

PHOTOS BY ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/GLOBE STAFF

## UPTOWN

Cookies to cocktails, row houses to restaurants, Harlem makes a visitor feel and taste its forward movement

BY JESSICA ALLEN | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**T**he cookie taxed the imagination. Would it be cooked through? And how many calories are in a fist-sized hunk of dark chocolate speckled with peanut butter chips anyway? Yes, to the first question. A slight crisp on the outside yields an ever-so-gooey center. As for the second, no matter. Hefting the dense ounces to our lips practically counts as exercise. We're munching and moaning on a bench outside of Levain Bakery, the new uptown outpost of a longtime Upper West Side favorite. My husband, Garrett, and I have been to Harlem many times, sampling its art (exhibitions at the Studio Museum) and food (slabs of red velvet at Make My Cake). Recently, though, we spent two full days exploring and, of course, eating.

Perhaps no other area in New York so eagerly honors its history as Harlem. Streets have been renamed for Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. North of the bakery, a 10-foot-tall, 2-ton statue of Harriet Tubman leans forward, like the prow of a ship about to sail into the green ocean of Central Park.

Despite the interest in what came before, these days Harlem seems utterly future-oriented. Over the past few years, several restaurants, bars, and even a hotel, the first in four decades, have opened on or near Frederick

HARLEM, Page M2

Clockwise from left: On a Sunday in May, Roz Beauty sings gospel at the Red Rooster on Lenox Avenue; pedestrians on Malcolm X Boulevard near 125th Street; fried chicken and waffles at Amy Ruth's, where patrons waited on 116th Street; and a nearby storefront mural.



JOHN A. MOLLICK

The dog is one of 36 sculptures carved from trees killed by Hurricane Ike.

### TEXAS

## After Ike, a deluge of reinvention

By Susie Woodhams  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**GALVESTON** — While the East End Historic District of this island claims one of the country's largest concentrations of well-preserved Victorian-style architecture, Donna Leibbert knows her home is far from the grandest.

Compared with the stone turrets of the Bishop's Palace and arcaded verandas surrounding Moody Mansion, the features of her 1894 house are demure. A lilac wood porch leads to the original oak door, adorned with an ornate bouquet cut in beveled glass.

Impeccably maintained, the house still reflects the late-19th-century period when Galveston, 50 miles southeast of Houston, was a booming port city and cotton trade gave the island the nation's second-richest per capita income.

Yet when three cars and a school bus full of senior citizens took turns idling at her curb on a spring morning, passengers armed with cameras were not focusing on the house.

Their target? The remains of Leibbert's 100-year-old live oak, whose sprawling branches once reached as high as neighborhood electric wires. Last year, she had it carved into a life-size geisha, while an upper portion of the tree was sculpted into two diverging angels and placed closer to the house.

"That's a constant, the buses, tour groups," Leibbert, 63, said. "And it's all good."

Interest in her sculptures, and 34 others scattered mostly throughout the neighborhood, typify a kind of rejuvenation for this island nearly three years since

GALVESTON, Page M3

### INSIDE

Islands in New York or the Caribbean, they make for hot destinations. M4



### EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND CAPE COD

Everyone can hail this 50th anniversary of the National Seashore. M5

Summer night highlights glimmer all over, dinner to drama to music. M5

JANET KNOTT/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2006

# In a global mix, with all eyes on the future

► HARLEM  
Continued from Page M1

Douglas Boulevard. Attuned to marketing opportunities, some real estate agents champion "So-Ha," or South Harlem, as the latest "it" location. We wanted to see how the new was getting on with the old.

The previous night, we had sampled the locally brewed Sugar Hill Golden Ale at one of Bier International's communal tables, then stopped into a speakeasy called 67 Orange Street. Opened in late 2008, it is named for the address of a black-owned, 19th-century bar.

Dressed in suspenders and soft, saggy denim, our bartender would have fit right into the original, sartorially speaking. Biceps undulating, he shook up a Corpse Reviver #2, which we ordered for the moniker, a mix of gin, lemon juice, tequila, Lillet Blanc, and absinthe. The Upper Manhattan, which we ordered as a nod to geography and because we wanted the brandy-soaked cherry, had rye, bitters, and vermouth. Each was eye-poppingly strong.

