



Certain New Yorkers don't care about hot new restaurants — they just want to go to a place where everybody knows their name.

PULSE

**MORE
REGULARS:
SEE PAGE 40**

Diner Dandy
Wellington mixes business and pleasure at The Smith — he goes there five times a week to dig into mac and cheese, mussels and orecchiette.

Caitlin Thorne Hersey

Meet *the* REGULARS!

By **DANA SCHUSTER**

EVER envy the person being ushered ahead of a long line at a Lower East Side joint that doesn't take reservations? Or the woman exchanging a double kiss with the maitre d' at some snooty Madison Avenue bistro where the martinis cost as much as the entrees? (And no doubt she get hers comped!) Such service doesn't come without dedication. A bevy of New Yorkers — whether out of love of the food, the scene or pure convenience — have decided to eschew the latest

hot spots for one tried-and-true restaurant they eat at as many as five times a week. Even Russell Brand has seemingly decided to make La Esquina his main dining destination. The comedian has been as ubiquitous a fixture at the restaurant as fiancée Katy Perry's summer hit "California Gurls" is on the radio. There are some perks to being a restaurant fixture: prime seating, the occasional complimentary soufflé and not having to have to stress about picking a place to eat. Here, and on the next page, is a look at six diners, who make eating out a matter of habit.

THE REGULAR: Dandy Wellington HIS HAUNT: The Smith

55 Third Ave.; 212-420-9800

The 26-year-old producer, performer, stylist and self-proclaimed dandy, né John Wellington-Simon, lives in Harlem, yet that doesn't stop him from making the 45-minute, two-train trek to new East Village mainstay The Smith up to five times a week. "The thing about being a New Yorker, it's always important to have a place that you can call your own. But also a great place," he says. "I can do anything at The Smith. I can go there during the day and do work and eat really great food. I can bring friends for dinner or have business meetings there."

Wellington has become "addicted" to The Smith, which replaced the Pizzeria Uno located there about two years ago. (He's in good company, Chelsea Clinton is also frequently spotted there.) Now, aside from his own home cooking, The Smith's cuisine almost entirely comprises his diet. "I don't care about the newest or latest restaurants," he proclaims. Wellington's friends know they can find him at The Smith, where more often than not, he dines alone. His table is the first banquette on the right when you walk in. He's not concerned with perks. "If they're busy, they're busy. It's a business. I'm definitely not some VIP, but if they have some space, they'll take me into consideration. They'll say, 'OK, Dandy is here; let's figure out if any of his tables will be open soon.'"



I'll have the usual

From page 39



Randle Doff's go-to food at her go-to place, Bistro Chat Noir, is tuna Nicoise (inset).

THE REGULAR: Randle Doff HER HAUNT: Bistro Chat Noir

22 E. 66th St.; 212-794-2428

"I'm the kind of girl, I do not go to restaurants by myself. I do not go to movies by myself. I'm kind of shy," says Randle Doff, a 40-something sales manager for Donna Karan collections. "But at Bistro Chat Noir, I do go by myself occasionally, because I feel comfortable doing so." She's been going to the eatery two to three times each week for three years.

"I realized I was a regular when I was invited to the restaurant's anniversary party in 2007," says Doff. "I felt kind of VIP." Since then, Doff has been a fixture at the restaurant's New Year's Eve and Halloween parties, even throwing a number of her own fetes there, including pals' bridal showers and her mother's 75th-birthday bash. "There's an elegance to the restaurant, but at the same time, [owner] Suzanne Latapie's Southern; I'm Southern, and although there's a certain sophistication, there's a gracious hospitality there. It's very comforting," she says.

Doff heads to the UES place for drinks with girlfriends after work on Sundays, or reserves the corner banquette for dates. "It's a great date place," she says. "The men I've had dates with, they are crazy about the food. The chef is amazing." Doff, a bit more "weight-conscious" than her male suitors, opts for the tuna Nicoise or salmon with lentils.

Despite her close ties with the owner, who "spoils you rotten," Doff's Southern roots prevent her from taking advantage. "If it's packed — and I walk in and don't have a reservation — out of respect to her, I'll go home."



THE REGULAR: Charles Kipps HIS HAUNT: Elaine's

1703 Second Ave.; 212-534-8103

A regular since the 1980s, writer Charles Kipps says he owes a lot to the East Side saloon and its ubiquitous owner, Elaine Kaufman.

"Every single thing I'm doing and have done, I can trace back to Elaine," says Kipps, who met his literary agent there, thanks to some introductions by Kaufman.

