

MICHELLE YOUNG, LAURA ITZKOWITZ & HANNAH FRISHBERG

SECRET NEW YORK



HIDDEN BARS AND RESTAURANTS



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

WEATHER UP

Classic cocktails and subway tiles

589 Vanderbilt Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238

212-766-3202

weatherupnyc.com

Daily 5:30pm–4am

2, 3 and 4 trains/Bergen St

Moderate



If not for the gleaming white subway tiles covering the façade, you might never even wonder what's behind the door of this little place on busy Vanderbilt Avenue. Venture inside, past the velvet curtain, and you'll find yourself in a glowing little jewel box of a bar. Amazingly, the white subway tiles continue on the inside, completely covering the ceiling, just like in the Paris métro. Yet unlike a grimy subway station, the place is outfitted in dark wood, brown leather, a copper bar, and marble tables. A wall-hanging made from an old piano adorns the front corner. Custom light fixtures made from thin slabs of stone hang above the bar, and little votive candles give the room a warm glow.

A Brit by birth, Kathryn Weatherup has worked in the service industry since she was 14 years old. After studying architecture, she ended up a bartender in Paris before coming to New York, so the echoes of Parisian design may not be a coincidence. It was there that she met designer Matthew Maddy, who's responsible for the look of the bar, which he transformed from a rundown gospel church into another kind of house of worship. Though Weatherup had been working in bars and restaurants for years, it wasn't until she tasted a true Martini at Milk & Honey that she was finally bitten by the cocktail bug. Inspired by Sasha Petraske's return to the old-school way of making classic cocktails, she opened this little place near Prospect Park.

Petraske trained the staff, and it shows. Behind the bar, oranges, lemons, and limes sit in wire baskets, waiting to be pressed and blended with spirits and amaros. The short but sweet cocktail menu contains ten drinks – takes on the classics – but Weather Up's bartenders have the full repertoire of classic cocktails in their heads. Order a Vieux Carré (rye, cognac, vermouth, Bénédictine, bitters, and lemon) and you won't be disappointed. Try the Sir & Madam (gin, grapefruit juice, lemon juice, simple syrup, Peychaud's bitters, and sea salt) and you might just discover your new favorite drink. Should you be in the mood for something stronger, there's an absinthe fountain on the bar. You wouldn't be the first in this place to order yours on a drip. The bartenders, like Ben Curtis, are incredibly knowledgeable and friendly.

When the place opened in 2008, there were only a couple of other bars between here and Prospect Park. The formerly rough neighborhood has been changing steadily, and with the influx of more young professionals, Weather Up has gained a devoted group of regulars.

PULQUERIA

Mexican pulque bar in a Chinatown basement

11 Doyers Street, New York, NY 10013

12-227-3099

pulquerianyc.com

Monday to Saturday 6pm–2am

J, N, Q, Z and 6 trains/Canal St

Moderate to expensive



On Doyers Street (the narrow curving lane off the Bowery where the original gangs of New York held court), most restaurant signs are a mix of Chinese and English. Look for the doorway with the cerulean and white zig-zag pattern, next to Nom Wah Tea Parlor, one of Chinatown's oldest dim sum spots, continually operating since 1920.

Descend the stairs and you'll find a bar on the left and the dining room on the right. Stepping into the warm, dimly lit restaurant with its cerulean and white tiles, copper table tops, and grass mats, you would never know that there was once a Vietnamese restaurant that illegally joined the two spaces. 'Everything was held together by chewing gum and chicken wire,' owner Christopher Tierney told us. He and his sister Heather bought the place and completed a gut renovation that took nearly two years. They opened Pulqueria in 2011, three years after debuting Apotheke, their turn of the century apothecary-themed cocktail bar two doors down.

Pulqueria and Apotheke share the same clientele, but that's where their similarities end. When Chris and Heather decided to open Pulqueria, they traveled to Mexico City to find inspiration, and brought back some unique finds. Look around and you'll see lots of geometric shapes, colored tiles, and brass fixtures. Grass mats from Mexico cover the ceiling, teal feathers adorn the canopy over the bar, and cinder blocks form room dividers. Tierney brought back pottery from Mexico, painted Aztec-inspired designs onto the tables in the dining room, and fixed up a vintage bar sign found at a street market in Mexico City.

