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In town for the Belmont Stakes, intimidated by New York City, and looking for some direction? Our TDN "locals" can help!

SCARLETT MURPHY (11-year-old daughter, owner/breeder Rob Murphy):

MESA GRILL, 102 5th Avenue, New York, NY. 212-807.7400. www.mesagrill.com

When I knew I would be traveling to New York with my dad to watch our horse, Golden Spikes, race, I definitely wanted to eat at one of Chef Bobby Flay's restaurants. We chose Mesa Grill on 5th Avenue. The atmosphere was warm and comfortable. Our waitress was very friendly and informative. The goat cheese dip was a great appetizer, light and fabulous. The shrimp tamale was spicy and filling. The fried oysters were amazing! I had the lamb chops for dinner. They were perfectly seasoned and cooked just right. The chimichurri complemented the lamb. The fries were crispy, yet tender. I cannot wait to go back again. In fact, my dad and I purchased the Mesa Grill cookbook. We have been using these new recipes since we returned from New York. We love Bobby's short rib recipe. Don't miss Mesa Grill!

AMERICAN GIRL PLACE, 609 Fifth Avenue at 49th Street, New York, NY.

Brunch, \$19 per person. Seating at 9:30. Lunch, \$23 per person. Seatings at 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. After noon tea, \$20 per person. Seating, 4 p.m. Dinner, \$25 per person. Seatings at 5:30, 7:30. Reservations required (tip: if you can't get a dining reservation, but are heading into the store for shopping, stop in to the café when you arrive and see if there are any cancellations. There often are.)

On the same trip, we had lunch at the Café at the American Girl Place, which was fun and delicious. The pink decor was nice and feminine. You get started with delicious cinnamon rolls and pretzel bread. The French dip was flavorful, yet subtle. The chocolate mousse was light and chocolatey. The Café is well worth the trip.

P. S. Make sure your dad brings some extra \$ for shopping.

KENT DESORMEAUX:

TAVERN ON THE GREEN (Central Park at West 67th Street, New York, NY. 212-873-3200.

www.tavernonthegreen.com.

On occasion, I enjoy heading to New York City with my nephew, who is a marathon runner. We start our day off by taking the train from Long Island in to Penn Station. From Penn Station we run south toward Battery Park and make several stops along the way. Some of our favorite pit-stops include parks and hotel lobbies; in particular, the lobby of the Trump Plaza which can always offer some interesting sights. Rockefeller Center is always a must-see as well. The first food stop is typically in Little Italy. There is a restaurant on Houston Street at which I always order sangria and some guacamole dip (try *Dos Caminos* at Houston and 475 W. Broadway). After that snack we head on down to Battery Park and spend some time enjoying the sights, especially the Statue of Liberty. The trip to Battery Park this time of year will be particularly special in that it is timed right around Memorial Day. Being there is a huge reminder of the freedom that our country has to offer. After the sojourn to Battery Park, we head towards Central Park and always enjoy stopping at the It has a dreamy atmosphere and the walls are adorned with pictures of numerous immortals, such as JFK. The glass-structured dining room offers a very open and bright place to have lunch. Finally, to finish up the day, we head to the mall on the south side of the park and wander around, possibly even stopping for another bite to eat. Once I had lunch next to Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod), who was undoubtedly signing some million-dollar contract. This trip to the city always ends up lasting all day and we are exhausted by the end. However, despite the physical exhaustion, I always feel as though my batteries have been recharged. I leave with new dreams and full of new goals which I am anxious to attain.

BOBBY FLAY, Chef:

*Chef and restaurateur Bobby Flay owns two of New York's finest eateries. **BAR AMERICAIN, at 152 West 52nd Street, New York, NY (www.baramericain.com),** has become an essential for many of the who's-who in the Thoroughbred industry. Located in midtown Manhattan, it is easily accessible and well worth the trek, and offers various foods of America at their very best. **MESA GRILL, at 102 5th Avenue, New York, NY (www.mesagrill.com)** is Flay's flagship restaurant, offering best of American dining with an emphasis on the flavors of the Southwest. (See Scarlett Murphy's review above.) Reservations are highly recommended at each, and available to TDN readers by calling Sally Jackson at (212) 924-3076. But where does Bobby eat when he's not eating at one of the above?*

MORIMOTO, 88 10th Avenue, New York, NY
www.morimotonyc.com. 212-989-8883.