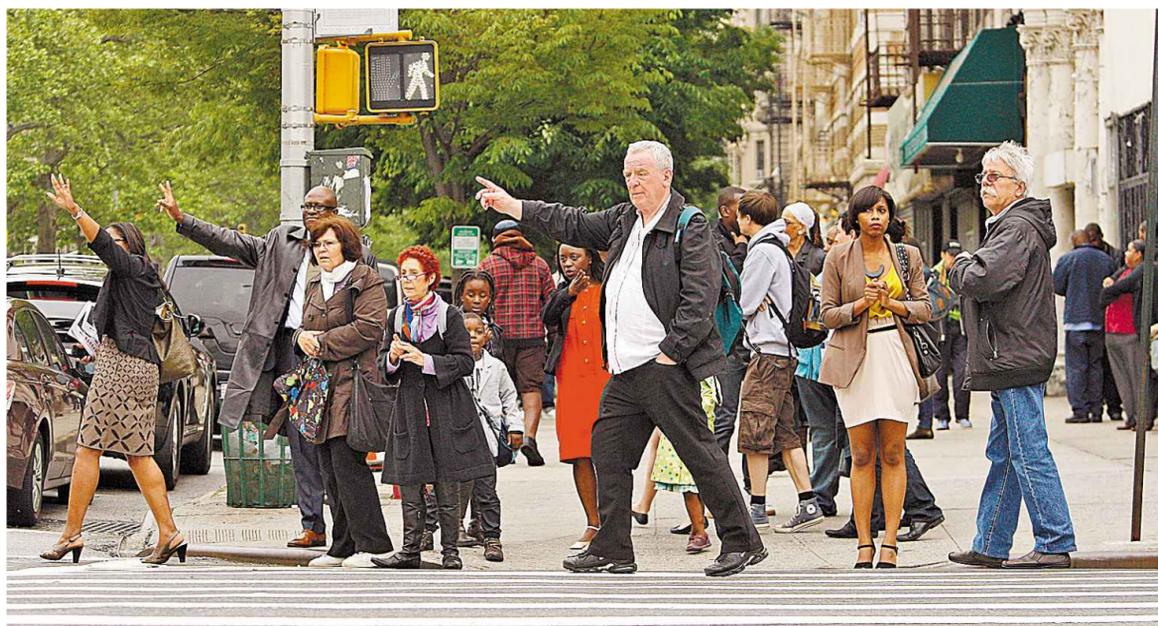
Our choices disappointed the woman next to us. "You should have had a Cleopatra's Lust," she said, laughing. As her husband, an off-Broadway playwright, looked over the bartender's headshot and asked about his experience on "Law & Order," she got to talking.

"I'm from Brooklyn," she said. "But walking around this neighborhood is like walking around the world."

On a map, Harlem cuts a wide swath: from 96th Street on the east side and Central Park North on the west, curving around Columbia University's campus, and extending north to 155th Street. Certainly its reputation goes far beyond those boundaries. And it attracts people from everywhere.

Along 125th Street, predominantly African vendors sell shea butter, incense, and T-shirts that read "I [heart] Harlem." Boomboxes blast reggae and soul, as if iPods never happened. Latin American women shave flavored ice into Dixie cups or carve fresh mangoes to look like pinecones. European tourists pose in front of the famed Apollo Theater.

This main thoroughfare has outposts of Applebee's and The Body Shop, in addition to the offices into which former President Bill Clinton moved in 2001 (earlier this year he announced that he is decamping for the Financial District). In the 1990s and early 2000s, such arrivals helped signify an end to the



Hailing taxis on Lenox Avenue; hearing organist Seleno Clarke and his Harlem Groove Band mates at American Legion Post 398.



**WHAT'S HAPPENING**  
See Harlem's neighborhoods blend old and new in a video tour at [www.boston.com/travel](http://www.boston.com/travel).

blight of previous decades and the beginning of gentrification, which continues fueled by rising real estate prices and changing demographics.

Nowhere is that better exemplified than at Red Rooster Harlem, a supremely popular restaurant serving global comfort food. So hot, in fact, that a \$30,800-a-plate fund-raiser for President Obama was held here in March, three months after the place opened.

During our early dinner, suited professionals sip gin and juice, dashed with bitters and marmalade, at the bar; families stop in for early appetizers, wedding strollers next to high-top tables; and diners young, old, and multi-racial nosh on the signature fried yard bird (chicken, in the slang of old Harlem), marinated in a blend of coconut and buttermilk, served with hot sauce and its own shaker of spices.

