008 Zagat survey — where it was voted the 16th most popular city restaurant and praised as one that never disappoints.

BLT Fish
21 W. 17th St., betw Fifth and Sixth aves., 212-691-8888
The middle child of the

famous Bistro Laurent Tourondel lineage showcases the owner and executive chef's true love: the sea. There's a New England-style seafood shack downstairs and elegant dining room upstairs.

Eca
402 W. 43rd St., at Ninth Avenue, 212-564-7272
This is another Italian hit from the duo who brought

you Babo, Del Posto and Otis. Try the \$72 tasting menu, with a sampling of the day's raw seafood, a Sicilian-style shark with cauliflower and desserts.

The John Dory
85 10th Ave., betw 15th and 16th sts., 212-929-4048
This follow-up to West Village hot spot The Spotted Pig opened in November and to (mostly) rave. The British-themed spot offers a 900-gallon fish tank, raw bar and late-night menu from midnight to 2 a.m.

Le Bernardin
155 W. 5th St., betw Sixth and Seventh aves., 212-554-1015
Internationally known for serving the best seafood dishes the city has to offer, this four-star restaurant consistently pleases. Forbes called it the gold standard of seafood.

London Lennie's
6388 Woodhaven Blvd., Queens, 718-894-8084
The oft-crowded mom-and-pop seafood mecca of Forest Hills offers a \$49 three-course prix fixe Seafood on a String deal Monday-Thursday from 4-10 p.m.

The Mermaid Inn
96 Second Ave., betw Fifth and Sixth sts., 212-674-5870; 568 Amsterdam Ave., betw 87th and 88th sts., 212-799-7400
More adventurous but equally as comforting as the common neighborhood joint, The Mermaid Inn's two locations serve extra-large scallops. Plus, this month's blue plate special offers their famous lobster sandwich with a Blue Point beer for just \$30.

Pearl Oyster Bar
18 Cornelia St., 212-691-8211
This Greenwich Village staple is credited with bringing the lobster roll from New England to Manhattan some 13 years ago. It has a quaint, down-home feel, with an open kitchen, mostly bar seating and a menu that changes daily.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2009



BLT Fish's tuna tartare

Briefs

Pay like it's 1909
at the W Hotel. Union Square 201 Park Ave. S., 212-553-8540 is offering a "Thankback Sunday Menu" with original menu items at original prices. Each week features a dish from the classic menu such as beef carpaccio with rugelach polenta for \$5.50, grilled octopus with chickpeas for \$5.95, brick oven roasted half chicken for \$12.95, and olives bouillabaisse for \$15.95.

Wine and cheese courses at the concourse: On the first and third Saturdays in March and April, Murray's Cheese and Charles Palmer's Mezzaro will hold four wine and cheese pair-

ings at Mezzaro (404 Grand Central Terminal, East Bklyn., 212-687-4600), and will be led by a sommelier and sommelier. Each class costs \$75 and features a wine and cheese sampling. Tickets can be purchased by calling Murray's at 212-243-3289, ext. 12 or online at Murray'scheese.com.

Fight the Monday blues with a burger and a beer: Mondays just got a little better thanks to the \$15 burger-and-beer special at Irving Mall (116 E. 86th Street betw Irving Pl and Union Square E., 212-254-1600), prepared by Metromix.com's chef of the year, Ryan Sloan.

February is pancake month: In the shadow of the presidents and candy hearts, pancakes are often forgotten in February. Clinton Street Baking Company (4 Clinton St. betw E. Houston and Stanton, 646-602-6203) keeps the spirit alive with a new pancake flavor — such as roasted apples and pears with cinnamon sour cream, and fresh coconut pancakes with roasted caramelized pineapple and macadamia nuts — every other day. Served weekdays between 9 and 11 a.m. (Daily Market)

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