

To Find New York's Best New Restaurants, Raise Your Gaze

Taking a page from the Tokyo playbook, upstairs is the new ground floor.

[Kate Krader kkrader](#) • October 27, 2016 — 8:13 AM EDT

When the 16 or so [restaurants and food concepts](#) open at the hugely anticipated Hudson Yards mega complex on Manhattan's way West Side in 2018, none will be located on the ground floor.

That's a purposeful move by Related Companies, the developer behind Hudson Yards, and one it has made before. Its previous projects include the Time Warner Center, which put two of New York's more expensive dining rooms—Per Se and Masa—up on the 4th floor of the 2.8 million-square-foot complex.



A rendering of the shops and restaurants at Hudson Yards.

Source: Related Oxford

Per Se's chef/owner [Thomas Keller](#) will again be cooking up in the air at Hudson Yards (a 28-acre, 17 million-square-foot property, essentially a [new neighborhood](#), if you can wrap your head around that). His upcoming American grill and steakhouse will occupy the 5th and 6th floors, according to Related Urban's president Kenneth Himmel. The downstairs will be a vast,

clubby-feeling bar with snacks, while the 6th floor will feature a 16,000-square-foot restaurant.

Also afforded two stories is a giant, West Side outpost of the Mediterranean seafood destination Milos. Both places will have dedicated outdoor terraces that flank a rooftop garden. Acclaimed Spanish [chef José Andrés](#)'s restaurant will be on the 5th floor. Almost everything below that will be retail focused, although one of Keller's Bouchon take-aways will be on the 2nd floor.

“It’s how we’re getting people back into brick-and-mortar spaces,” says Himmel, about putting restaurants above the stores in Time Warner and now Hudson Yards. Anyway, he adds, “Ground floor real estate is so expensive. It’s hard for most restaurants to sustain that rent.” People will go upstairs, especially if they can see the dining areas, he maintains. “You just have to make sure there’s enough action and energy on the ground floor.” (Himmel told *WWD* that the projected rents on the first level would be at least double, [if not triple](#), the rents on higher floors.)



Eataly Downtown NYC.

Photographer: Pablo Enriquez

Also up a couple escalators is the [recently opened Eataly Downtown](#), encompassing the third floor of Tower 4 at the World Trade Center.

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“Rents in New York are insane. And we aren’t afraid to go on an upper floor,” says Alex Saper, chief operation officer of Eataly America, who adds that the only space large enough in the World Trade Center complex was a couple stories above ground. Plus, he estimates the rents were about 50 percent to 60 percent less than for ground floor space. He notes that another advantage of being on upper floors is the view: If you take a break from shopping and snacking, the views of the Hudson River and the [new Calatrava Oculus](#) are stunning.

“I’m surprised that people don’t want to go higher with their restaurants,” Saper said over the phone. He anticipates that, in the not-too-distant future, New York will become a more vertical city, like Hong Kong and Tokyo, where you often get in an elevator to get to a restaurant.

While we wait to eat high up at Hudson Yards, consider these places that are ingeniously using upstairs and downstairs spaces around New York for terrific food and cocktails, too.

Akashi



Akashi Chef Yoichi Akashi
Photographer: Brent Herrig

This elegant new [omakase spot](#) is located down a flight of stairs in the West Village. Chef Yoichi Akashi, a veteran of Sushi Nakazawa and Sushi Yasuda, is the guy behind the counter at this 500-square-foot space. (Even subterranean

West Village real estate is precious: At Hudson Yards, Thomas Keller’s dining room will be 32 times as big.) Akashi’s owner Emil Stefkov converted a minute jazz bar into this luxe spot, where around 20 courses cost more than \$200.

“To achieve the calmness for the experience we desired, we needed a secluded place. Most high-end Japanese places prefer that. The space, on a quiet West Village corner, was perfect,” he says.

Mister Dips



Photographer: Noah Fecks

Now dominating the skyline by the Williamsburg waterfront is the William Vale hotel. Way up in the sky, with the best new view of the Manhattan skyline, is Westlight bar on the 22nd floor. But rooftop bars are not new in New York; what is new is a food truck that’s set in the hotel’s 15,000-square-foot public park, located up a tall flight of stairs from the street.

Mister Dips is set in a [1974 chrome Airstream trailer](#) that [chef Andrew Carmellini](#) and his partners bought on EBay. There’s a short menu of griddled burgers, both single and double patties, including an occasionally changing Special Dip. Currently, it’s topped with Hatch chiles (a favorite of chef Carmellini’s), Jack cheese, and sriracha sauce.



Photographer: Noah Fecks

“Ground floor real estate is no joke,” said Carmellini, as he climbed up to Mister Dips. “We couldn’t have put a public park on street level; that space is for retail.”

The chef does acknowledge one drawback to having a food truck on an upper level of the hotel: To be installed, it had to be hoisted up to the park by crane.

Metropolis

For 20 years, Blue Water Grill has been a mainstay on a prime corner opposite the Union Square Farmers Market in a space that was once upon a time a handsome bank. Earlier this year, it underwent a million-dollar renovation. Now it’s got a [separate restaurant and jazz club](#) below called Metropolis, in what was once the vault.