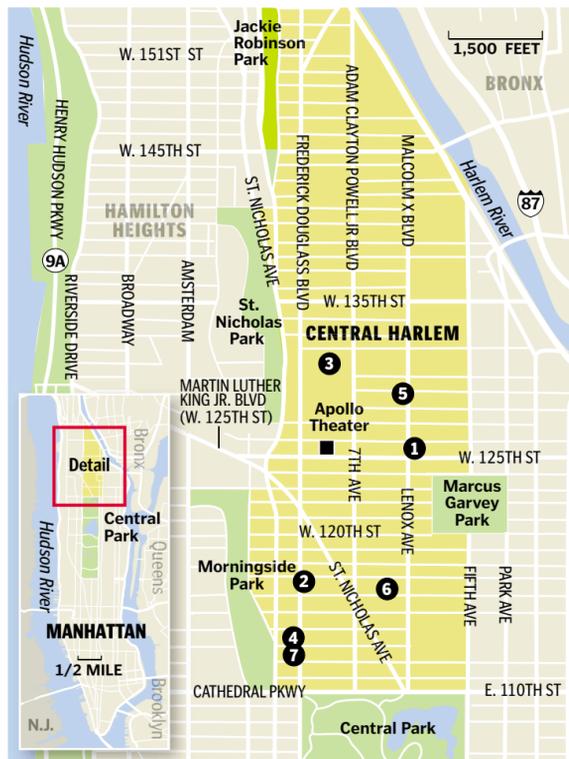
Marcus Samuelsson, the Ethiopia-born, Sweden-raised, "Top Chef Masters" season two-winning chef-owner, draws inspiration from his own history as well as that of the neighborhood where he now lives. Créole red

grits are a cheesy mess of shrimp, crab, chorizo, and grains, while crispy chunks of injera and sour cherries liven a typical bar snack of mixed nuts. Not surprisingly, to find an appropriate appellation for his endeavor, Samuelsson looked backward: The original Red Rooster was a chi-chi nightery nearby.

The next day, we breakfast at Amy Ruth's, a soul food institution, and climb to the top of Marcus Garvey Park. Looking out, Garrett and I try to imagine what the original inhabitants saw. In 1658, Dutch settlers christened the area Nieuw Haarlem. Gradually fields gave way to construction sites; the gleaming towers and cranes we spy demonstrate that trend's persistence.

Side streets feel more human. Several times we are told to "have a blessed day" as we wander around admiring the gorgeous row houses and brownstones, some of which belonged to the burgeoning black middle class of the 1920s and '30s, an era known as the Harlem Renaissance. So-called Strivers' Row, with its landmark brick buildings and wrought iron accents, still has signs admonishing visitors to "Walk Your Horses."

Following the crowds, we stop at Jacob's Restaurant for lunch. Although it opened in 2009, the



1. Red Rooster  
310 Lenox Ave (at 125th St)
2. Levain Bakery  
2167 Frederick Douglass Blvd (at 117th St)
3. American Legion Post 398  
248 West 132d St (between Frederick Douglass Blvd and 7th Ave)
4. 67 Orange Street  
2082 Frederick Douglass Blvd (at 113th St)
5. Jacob's Restaurant  
373 Lenox Ave (at 129th St)
6. Amy Ruth's  
113 West 116th St (between 7th Ave and Lenox Ave)
7. Bier International  
2099 Frederick Douglass Blvd (at 113th St)

unpretentious buffet feels as if it's been around forever. Kids elbow their way onto communal tables to make signs for an anti-violence rally while flat-screen

televisions play a loop of footage from a concert in South Africa.

We select a mélange of Caribbean, West African, and Southern flavors: tender ribs, potato salad, jerk chicken. Beneath framed drawings of Sojourner Truth and Nelson Mandela, we devour the cornbread, outlined in a caramelized crust. Only a super long line stops us from getting seconds.

Bellies full, we decide to feed our brains. At Hue-Man Bookstore & Cafe ("A SKU for Every Hue" goes its tagline), we page through Jonathan Gill's just published "Harlem: The Four Hundred Year History From Dutch Village to Capital of Black America." The past is always present, and the only constant is change. Hanging out here shows the truth of both claims.