But the most important thing the brother-and-sister team brought back from Mexico was the inspiration for the menu. The restaurant takes its name from *pulque*, a spirit made from fermented agave nectar. 'Older than tequila, stronger than beer,' Tierney explained. The Aztecs drank *pulque*, and today pulquerias all over Mexico serve it, but it's extremely rare in New York City. Taken straight up, it tastes a bit sour. For something a bit more palatable, try the *curados* – *pulque* mixed with tequila or mezcal and fresh fruit like mango, tamarind, or coconut. They pair well with the tapas-style menu of light bites, like the ceviches and tuna tostada, served with avocado, chipotle mayo, and crispy onion. 'Don't fill up on the guacamole,' Tierney warns.

SUNKEN HARBOR CLUB

Something entirely different

372 Fulton Street (2nd floor), Brooklyn, 11201

gageandtollner.com/sunken-harbor-club

info@sunkenharbor.club

Daily 5pm–till late



© Alix Pronun

From 1879 to 2004, the eatery Gage & Tollner offered Brooklynites a white tablecloth experience and earned the unofficial honor of being the borough’s arguably most famous restaurant. Then, one solemn Valentine’s Day, after 125 years in business, the eatery served its last meal and descended into a 12-year period of assorted incarnations: up through 2016, a fast-casual restaurant, bargain retailers, Arby’s and TGI Fridays all varyingly called the Fulton Street address home.

Skip to 2021 and, after years of renovations and an additional pandemic delay, the fabled institution reopened under the former name, now an oyster and chop house with a separate bar above.

The downstairs revival successfully brought back the space’s old 19th-century glamor with the restoration of its Gilded Age dining room – only the third NYC interior to achieve landmark protection after the New York Public Library and Grant’s Tomb – and electrified gas-light-era chandeliers.

Meanwhile, upstairs, a tasteful but tiki-themed institution named Sunken Harbor Club has done something entirely different. Here, in place of arched mirrors and golden wallpaper, there are plush red booths, a backlit window of an underwater scene behind the bar, wave sounds gliding gently behind the music and seven dining tables hand-painted with different vignettes from an 18th-century Dutch work about rare sea creatures. Tropical fish from Louis Renard’s 1754 *Histoire Naturelle des Plus Rares Curiosités de la Mer des Indes* are found on the bar’s postcards, its coasters, its menu and in ‘every corner of the Club,’ according to a post by the pub.

The bar offers its own brief menu independent of Gage & Tollner. It runs the gamut from ramen and dumplings to ribs and salt-cod fritters. Also different from the downstairs eatery, which books out months in advance, Sunken Harbor does not accept reservations and both bar seats and tables are available on a first-come, first-served basis. (Gift certificates work at both venues.)

Although the cocktail menu is most easily labeled as tiki, it is also inspired by the travel writing of 20th-century culinary writer Charles H. Baker, Jr. and ‘cutting-edge mixological’ techniques. These ‘molecular’ methods include the high-pressure flash-infusion of spirits, acid adjustments and forced carbonation.

Before putting down anchor with Gage & Tollner upon the restaurant’s reopening, Sunken Harbor Club spent eight years as a successful, nautical pop-up concept at the Red Hook bar, Fort Defiance. Both bars are owned by one St. John Frizell.

To reach the Harbor, guests must enter through the restaurant downstairs.

CHEZ ZOU

A concealed cocktail cantina just as posh as its name

Suite 85, 385 9th Avenue, Manhattan, 10001

(212) 380-8585

chezzou.com

Sunday 2pm–midnight; Monday 5pm–midnight; Tuesday to Friday 5pm–1am;

Saturday 2pm–1am



© Alix Pronun

Situated in the developer-built neighborhood of Manhattan West (the neighboring corporate mixed-use project to the better-known Hudson Yards), those in the know access this watering hole through the downstairs restaurant which bears half its name twice.

To get to Chez Zou, patrons first enter Zou Zou's, then locate the host stand, enter the elevator behind it, and ride up to the fourth floor. Once there, an impeccably designed space awaits with uniquely patterned black-and-white flooring, curving benches and tastefully mirrored ceiling lights. Large leafy plants abound. A patio offers shaded turquoise and pink seats beneath striped umbrellas, more fronds, and the shadow of many glassy behemoths towering overhead.

Former The NoMad head bartender Joey Smith is shared as beverage director at both Chez Zou and Zou Zou's. Smith, who spent years learning modernist techniques from the 'godfather of modernist cocktails, Dave Arnold' at the bar Booker and Dax, has applied that knowledge to Chez Zou's menu, where drinks incorporate traditional flavors of the Levant region as well as 'staples of the New York cocktail haunt,' says Smith.

'A cocktail at Chez Zou should simultaneously transport you worlds away while still making you feel right at home,' poeticizes Smith, offering a cinematically dramatic description more akin to the synopsis for a romantic thriller than a new above-restaurant bar. 'When last call is done, and you enter the bright streets of a Manhattan night, your experience in Chez Zou should linger like a good dream. The difference is you can relive this dream any evening you're on the West Side.'

