

# six of the best



## NEW YORK BITES

### 1 Belgo-bistro at Resto

Most fashion restaurants are a flash in the pan. But once in a while, a new arrival acquires neighbourhood-classic status overnight. It simply opens for business and folks realise what they've been missing all along: staff that can wear black and still smile; a chef more concerned with culinary quality than column inches; and a calmly designer space committed to serving the community... late into the night. That's the story with Resto, the restaurant that seems to think it's a gastropub. Right now, it's teeming with the groomed townhouse dwellers of movie-set Murray Hill, below Midtown. It's Belgian, but that doesn't mean chips off the old block and mussel fatigue. It means a glinting world of superb beers and carnal pleasures: deep-fried veal-and-

gruyère meatballs; and double-cooked pork belly with endive vinaigrette. The look: a silvery industrial box of pipes and ducts wriggling overhead. Down one side is the bar, glowing with exotic beer pumps and bottles. To the left, a parade of woody tables and metal chairs, where diners await chef Ryan Skeen's great cooking: out come the likes of coarse-lamb sausage and made-for-sharing moulles, steamed in white ale with garlic and orange zest. There's even a world-class burger, cut with fatback and hanger steak for flavour. And if you want to try the place at its latest, greatest, there's a night menu, from 11pm to 1am – plenty of Resto for the wicked. ● Resto, 111 East 29th Street, Murray Hill (00 1 212 685 5585, www.restonyc.com). Starters from £4; mains from £6.

### 2 Pizza at Lombardi's

'America's first pizzeria' – that's the claim on the laminated menus and long mirror at this cheese-laden landmark in Little Italy. Even if it weren't true, Lombardi's – one of the best-loved, busiest Italians in Manhattan – is still a textbook example. Below walls of ruddy bare brick, the tables wear more gingham than Doris Day. Iced water comes in chill-beaded retro plastic jugs, and Frank Sinatra croons swooningly over waves of wee-small-hours violins. So the stage is set for Lombardi's renowned pizzas, consumed by famished fashion shoppers from surrounding SoHo, as well as weekend visitors from states where male ponytails are pulled through the backs of baseball caps. Take note before you let hunger carry you away: pizzas here are about the size of the

thing that came down at the end of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – and that's just the 'small' ones. Not enough? The eight-slice biggies, doused with tart tomato sauce, mozzarella, Pecorino Romano and fresh basil, will feed a large family, and arrive looming on silver cake-stands. Ask the staff sweetly if you can have one of the crimson banquettes in the long, narrow part beyond the kitchen. Now load your order with extra toppings (meatballs, beefsteak tomatoes, coal-oven roasted red peppers). Slowly, the red wine, along with the general low-lit cosiness, will enfold you; watch through the windows as evening falls on Spring Street. ● Lombardi's, 32 Spring Street Little Italy (00 1 212 941 7994, www.firstpizza.com). Pizza (feeds four) from £9.

### 3 24-hour comfort food at Veselka

Veselka means 'rainbow' in Ukrainian. Fittingly, plenty of pleasure awaits regulars at this '50s favourite in the East Village. Unless, that is, you're allergic to trailing spider plants, sweeping Socialist Realist wall scenes, neon-lit window swirls, and molten cheese or cream on practically everything that comes out of the kitchen. At any time of the day or night, the place is a strip-lit cauldron of comfort for the hungry and the hung-over who inhabit this Ukrainian corner of Lower Manhattan: beanpole NYU students, wizened guys in baseball caps, just-got-up girlfriends with wet perms, and the lone anoraked lady who hobbles in routinely on a crutch. Since 1954 – the year Veselka first beckoned in the Ukrainian community residing among the

oxblood tenements and skittering fire escapes – they've kept the borscht and pierogi coming. The first is thick with butter beans and beef chunks; the second is soul food – little dumplings full of ripe-tasting goat's cheese and demanding to be submerged in apple sauce and fried onion. If that doesn't fill you to groaning point (remember – you'll probably have swigged a couple of cold, sweet Obolon beers from a dimpled tankard, too), then take a look at the cakes. They're slabby, crumbly and decorated with icing-sugar carrots and flowers. The very fuel you need for that wintry afternoon walk back Uptown. ● Veselka, 144 Second Avenue, East Village (00 1 212 228 9682, www.veselka.com). Starters from £3; mains from £4. >