

In the Neighborhood

Once considered part of Little Italy, Nolita is making a name for itself as one of Manhattan's trendiest areas.

BY KRISTIN SCHARKEY

Walk down Mulberry or Mott streets in Nolita and you won't find any chain retailers; the neighborhood bound by Soho to the west and The Bowery to the east is forging its own identity. Amid the Old World charm of the area's Italian heritage, a highly concentrated collection of designer boutiques, independent art galleries and sidewalk cafes emanate a vibe that is at once eclectic yet sophisticated, all within the approximately 16 square blocks that make up the locale.

Earning its moniker for its position "north of Little Italy," Nolita got its name after signs of Italian culture began to fade in the 1990s. While the neighborhood is still home to the Feast of San Gennaro, a nearly century-old Italian street fair that draws more than 1 million attendees each September, it continues to make its own traditions. James Beard Award nominees Mario Carbone and Rich Torrisi's restaurant and sandwich shop, Parm, for example, celebrates Italian-American cuisine with

revamped chicken classics and ice cream cakes, while corner deli La Esquina is disguised as a street-level taqueria but boasts a subterranean brasserie and tequila bar that's as exclusive as it is chic. (Reservations are taken three weeks ahead.) Local boutiques also lend themselves to its contemporaneity, as mainstays like Creatures of Comfort, Condor and Warm offer forward-thinking collections.

It's this juxtaposition of old and new that heightens Nolita's charm, perhaps no more embodied than in Frank DeCarlo's rustic Italian eatery, Peasant, where locals can be found lingering late-night in the wine room. The establishment opened in 1999 to criticism for bucking Little Italy's "red sauce" expectations, but has since earned a reputation as one of the best Italian restaurants in Manhattan; it's only fitting, as DeCarlo—and the neighborhood—continue to carve out a niche unlike anywhere else in the city.



1. "One point of interest that I always suggest is the historic **BASILICA OF SAINT PATRICK'S OLD CATHEDRAL**," says Michael Romei, chief concierge of The Towers of the Waldorf Astoria New York. "The Gothic revival architecture and gated grounds stand out from surrounding New York City buildings." (263 Mulberry St.; 212-226-8075; oldcathedral.org)

2. "**LOMBARDI'S PIZZA** [offers] New York-style pizza invented by an Italian immigrant from Napoli in [1897]," recommends Jolie Mansky, chef concierge at Urban Concierge US. "Lombardi's boasts the distinction of being the first American pizzeria, and the pizza is delicious." (32 Spring St.; 212-941-7994; firstpizza.com)

3. "Designer Robin Renzi's original jewelry for women, men and children has been handcrafted in New York City since 1991," Mansky says. "All **ME&RO** designs, including stackable rings, hammered bangles and hoops, are created from 100 percent recycled metals and conflict-free stones." (241 Elizabeth St.; 917-237-9215; meandrojewelry.com)

4. "I love to recommend **UNCLE BOONS** for a more adventurous and unique dining experience—it would be a shame to describe it as simply a Thai restaurant," says Carmen da Silva, chef concierge at Soho Grand Hotel. "Uncle Boons' Thai classics incorporate a creative use of spice absolutely worthy of its recent Michelin star rating. And the dining rooms and bar offer a fun and funky backdrop to enjoy a cheeky cocktail or imported Thai beer." (7 Spring St.; 646-370-6650; uncleboons.com)



5. "**MCNALLY JACKSON** [is an] independently owned bookstore [that] is more than just a place to purchase books," Romei says. "In addition to highly personalized service, the bookstore offers unique, house-created customized journals, which make for a wonderful gift item." (52 Prince St.; 212-274-1160; mcnallyjackson.com)

6. "**THE MUSKET ROOM** is another wonderful foodie destination with an outstanding cocktail program," da Silva says. "Chef [Matt] Lambert, offers a modern take on classic New Zealand fare in a relaxed yet rustically chic downtown space. I [enjoyed] a great pre-batched cocktail for two ... at this Michelin star winner." (265 Elizabeth St.; 212-219-0764; musketroom.com)

7. "Founded in 1985, **DINOSAUR DESIGNS** ... offers a unique range of hand-made resin and silver jewelry, homewares and accessories," Mansky recommends. (211 Elizabeth St.; 212-680-3523; dinosaurdesigns.com)

8. "Founded by Marcia Tucker, a former curator at the Whitney Museum, the **NEW MUSEUM** was ... the first museum devoted to contemporary art in New York since World War II," Mansky says. "Its new home [just over the Nolita border] is a seven-story, eight-level structure." Starting Jan. 13, 2016, the space will be home to artist Pia Camil's first solo museum presentation in New York. (235 Bowery; 212-219-1222; newmuseum.org)

9. "**BALABOOSTA'S** food is imaginative and scrumptious, the creation of husband-and-wife team Einat Admony and Stefan Nafziger," Mansky explains. "The mix is Mediterranean meets Middle East. ... Don't miss the house chicken (cooked under a brick) and crispy fried cauliflower." (214 Mulberry St.; 212-966-7366; balaboostanyc.com)

10. "While Little Italy has its charm, my favorite rustic and cozy Italian restaurant, **PEASANT**, can be found tucked away on Elizabeth Street," da Silva says. "This neighborhood favorite offers something for everyone from brick oven pizzas to homemade pastas and whole fish." (194 Elizabeth St.; 212-965-9511; peasantnyc.com) **C**

OPPOSITE PAGE: LA ESQUINA; THIS PAGE: ME & RO PHOTO COURTESY OF ME & RO; MUSKET ROOM PHOTO BY EMILY ANDREWS