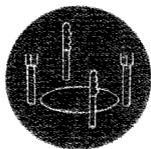


## TABLES FOR TWO



### DINERBAR

1569 Lexington Ave., between 100th and 101st Sts. (212-348-0200)—A young pioneer who moved uptown from SoHo to Carnegie Hill a few years ago dubbed the neighborhood—defensively, hopefully, facetiously—the “New Bohemia,” or NuBoHo, in an attempt to promote it to skeptical friends. The name, not to mention the sentiment, failed to catch on, and those who pined for NuBoHo were forced to look further north. Dinerbar sits atop a doozy of a hill in what real-estate brokers call Carnegie Hill North—Spanish Harlem, to the rest of the world. The place is spare, roomy, and unassuming: plate glass, ceramic tile, exposed brick, something junky on a big TV, secondhand tabloids by the door. One corner is occasionally taken over by a band or a d.j. There are well-chosen wines and dozens of beers, but no hard liquor, owing to the presence, across the street, of a Life Changers church. The kitchen is open for all to see, and people from the neighborhood drift in and out, in a college-town kind of way. The conversations often seem to be about what happened at Dinerbar the night before.

What comes out of that kitchen, in giant but prettified portions on big rectangular plates, is diner food, comfort food, square-meal food. (Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are represented, Dinerbar being a 24/7 operation.) There is a list of special sandwich combos named after the people who work there. The most popular, according to a waitress named Colleen, is the Colleen: a grilled-chicken hero with mozzarella, tomato, pesto, and red onion. Another waitress, Leilani, prefers the Big Dan, a chicken club with avocado and bacon on seven-grain toast—which is not to be confused with the Dan, “a cheesesteak with cheese, chili, and bacon.” The cuisine part of the program is only a bit more buttoned up. A whole striped bass, with a coconut-curry sauce and stir-fried veggies—“Would you like the head and tail?”—is worth the work, but there is plenty of great lazy eating: meat loaf, mashed potatoes, apple brown betty. About the pan-seared salmon fillet with mango salsa, one diner exclaimed, “This is better than the salmon I had the other day at the Four Seasons.” She paused. “Oops. Shouldn’t have said that!” (Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Entrées \$7-\$18).

—Nick Paumgarten