In presentation, this looks like drinks combining 'bourbon and banana, mezcal and clove, white rum and dill, and more.' There's also a Mediterranean-inspired menu of appetizers and shareable offerings, although far less extensive than the one on the next floor down.

Below, at the high-ceilinged, 75-seat Zou Zou's, the open kitchen is centered around a wood-fired hearth and produces a robust menu of modern Eastern Mediterranean food, with cuisine inspiration credit due to Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Jordan 'among others.' There's more bread options than some bars have beer – grilled *bazlama* (a Turkish village bread), fresh-baked *talami* (a Lebanese focaccia) and honey-butter *kubaneh* (a Yemeni pull-apart roll), to name a few.

As for the architecture at this bright and colorful, socialite-friendly hot spot, there are arches galore, blue and green tiles cover the floor and domes abound.

DEAR IRVING ON HUDSON

A respected bar in an unexpected, high-up location

310 W 40th Street (40th & 41st floor), Manhattan, 10018

(917) 261-6908

dearirving.com

Monday to Thursday 5pm–midnight; Friday 5pm–2am; Saturday 4pm–2am;

Sunday 4pm–midnight



© Alix Pronun

This open-air hotel bar and lounge claims to be the highest in Manhattan. Way above Midtown, on the 40th and 41st floors of W 40th Street's Aliz Hotel Times Square, this rooftop venue promises to elevate guests' evenings in more ways than one. Not only does Dear Irving on Hudson offer panoramic views from its sky-high setting, but it also has a sommelier-selected wine menu and small plates – an airy reprieve from the rat race below.

The extensive cocktail list is thematically organized into classics, earthier mixes, spicy options, alcohol-free refreshers and local inspirations, including a gin and tonic featuring New York Distilling Company's Dorothy Parker gin, a highball with Writers' Tears Irish whiskey and the 'Pullin' Me Back In' with ragtime rye, honey, amaro sfumato and both angostura and mole bitters (all \$19 each). Seasonal additions are also rotated in and out.

Nosh choices include filet mignon bites, petite abeille sliders with wagyu beef, and wild mushroom croquettes served with truffle garlic aioli.

Like Dear Irving Gramercy, its older, same-name sister bar, the dual-level space has been decorated in accordance with a loose time-travel theme. The lower floor has been given Art Deco accents and the upper is intended to look like the set of a 1960s James Bond film, concealed areas included.

The space features four balconies, but most of the square footage is indoors. The team behind Dear Irving on Hudson has thus angled away from calling it a rooftop bar as really, they feel, it's more of a penthouse. 'We're definitely trying to stay away from rooftop and that connotation, because most of the real estate is inside,' bar director and owner Meaghan Dorman (who curates the menus at both Dear Irving locations) told Eater shortly ahead of the Midtown location's opening in January 2019. 'We've been calling it 'Dear Irving with a view' amongst ourselves.'

The first Dear Irving, aptly located on Irving Place, opened in 2014, and has earned itself a reputation as one of the city's most revered cocktail bars in the years since. At the original Gramercy spot, the space is divided into four rooms, each themed for a different historic figure: there's a Marie Antoinette room, an Abraham Lincoln room, a JFK room and an F. Scott Fitzgerald room. The uniting concept is Woody Allen's 2011 film, *Midnight in Paris*.

Although it doesn't offer the same sweeping views as its sister establishment, it does boast hand-carved ice and buzzer-equipped tables to ensure the most high-quality service.

CAMPBELL APARTMENT

*One of the most magnificent rooms in the entire city,
within Grand Central*

15 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

212-953-0409

hospitalityholdings.com

Monday to Thursday 12pm–1am; Friday and Saturday 12pm–2am;

Sunday 12pm–midnight

4, 5, 6 and 7 trains/Grand Central

Moderate to expensive



Of all the hidden bars in New York City, the Campbell Apartment is the grandest and most elegant. Yet of the 750,000 people who pass through Grand Central Terminal every day, only a fraction knows it exists. The next time you want to impress someone, lead them to the gilded elevator in the south-west wing of the terminal, below Commodore Vanderbilt's enormous gold light fixtures lined with Edison bulbs, and take them downstairs to the basement. There, up a small set of stairs, you'll find one of the most magnificent rooms in the entire city.

