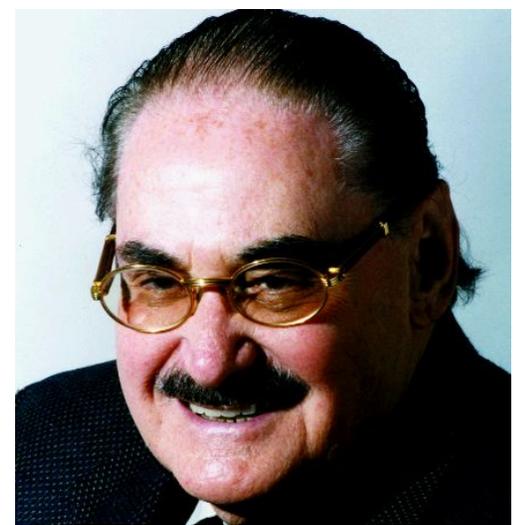


Dining Out

With Sheldon Landwehr
Late Night



New York's hottest, year-old French shrine, Bruno Jamais Restaurant Club, is perhaps the most unique in the city. It occupies a white stone Renaissance mansion that was once the Henry Hay town house at 24 East 81st Street.

Entering through a long glass-enclosed walkway, you view displays of Bruno's impressive collection of wine, including his own Champagne label, as well as expensive jewelry, crystal and luxury fashion items. Then one steps into the compelling dining room. Handsome surroundings abound; an ebony standup elbow-to-elbow bar to the left of the main arena, lustrous wood-paneled and sand painted walls, uncommon wood ceiling, brown velvet banquettes and chairs skirting leather-top tables, all softly flooded with mellow golden radiance from clusters of ceiling lights. Proprietor Bruno Jamais, previously noted for his stints with Alain Ducasse and Daniel, addresses the traditional needs of celebrities, the privileged few and high society folk, who flock to this clubby, semi-private venue where each guest seems to be intimately acquainted with everyone else in the place.

Host Bruno is ably seconded by maitre 'd Denis Le Denn and the head chef Andrew Karasz, who worked the Westcoast region for years.

The cooking is essentially contemporary French, with menus mindfully restraining the use of cream, butter wine and brandy in the sauces, yet managing to sustain sufficient flavor in nearly every dish. Besides the main dining room there are individual sectors and a small 12 seat private party room downstairs.