Regardless of where we walk or what we eat, our weekend can only conclude with one activity: jazz. Harlem offers plenty of places to hear live music, from the historic Lenox Lounge to the hipper Shrine. We want something a little more intimate, a little less frequently mentioned in guidebooks, so we head to American Legion Post 398.

The basement space has no cover charge or drink minimum. No dress code, no carefully crafted libations. Other than signing the guestbook, there's no requirement to watch the show, but the audience tends to buy food or a drink. Garrett opts for fried chicken; I choose the fried whitefish, along with collard greens and red rice. All arrives on Styrofoam plates.

Sundays, Seleno Clarke plays his 350-pound Hammond B3 organ with some members of his

If you go . . .

**Where to stay**  
**Aloft Harlem**  
2296 Frederick Douglass Blvd.  
212-749-4000  
[www.spg.com](http://www.spg.com)

This minimalist Starwood property is Harlem's first new hotel in 40 years. Queens and kings from \$260 per night.

**Where to eat and drink**  
**Amy Ruth's**  
113 West 116th St.  
212-280-8779  
[www.amyruthsharlem.com](http://www.amyruthsharlem.com)  
Try the Reverend Al Sharpton at this beloved soul food restaurant: a waffle topped with smothered or fried chicken, made juicier by a big pour of maple syrup. Waffles \$7.25-\$15.25.

**Bier International**  
2099 Frederick Douglass Blvd.  
212-280-0944  
[www.bierinternational.com](http://www.bierinternational.com)  
A cash-only Biergarten, which opened in 2010. Pints and bottles \$6-\$14.

**Jacob's Restaurant**  
373 Lenox Ave.  
212-866-3663  
[www.jacobrestaurant.com](http://www.jacobrestaurant.com)  
One hot buffet, one cold buffet, no frills and delicious. \$4.99-\$5.99 per pound.

**Levain Bakery**  
2167 Fredrick Douglass Blvd.  
646-455-0952  
[www.levainbakery.com](http://www.levainbakery.com)  
Best known for its mammoth cookies, including chocolate chip walnut and dark chocolate peanut butter chip. Cookies \$4.

**Red Rooster**  
310 Lenox Ave.  
212-792-9001  
[redroosterharlem.com](http://redroosterharlem.com)  
Reservations are recommended for Harlem's most happening restaurant, serving global comfort food. \$14-\$33.

**67 Orange Street**  
2082 Frederick Douglass Blvd.  
212-662-2030  
[www.67orangestreet.com](http://www.67orangestreet.com)  
This speakeasy-style bar has a casual vibe and artisanal drinks. Cocktails \$13-\$16.

**What to do**  
**American Legion Post 398**  
248 West 132d St.  
212-283-9701  
[www.colchasyoungharlem.com](http://www.colchasyoungharlem.com)  
Seleno Clarke and his band play every Sunday evening starting around 7.

**Hue-Man Bookstore and Cafe**  
2319 Frederick Douglass Blvd.  
212-665-7400  
[www.hue-man-bookstore.com](http://www.hue-man-bookstore.com)  
One of the largest African-American bookstores in the United States.

**Marcus Garvey Park**  
East 120th to 124th streets, between Madison Avenue and Mount Morris Park West  
An outdoor pool, two playgrounds, plenty of benches, an amphitheater, and an 1857 cast-iron fire watchtower make this park worth a stop.

**Strivers' Row**  
West 138th and 139th streets, between Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Frederick Douglass boulevards  
Two streets full of 19th-century buildings, some designed by McKim, Mead & White.

Harlem Groove Band and anyone else who cares to jam, on a stage that's about 4 inches off the floor. Except for us, everyone knows one another.

Crewcut, in a blue Oxford, saxophonist Peter Valera takes a deep breath, shuts his eyes, and blows. The mild-mannered appearance slips away. At one point, he follows a waitress around, then serenades her from his knees as she tries to take orders. Later, a patron will lean across the cymbals to kiss drummer Sean Cameron goodbye. He'll keep playing.

Sliding an arm around my shoulders, our waitress asks whether we would like some rum cake. I shake my head. Next time.

"OK, y'all, what we doing . . . it's how you feel," Clarke booms, before beginning another song. We feel great.

Jessica Allen can be reached at [www.jessallenica.com](http://www.jessallenica.com).

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