To fully appreciate the Campbell Apartment, you need to know its history. In 1864, industrialization was beginning to dramatically alter the landscape and politics of New York. Cornelius 'Commodore' Vanderbilt had risen from humble beginnings to become a shipping magnate and one of the wealthiest men in the country. After making a fortune in steamships, he bought out the railroad and set about rebuilding Grand Central to reflect his wealth and glory. He let his friend, the tycoon John W. Campbell, set up a private office inside the station starting in 1923. At once, Campbell furnished the place with Oriental rugs, 13th-century Italian furniture, priceless porcelain vases, a huge leadedglass window, and an enormous stone fireplace. Campbell lived in the suburbs, but took great pride in his gorgeous office, and often entertained guests there in the evenings. He used the space until the 1940s.

After Campbell moved out, the room was used as a holding cell for the police, CBS's executive offices, and was left empty and abandoned for a while before it finally reopened to the public as a cocktail bar in 1999. A renovation in 2007 restored the Campbell Apartment to its former glory, making it the epitome of Gilded Age splendor in New York City. You can even see Campbell's original safe, with his name engraved on it, under the fireplace. The cocktail list harkens back to the Jazz Age, with fresh takes on classic drinks, the most celebrated being the Prohibition Punch – a fishbowl-sized serving of passion-fruit juices, Appleton Rum Estate VX, and Gran Gala topped with Moët & Chandon champagne. One is all you'll need to feel like a robber baron on par with the Commodore.

POSTCRYPT COFFEEHOUSE

One of Columbia University's best-kept secrets

1160 Amsterdam Avenue, Manhattan, 10027

postcrypt.org

postcryptcoffeehouse@gmail.com

Friday & Saturday nights during the academic year



© Alix Pronun

In the middle '60s, a reverend decided to clean up a 200-year-old church basement storage room, buy a few tables, build a stage, name it after philosopher Soren Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and start what has become one of Columbia University's best-kept secrets.

For nearly six decades now, Postcrypt Coffeehouse has continued to operate out of its little 30-person hollow beneath the university campus' St. Paul's Chapel on Amsterdam Avenue. Over the years, a host of globally renowned acts, including Jeff Buckley and Suzanne Vega, have graced the homemade stage installed by Rev. John Cannon – who was, at the time, a campus chaplain – and his helper, one Dotty Sutherland. Since its birth in 1964, the stonewalled subterranean saloon has been packed with countless students and innumerable numbers of people have walked by overhead, never knowing there was a live show being performed beneath their feet.

When returning to the underground den of acoustic appreciation (there are no microphones at Postcrypt), alumni often comment on how unchanged it all seems. While time marches on elsewhere, the stage has stayed exactly the same – indeed, it is to this day the original one. A mosaic bar constructed by Sutherland is still used to serve tea and coffee, which patrons drink at the original chairs and tables. An over-door box of unknown origin with the handwritten word 'Postcrypt' has also stood the test of time, as have the many regulars who return time and again to the space.

Every Friday and Saturday night during the academic year, students and strangers alike are invited to venture down free of charge and experience some music, some warm (albeit nonalcoholic) beverages, snacks and company in the timeless chamber. Entry is granted on a first-come, first-served basis and it remains free and entirely student-run.

'The Postcrypt offers no refuge from intimacy. It is at once intimidating and exhilarating for a performer to know they will have no choice but to look into the eyes of the audience that has come to see them give something of themselves,' reads a 1991 clipping from *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* which was included in a zine to celebrate the venue's 50th anniversary. Another snippet from the zine recalls the impressive amount of open flames and melted candle-filled wine bottles at Postcrypt in 2000, as well as the popularity of a bar snack served at the time called GORP, or 'Good Old Raisins and Peanuts.'

Since Postcrypt's inception, another student-run Columbia venue – this one an exhibition space – has also adopted the name: Postcrypt Art Gallery currently operates out of the university's Dodge Hall.

OVERSTORY

Breathtaking views from the former third-tallest building in the world

64th floor of 70 Pine Street, Manhattan, 10005

(212) 339-3963

overstory-nyc.com

Tuesday to Saturday 5:45pm–midnight



© Alix Pronun

Everything tastes better from above, and little pairs better with sky-high cocktail prices than a view to match. When the Financial District's landmarked 70 Pine Street was completed in 1932 it was, at 952 feet and 67 stories, the third-tallest building in the world, and its highest floors were reserved for use by executives. Today, the 64th floor of the skyscraper is home to Overstory, where reservations are available but walk-ins are welcome.

The less than 600-square-foot interior features an underlit brass-and-marble bar surrounded by plush stools which appear rather cloud-like at dusk. But the most elegant furnishings in the world couldn't possibly compare to the view from the wraparound terrace. Out here on the Art Deco railing-enclosed deck, hundreds of feet above Manhattan, New York is spread to the horizon from 360 degrees. The views are so breathtaking that the bar is arguably more of an observation deck with drinks service.