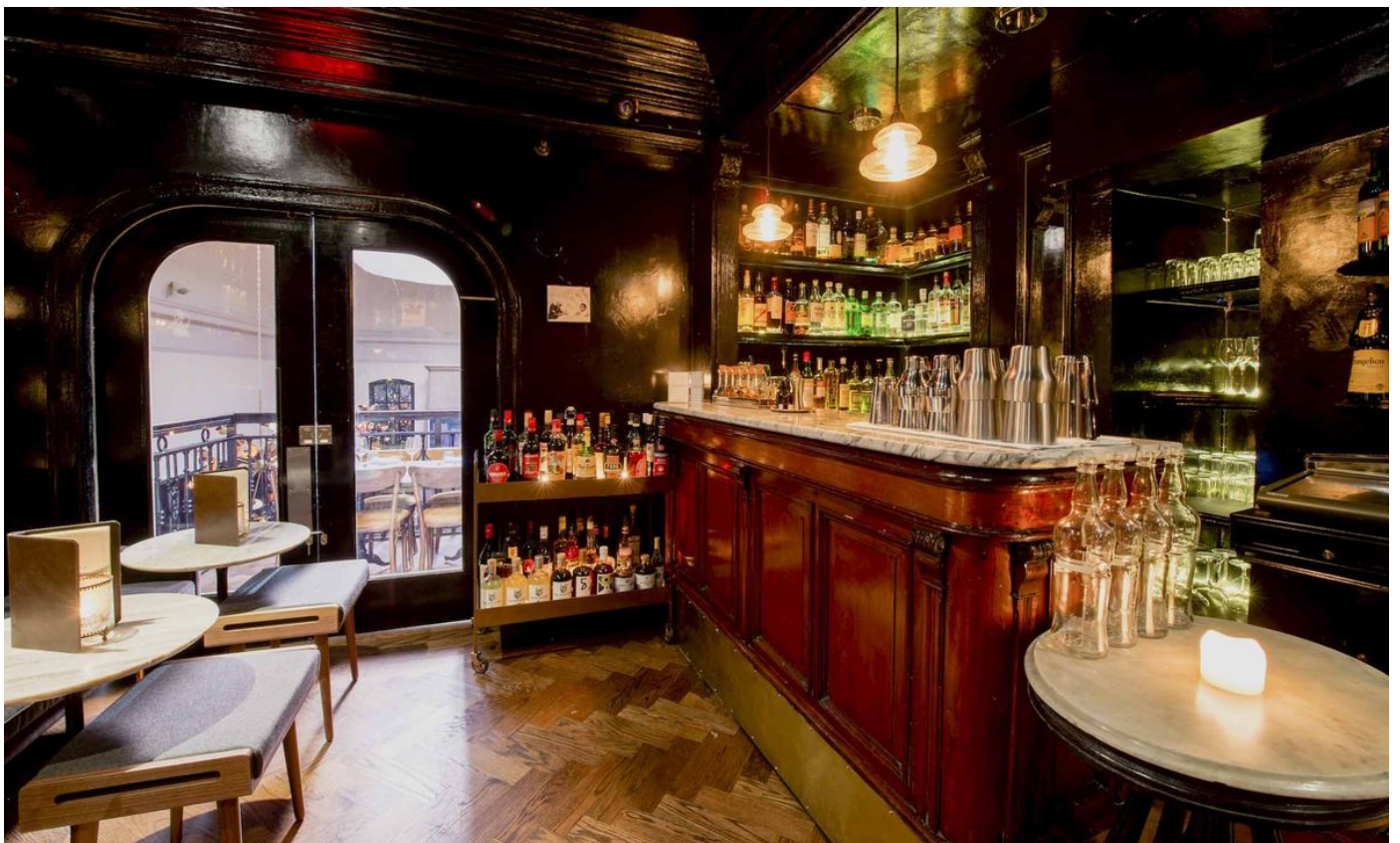
Chef Adam Raksin, who cooked at Per Se, serves raw bar staples such as [oysters and caviar](#); he’s also making a surf and turf tartare. It makes perfect sense for the Blue Water team to maximize their space: It’s next door to the former site of Union Square Café, which [moved out](#) because the rent was too damn high.

Bar Fortuna



Photographer: Daniel Krieger

At the newly opened Casa Apicci, in a cozy space last occupied by the Lion restaurant in the Village (and once a club where Barbra Streisand first began singing), chef Casey Lane is preparing a large menu of Italian-focused dishes, such as garganelli verde with three-meat ragu and a Heritage pork chop with pepper ragu.



Photographer: Daniel Krieger

For people more inclined to snack and sip some transportive cocktails, Bar Fortuna is located [past a semi-hidden door](#) by the host stand and up the stairs, in what was the Lion's private dining room. In a space outfitted with

velvet couches and a fireplace, Fabio Raffaelli, who mixed drinks at Restaurant Daniel and at el Bulli in Spain, serves aperitivo-based cocktails, including the amaro-spiked Bitter Sour and the Nuvolari, a Negroni twist named for a legendary Italian Formula One driver. There are also snacks such as arancini, cured meats, and bagna cauda with seasonal vegetables—and one of New York's largest grappa selections to cap it all off.

Le Boudoir



Photographer: Nicole Franzen

The space that is the sexy underground le Boudoir bar was discovered by accident. The owners—Tarek Debira, Patricia Ageheim, and Ali Mardassi—were engaged in DIY renovations of the storage space below their neighborhood Brooklyn spot Chez Moi. In a story that involves a few drinks and a sledgehammer, they discovered a pair of hidden chambers that were once part of the Atlantic Avenue tunnel, supposedly the city's oldest subway thoroughfare.



Photographer: Nicole Franzen

Now it's a Rococo-style bar inspired by Marie Antoinette's private rooms at Versailles with plush booths and ornate mirrors. The food is light—crispy frogs legs with honey sauce and a country pâté. Many of the drinks have Antoinette-inspired names, such as the Guillotin, a mix of mescal, scotch, banana liqueur, and honey. The dessert cocktail is made with vodka, crème de cacao, vanilla, and lemon: It's called Eat Cake.

Before it's here, it's on the Bloomberg Terminal. [LEARN MORE](#)