Morimoto offers a wide variety of fine Japanese cuisine. In order to get the best dining experience, I choose to order the *omakase*, which means “chef’s choice.” This multi-course tasting menu allows the chef to give you what he thinks will be the most enjoyable dining experience. If something else sounds better to you, the menu is vast and has plenty to offer from sushi to steak. The prices are moderately expensive, but the food and overall dining experience are well worth it. Reservations are recommended.

CRAFTSTEAK, 85 10th Avenue, New York, NY
www.craftrestaurant.com. 212-400-6699.

Craftsteak offers the most modern take on the traditional steak house. Several different types of steak (corn-fed, grass-fed, etc.) are selected from the World’s top ranchers and aged in numerous ways in the restaurant’s own aging room. For those preferring a seafood option, a raw bar serving the freshest oysters, marinated and chilled seafood is available. The staff is incredibly well informed and ready to walk you through your selections. The prices are moderately expensive and reservations are recommended.

SCARPETTA, 355 West 14th Street, New York, NY.
212-691-0555

Scarpetta (translated from *fare la scarpetta*, which means to wipe your plate clean with a chunk of bread) is a newly opened restaurant in the city offering fine Italian cuisine in an airy, skylit setting. The menu is divided between small plates, pasta and main courses offering anything between spaghetti with tomato and basil to tuna. The dishes are priced moderately and reservations are recommended.

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CRAIG BANDOROFF

GALLAGHER’S STEAKHOUSE, 228 W 52nd St., New York, NY. 212-245-5336

www.gallaghersnysteakhouse.com

Full disclosure: I was introduced to Gallagher’s through my association with owner Marlene Brody, for whom I consign horses. Let that take nothing away from the fact that this is one fabulous steakhouse. Opened 80 years ago as a speakeasy during Prohibition, the restaurant was purchased by Jerome Brody during the 60s. The meat is dry-aged in-house in a meat-aging room, cooked on an open hickory coal grill, and served by real New York waiters—no waitresses in mini-skirts here. The dark wood tables and red and white checkered tablecloths add to the authentic New York feel. A wide variety of seafood and a half-roasted chicken are also offered (and a seasonal vegetable plate for vegetarians, if they can handle being in a restaurant with meat hanging in the lobby) but the steak is the star. I like the filet mignon or the grilled rib eye. Sides are a la carte—go for the hash brown potatoes and the creamed spinach. I like to sit in the back, near the open kitchen and the grill. The PEB mural on the wall is worth the visit all by itself. Located in the theater district, it’s a good spot before or after your show. If you’re looking for a real New York experience with real New York waiters, this is the place. Tell them you’re in the horse business, and they’ll treat you like a real star!

(Cont.)

DAVE JOHNSON, racecaller, t.v. analyst and host, Sirius Radio's Down the Stretch.

BLUE SMOKE, 116 East 27th Street, New York, NY. 212-447-7733. www.bluesmoke.com

Being from St. Louis, I love good barbeque. The best barbeque that I have managed to find in the city is at Blue Smoke, which is part of the Danny Meyer restaurant chain. Danny himself is from St. Louis and he knows good barbeque! The atmosphere is big, bright, open and casual; for example, instead of giving you a napkin, they just give you a towel—it is gonna get messy! My favorite dish is toasted ravioli, which I have never found outside of St. Louis. There are also numerous choices of draft beer and the staff is great. The prices are moderate and reservations are recommended.

JOE ALLEN RESTAURANT, 326 West 46th Street, New York, NY. 212-581-6464. www.joeallenrestaurant.com.

If you want to see stars, this is one place to go! Joe Allen Restaurant offers a place for those famous and not-so-famous to gather after the theater and enjoy a large collection of casual dining options and strong drinks. The decor is made up of theater posters and brick walls. Half of it is a bar, while the other half offers a restaurant setting. My favorite meal is undoubtedly the meatloaf. Everything is moderately priced and the best thing is that they will honor your reservation, no matter what!

