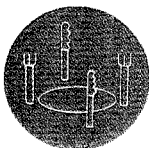


## TABLES FOR TWO



### WESTVILLE

210 W. 10th St. (212-741-7971)—Like the kind of Hampton that no longer exists, Westville is mellow, a little arty, and you and all your friends can afford to be there. Jay Strauss, an erstwhile photographer who owns the restaurant with a friend from N.Y.U. (they graduated in the eighties), grew up in Oyster Bay. He can reliably be found shimmying through the restaurant's narrow passages in a well-worn black T-shirt and jeans, pouring water from a plastic pitcher or opening more wine. (He works in the shoebox kitchen four days a week.) The restaurant seats eighteen—here an actress memorizing lines, there a young novelist. One night, a couple sat down to dine and knew the party of four to their right and the party of three to their left, and soon dishes were being passed among the tables—try the bok choy, these string-beans are amazing—until the whole thing felt like an après-softball potlatch. (“After the Gold Rush” was on the sound system.) Tiny imperfections in the food, you forgive. So what if the fennel is a little waterlogged? Just feel lucky you got a seat.

Burgers and dogs have pride of place on the menu, and the Fearless Frank, from the Niman Ranch, is really something: fit to burst and salty as a dog should be. The waitress recommends it with the chili (mild and almost too fresh—the beans are al dente). The fries are skinny and pale, just like at Mickey D.'s. Chicken tenders, a king-size appetizer, are beyond crunchy, with perfectly cooked middles, and served with chunky blue-cheese dressing or hot sauce. More sophisticated dishes, like trout, with a heavy smattering of finely minced rosemary between the filets, are simple and au naturel: the trout comes with a lemon wedge, a bed of mixed greens, and the head.

In the summer, Strauss gets produce from the greenmarket at Hudson and Twelfth Streets, but even in the in-between months he serves up “Market Sides”—vegetable dishes such as roasted beets and sweet walnuts, snow peas and carrots, and sautéed broccoli rabe. The L'il Devin (an oatmeal-and-cranberry sandwich cookie with a cream-cheese filling) and heavenly carrot cake are homemade by Ivy Tack, the only one on the premises who's been to cooking school. (Open daily for lunch and dinner and for brunch on weekends. Entrées \$7-\$14.)

—Dana Goodyear