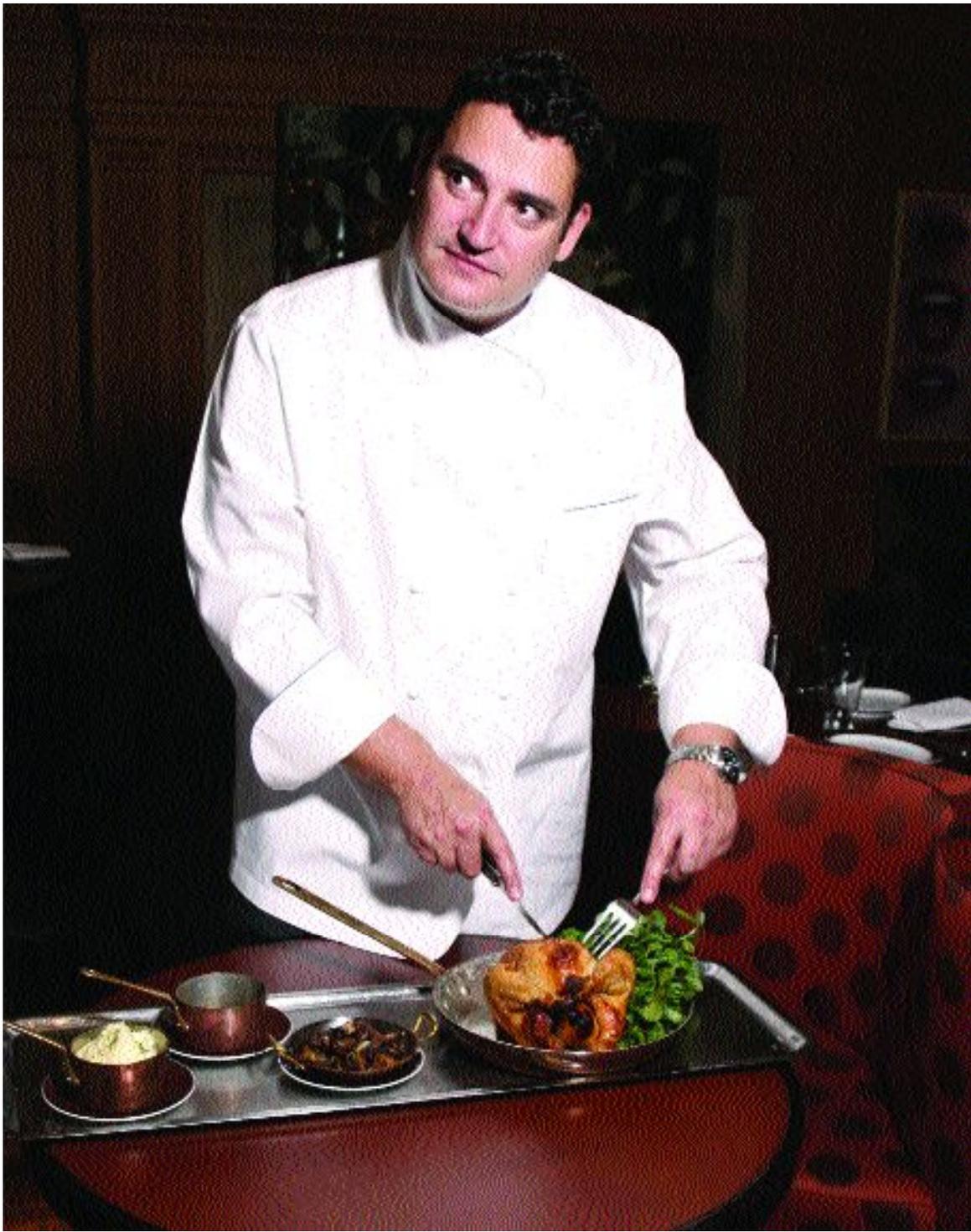
Bruno's dinner menu offers clear-cut choices of intricate creations. Even traveled and knowledgeable guests will profit by counseling with Denis when ordering a meal. Not only is it quite safe to leave the choice to him, but you will be sure to get things that are seasonally fresh and at their most desirable point of flavor.

A few of the openers that I have tried, which works for me, are veal tongue salad



Owner Bruno Jamais





Owner Bruno Jamais



Lobster Salad

sitting regally atop arugula and lentils; flavor-enriched cold creamy celery root soup floating strips of salmon; pungent tuna tartare; a salad of mixed sliced tomatoes garnished with shaving of parmesan cheese; and an inventive chef's specialty, eggs Meurette, poached eggs on toasted brioche reposing in a wonderful compliment of savory wine reduction. Only saffron risotto with prawns and fresh herbs is marred by heavy-handed salting.

Free range breast of chicken roasted to a golden brown with fricassee of wild mushrooms served with a cast-iron pot of potatoes, shows a well-balanced approach. No less appealing than the chicken, roasted veal chop with grocchi and braised lettuce is thick, juicy, tender and delicious. Chef Karaz presents the classic cote de boeuf for two cooked and decorated with an array of remarkable herbs and spices as an artist might embellish a still life—just enough to add interest and direct attention to the object of primary importance. Arriving in a gleaming copper skillet, the meat is then judiciously sliced and served with excellent potatoes gratin.

Given the quality of the meal, Francois Payard's desserts could be anitclimatic. Instead they are irresistible despite being richly dazzling. Airy, delicate chocolate mousse, marvelously restrained sweetness to the floating island, creme brulee with a light flanky crust, and the like. A fine variety of bread and rolls along with fresh unsalted butter is offered when one is seated, along with a jar of sweet red pepper marmalade and toasted brioche.

*** Bruno Jamais Restaurant Club, 24 East 81 Street, New York. (212) 396-3444. Dinner nightly. Closed Sunday. Entrees \$24 to \$38. Accepts reservations, major credit cards.



Roasted Veal Chop



Tuna Tartare

Photos by *Rob Rich*