To access Overstory, guests take an elevator up from its red marble lobby to its much more expensive and exclusive sister restaurant, Saga, before being escorted up a travertine stairwell to the bar's indoor area one flight up.

While a meal just a story below costs a base level of \$295, cocktails at Overstory are comparatively not bad at \$24 a pop. The most affordable drink option, a 12 oz. can of cider, costs \$11. Limited food offerings include oysters, royal sturgeon caviar and BBQ lamb buns.

Meanwhile, at Saga, the opulence is endless as, seemingly, is the amount of money that can be spent in a single sitting. The restaurant occupies four full stories of the building and boasts three terraces and a 56-seat dining room. This square footage was originally designed to be a private apartment for the founder of Cities Service Company, today known as Citgo (the oil and gasoline giant).

'Saga' is an acronym for venue creators James Kent and Jeff Katz's children's names. The layout is intended to give the impression of being not at a restaurant but a very rich friend's house: diners are invited to explore the sprawling indoor and outdoor space, and certain courses in the seasonal tasting menu are served plated while others are intended for communal consumption. The exorbitant price tag is attached not just to a meal but to an experience.

The residential building is additionally host to a ground-floor restaurant by Kent and Katz (who are also behind Overstory). Being at the building's base, Crown Shy can't boast the views of its sister venues above, but it does have 16-foot-ceiling windows, an open kitchen and a Michelin star.



THE STORAGE ROOM OF THE UES.

A unique ice-cream speakeasy

1707 2nd Avenue, Manhattan, 10128

(646) 559-5889

theuesnyc.com

Tuesday to Friday 5pm–1am; Saturday 4pm–1am; Sunday 5pm–1am



© Alix Pronun

This brightly painted dessert vendor isn't exactly incognito: UES. sticks out like a sore thumb on the Upper East Side (for which it is named) amid the toned-down, buttoned-up stores with which it shares its strip of Second Avenue. Outside, pink umbrellas and flower-garlanded stanchions surround heart-covered benches and purple chairs. Inside is no less lively, and those craving a scoop really can indulge – but there's a sweet secret to this storefront ice-cream parlor for those who can find it. Indeed, a whole other dimly lit world exists behind that extremely Instagram-worthy, pint container-covered wall.

To access the Storage Room, customers are tasked with finding the door. While the white bricked front is decked out in waffle-cone wallpaper and cotton-candy pink accents, a single step past the hinged pint display is a shrine-like bar for adults, with no children – or baseball caps, beanies, hoodies, athletic wear or 'super casual wear' – allowed.

'At the time that I opened, we were the only ice-cream shop speakeasy in the world,' claims Cortney Bond, who started UES. in 2017 after deciding that the notoriously stuffy neighborhood could use a little color. 'I had a lot of interest in putting my concept downtown but wanted something for my hood,' Bond – an Upper East Side resident herself – explains. 'All of the cocktails are named after something that has to do with the Upper East Side and we have many ice-cream-themed cocktails for the guests to enjoy.'

The vibe is decidedly modern, with intimate plush booths and stools for seating beneath a contemporary take on chandeliers and golden frames, many containing paintings, many without. The bar itself is far more than functional: the warmly backlit, columned centerpiece features three arched sets of shelves bursting with various booze bottles.

'I wanted guests to feel what it would feel like to be in a bar during Prohibition, so everything is dim, antique and sexy,' says Bond.

In its five years slinging scoops and drinks in Manhattan's bougiest nabe, UES. has become a go-to oasis of upscale fun. 'UES. was made by an Upper East Sider for Upper East Siders,' says Bond, proudly adding that she firmly believes no other ice-cream speakeasy across the globe has executed the concept 'quite like ours.'

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& HANNAH FRISHBERG



SECRET NEW YORK

HIDDEN BARS AND RESTAURANTS

A club in the back of a lingerie store, a Hare Krishna temple with a lunch canteen, a Mexican pulque bar in a Chinatown basement, a Central Asian eatery above the world's largest diamond district, hole-in-the-wall countertops inside freight entrances, a Swiss ski chalet accessed through a kitchen, an open-to-the-public dining room in the United Nations, a celebrity-loved party spot inside a pawn shop, a dance destination behind a barber... Over 100 pages of amazing decor, eccentric locations, bizarre food, newcomers, longtime holdouts and more that will please and astonish underground and post-industrial design buffs, refined gourmards, cocktail drinkers and anyone curious to discover more of the infinite ways to have fun in New York City.

An absolute must-have guide to enjoy the amazing, hidden bar and restaurant scene in the boroughs.

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