VIVOLO, 140 East 74th Street, New York, NY. 212-737-3533. www.vivolonyc.com

Vivolo offers an option for fine Italian dining in a turn of the century townhouse. It is owned by the Vivolo family who loves horse racing and is always open to talk horses. The wood-paneled rooms, fresh flowers and candles create a relaxing and romantic atmosphere. I always find downstairs to be the best place to sit, especially since there is always a fireplace going when it is cold outside. There is a great wine list and I always order the pasta special. The prices are a bit more expensive, but well worth the cost. Reservations are recommended.

PARNELL'S, 350 East 53rd Street (at 1st Avenue), New York, NY. 212-753-1761.

For a pub with an authentic Irish-ambiance, Parnell's is the place to be! From the steeplechase photographs on the wall to the Guinness on tap, it is all-Irish, and caters to both those who want to eat in a casual setting (up front there is a bar that is always showing sports on the TV's) and those who want a sit-down dining experience (formal white tablecloth setting in the back). The kitchen is excellent, producing very tasty Shepherd's pie and chicken pot pie and the prices are moderate.

FRAN LABELLE, NYRA Communications:

For even more local flavor, Fran LaBelle of NYRA Communications was kind enough to share some of his local Long Island favorites with us. Below are just a few restaurants that the Belmont Park locals flock to, each listed with Mr. LaBelle's favorite dishes. Enjoy!

ARTUROS, 246-04 Jericho Turnpike, Floral Park, NY (www.kpsearch.com/arturor/contact.htm)

Classic Italian - Moderately priced

Fran's Picks:

Sea Bass Francese

KING UMBERTO, 1343 Hempstead Turnpike, Elmont, NY (www.kingumberto.com)

Italian Pizzeria & Restaurant - Moderately priced

Fran's Picks:

Veal chop and the homemade pasta dishes

POPPY'S PLACE, 12 Verbena Avenue, Floral Park, NY (www.poppysplacorestaurant.com)

Italian Bistro - Moderately Priced

Fran's Pick:

Porterhouse Pork Chop

VILLA D'ESTE, 186 Jercho Turnpike, Floral Park, NY (www.villadesterestaurant.com)

Northern Italian - Moderately Priced

Fran's Picks:

Chicken or veal with chestnuts

Pasta bolognese

BARRY WEISBORD, TDN Publisher:

The following plays are all produced by horse owner and lover Jerry Frankel, and I have had the pleasure of being his producing partner on some of the productions. Good tickets can be hard to come by, but we'd be happy to help out TDN subscribers. Call Vicki Forbes at 732-747-8060 for reservations.

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, Music Box Theatre, 239 West 45th Street, New York, NY

www.augustonbroadway.com

Set in contemporary rural Oklahoma, this is a tale of a Midwestern American family facing a unexpected reunion which is driven by the disappearance of the father. Each character, from the drugged-up, scathingly acidic matriarch, Violet, to the pill-popping mother and three mysterious sisters add s flavor to the intriguing plot. This is a must-see for devotees of serious drama as it has been recently honored with seven Tony Award nominations, including Best Play. (Running time, 3 hours 20 minutes.)

NOVEMBER, Ethel Barrymore Theatre, 243 West 47th Street, New York, NY www.novembertheplay.com

Written by Pulitzer Prize winner David Mamet, this production highlights the highs and lows of the process involved in campaigning for president. While the incumbent does his best to keep tabs on the current issues (gay marriage, Indian casinos, etc.), he is trying to maintain his position in the Oval Office. Nathan Lane stars as President Charles Smith, Laurie Metcalf as presidential aide Clarice Bernstein and Dylan Baker as presidential advisor Archer Brown. This is a farcical comedy with typical Mamet zippy dialogue which showcases the comedic talents of Nathan Lane. For those that want to laugh, an hour and a half is appealing.

SPRING AWAKENING, Eugene O'Neill Theatre, 230 West 49th Street, New York, NY www.springawakening.com

A major Tony Award winner from last season, this high energy "punk-rockish" musical has received a five-star billing from my 22 year olds. Spring Awakening is a musical that is based on the infamous 1891 Frank Wedekind play which was so up-front and honest about the period of teenage self-discovery that it was kept offstage in its full English format for almost 100 years. Based in Germany, it addresses the issues and questions of adolescence and is a story of uncontrolled emotions, first loves and everlasting regrets. In the words of The Newark Star-Leger, it is the "most explosive new musical since RENT."