As for regular eating habits at his usual spot, Kipps admits, "The only consistent thing would be a martini, straight up with a twist."

But going to Elaine's isn't just about the food and drink, he says. "It's like a very complex dinner party every night, and she pulls it off."

He even saw George Steinbrenner there, talking championship sports with Kaufman after beating the Red Sox for the 2003 pennant.

Just don't expect any special service, even if you are one of the most regular regulars.

"There's no such thing as discounts, no such thing as happy hours and no such thing as any type of coupon," says Kipps, noting he'll occasionally get a complimentary drink. "Elaine does what she wants to do in that regard."



Charles Kipps regularly drinks martinis at his reg joint.



THE REGULAR: Paul Guevara HIS HAUNT: Alpha Fusion

169 Eighth Ave.; 212-627-8888

Paul Guevara's first encounter with Alpha Fusion, an Asian restaurant, was a love affair of sorts. He began patronizing the original Alpha Fusion on West 34th Street about a year ago, when he was dating a girl who lived nearby. When they broke up, he moved on, too — to the Alpha in Chelsea. He's now in a committed restaurant relationship (albeit somewhat long distance — Guevara, 24, lives on the Upper East Side). "I try to go there during the week because on the weekends, it's a little packed," he says. "I don't like to go to places where there are too many people." Guevara, who does freelance p.r. marketing, goes to Alpha on average three times a week, to order such favorites as the Jimmy Sexy Roll (with spicy mayo on the side) and the green tea margarita ("They always bring me one without my asking"). He even has a standing 20 percent discount, and began receiving free appetizers after just a few visits. He has such pull with the owner that when Guevara told him they were playing the music too loudly, it was immediately (and permanently) lowered. And last, but not least, he is also the proud mayor of Alpha on foursquare, a phone app where users broadcast their whereabouts (frequent visitors to certain spots are awarded mayor-ships).

"It's close to the Meatpacking District, and I go out to some spots there, so I get to Alpha around 9:30 or 10," he says.



Paul Guevara's dining habit has gotten him a discount.



Zandy Mangold

THE REGULAR: Marcus Page HIS HAUNT: Serendipity 3

225 E. 60th St.; 212-838-3531

Marcus Page, 48, always starts off his lunch with a frozen hot chocolate — he's been imbibing a pre-meal frozen hot chocolate since the age of 10, when he first started going to Serendipity. "My mom was a regular; my siblings were. I remember going with my mom dressed very monochromatic, with the satin belt and the shirt popping out, and all the food going by and all the overindulgence," Page says. "It's a rite of passage in New York." Nowadays, Page is a TriBeCa interior



decorator. But he keeps his childhood close to heart (and stomach) by holding business lunches at the famed dessert mecca about three times a week.

"It's like going home," he says. "I don't have my immediate family any longer, so this is as close to it as one can get." A home with plenty of celeb sightings including Miley Cyrus, Bill Clinton — and Lady Gaga.

But Page is less concerned with hobnobbing and line-skipping ("I usually get pushed to the front of the queue," he says) than he is with eating Serendipity's sinfully delicious treats. His favorite dish is the Young Chicken Sandwich, "unless I'm dieting," he says. Does that nix the frozen treat? No, says Page. "We always have a frozen hot chocolate as a starter."

THE REGULAR: Jesse Kearney HIS HAUNT: Joe Allen

326 W. 46th St.; 212-581-6464

When the waiters decide to name a month after you, it's safe to say you're family. Such was the case for Jesse Kearney, 34, when the Joe Allen waitstaff honored the legal secretary and musical theater writer a few years ago with an unofficial "Jesse Month." "It was partly because it was my birthday that month," says Kearney. "But they just started giving me different treats during the whole month... it was cool."

Kearney got hooked on Joe Allen in 1999, when he was introduced to the theater clubhouse during a "magical" night in grad school.

"It was just such a great spot. Sean Penn was there that night. It was good food; the atmosphere was warm and inviting to artists," says Kearney. Now the Park Slope resident hits the Theater District spot at least three times a week — for Monday night Mexican specials, steak and eggs at Sunday brunch and his burger fix. "I usually eat by myself. I know enough of the regulars that, any night I'm there, we all hang out. We all kind of know each other," he says. You can usually find Kearney perched by his favorite spot at the corner of the bar. If it's occupied, he'll sit elsewhere until it's free. "Then, I make a mad dash. If I don't, four or five other people will," he says. "It's a fun thing."



Jesse Kearney had a very special birthday at his fave restaurant.



N.Y. Post: Tamara Beckwith