

# FOOD



Blue Smoke

## Veggiecue

A rundown of vegetarian options in barbecue land

It goes without saying that no one goes to barbecue restaurants for the sides. So what's a vegetarian to do when friends suggest dinner at one of New York's many hyped barbecue restaurants? The very idea of such places can pose a problem for those who don't dig pig or cow or chicken. Then again, no menu will be without at least a few herbivorous options—some of them quite good. Here's how five of the city's most popular barbecue restaurants rank in terms of vegetarian solidarity.

### Dinosaur Bar-B-Que

646 131st St at 12th Ave

Founded in Syracuse almost 25 years ago, Dinosaur Bar-B-Que calls itself "a genuine honky tonk rib joint." The city outpost, located in Harlem under the heavily trafficked Riverside Drive Bridge, has its share of honking, though of a different kind. As for the food, the corn on the cob is super-fresh, and spicy walnuts give a ho-hum salad mix a sweet little kick. But not even a hearty sprinkle of Cajun powder can mask the pre-packaged-ness of the mac-and-cheese, and the slivers of skin left on the fries seem a little too perfect to skew as properly earthy. Worse yet, the fried green tomatoes look and taste as if the cook pulled the cheese out of a T.G.I. Friday's fried mozzarella stick and shoved in a slice of tomato instead.

**Go if you're invited by:** Only someone you're desperate to please.

### Hill Country

30 26th St b/w Broadway & 6th Ave

Everybody's welcome at the much-lauded Hill Country, a Texas theme park in the heart of Chelsea. Upon entering, you're given a meal ticket, which gets marked each time you order food from the counters. It's a self-service market, with an entire sides and breads area. Cold sides include slices of produce like plain avocado, so-called Texas caviar (black-eyed peas gussied up with chopped red and green peppers), deviled eggs, and confetti coleslaw. Hot sides range from corn pudding to a green-bean casserole that's pure cheesy warmth to cornbread with real bits of corn and a cinnamon-y crunch.

**Go if you're invited by:** Decent conversationalists who aren't afraid to mess with Texas.

### Fette Sau

354 Metropolitan Ave b/w Havemeyer & Roebling  
Dinner at the Williamsburg restaurant

Fette Sau purports to fill bellies and minds. The communal dining room features a glass case of the evening's meats on one side and, on the other, a huge mural covered with line drawings of different cuts of beef, pork, and lamb. Additional tables lurk outside for those who prefer to eat their extra-lemmony broccoli salad, chips, or sauerkraut away from the watchful gaze of ribeyes and flank steak. The peppery potato salad has a nice crispy give—surprisingly, the vinegary dressing doesn't turned the potatoes or onions into uninviting mush. And biting into the half-sour pickles douses the mouth with a splash of dare-we-say refreshing juice.

**Go if you're invited by:** Hip friends you'll be thrilled to be seen with.

### Blue Smoke

116 27th St b/w Park & Lexington

Über-restaurateur Danny Meyer broke the barbecue barrier in 2002 by finding a way to smoke meat that passed New York's tough air pollution laws when he opened Blue Smoke. Since then, the cavernous space in Murray Hill has remained packed. The menu offers lots to vegetarians, including several salads and gazpacho with guatamole and cilantro.

But the best bet is the Blue Smoke "Veg Out," a plateful of mashed potatoes, baby asparagus spears (too wee to even eat with a fork), haricots verts (tender green beans to us Americans), dark-orange sweet-potato fries, half a grilled onion, and a wedge of cornbread. Though entrée-sized, the portions are small, leaving plenty of room for the three-layer chocolate cake, so

dense it comes with its own glass of milk.

**Go if you're invited by:** A date who happens to be paying.

### RUB

208 23rd St b/w 7th & 8th Aves

Fried sides rule at RUB, a Chelsea restaurant whose full name is the wickedly earnest Righteous Urban Barbeque. "Today's greens" often contains meat, as does the stuffed baked potato. Opt for a self-selected special of hushpuppies, cutely misshapen balls of peppery cornbread covered in mottled batter, as well as onion strings and french fries, which come casually dusted with the house dry-rub powder. Non-fried options include two types of coleslaw, ubiquitous cornbread, potato salad, and the Pulled Portobello Vegetarian's Delight, a giant mushroom given the smoked-meat treatment, covered in barbecue sauce, and served on a bun. The real treat comes, once again, from the fryer: fried green tomatoes that amount to a perfect circular amalgam of crunch and squish. Die-hards should also save room for deep-fried Oreos for dessert.

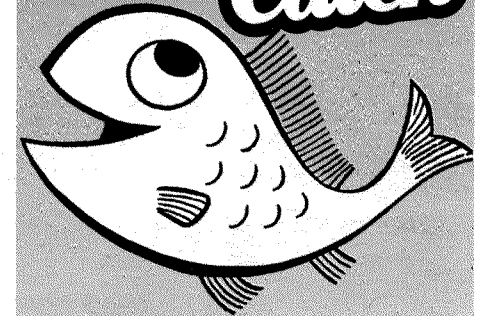
**Go if you're invited by:** Anyone. Period.

—Jessica Allen

RUB



# WALLY'S Pacific Catch



## Fresh Pacific Seafood and Raw Bar

101 east 2nd st  
NYC  
212-673-8908

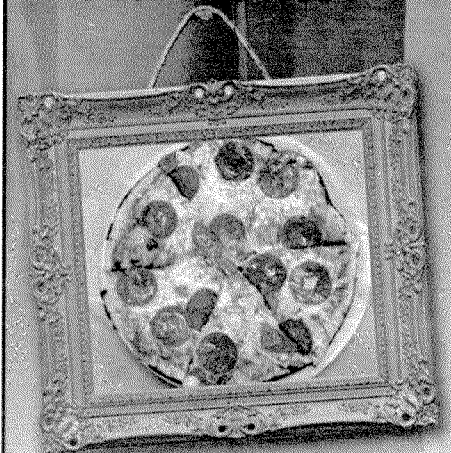


# John's


of  
Bleecker Street

"A West Village Institution Since 1929"  
"The Original Brick Oven"  
No Slices

www.johnsofbleeckerstreet.com  
278 Bleecker St.  
between 6th & 7th avenues  
212-243-1680



Now Featuring  
**John's Gallery**  
Showcasing NYC's Hottest Artists!



**THE ESSENTIAL LATE-NIGHT MEXICAN SPOT!**

**OPEN TILL 5AM**  
THURS - SAT


NEW WILLIAMSBURG LOCATION NOW OPEN!  
[WWW.SANLOCO.COM](http://WWW.SANLOCO.COM)

**SAN LOCO**  
MEXICO

160 N 4TH ST. BET. BEDFORD & DRIGGS 718-218-8479 • 111 STANTON ST. (BET. ESSEX & LUDLOW) 212-253-7580  
151 AVENUE A (BET. 9TH & 10TH STS.) 212-982-5653 • 124 2ND AVE. (BET. 7TH ST. & ST. MARKS) 212-260-7948

## GUSSO'S

**Open since 1920**



**PICKLES**

**Kosher Barrel Cured Naturally Fermented**

85-87 Orchard St (Corner of Broome) **212-334-3616**