

Friday, August 21, 2105

Steve Cuozzo

FREE RANGE

Inside NYC's most beautiful new restaurant

By [Steve Cuozzo](#)

August 21, 2015 | 6:00am



Raw diver sea scallop is a revelation — and the most beautiful dish of the year too. Photo: Anne Wermiel

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Gabriel Kreuther

41 W. 42nd St.; 212-257-5826

Sorry, kids — “fine dining” is still my idea of the dining to beat. Especially when “fine” means great. Take [Gabriel Kreuther](#), an impossible dream tremulously born on the ground floor of an office building that faces Bryant Park.

If white tablecloths, professional but warm waiters and a grown-up mood must make their last stand in Manhattan, there could be no better place than this.

Four meals in its resplendent but easygoing confines delivered so many original, French-Alsatian-tinted, modern-Manhattan masterpieces from executive chef Kreuther's kitchen, it's hard to know where to start.

Modal TriggerChef Gabriel Kreuther is turning out masterpieces at his eponymous restaurant near Bryant Park. Photo: Anne Wermiel

After three-star runs at the Ritz-Carlton's Atelier and the Modern inside MoMA, Kreuther and business partner Eben Dorros rolled the dice two months ago, opening a megabucks venture that must soar or sink on its own.

Not enough New Yorkers have yet experienced its \$98, four-course, prix fixe-only dinner menu — which seems like eight courses thanks to a cavalcade of bread offerings, intricate amuse-bouches served in a sea-urchin-shaped cup, and pre- and post-dessert treats. (It's \$57 for two courses at lunch.)

Kiss au revoir to Midtown corporate-design monotony: [Glen Coben's Glen & Company](#) have parsed a standard, squarish space into three near-triangles that flow effortlessly into one another.

The modern-meets-rustic 95-seat dining room unfurls as a carpeted expanse of cream-colored banquettes, green and copper accents, and Alsatian floral wall fabrics. Ceiling-height timber beams in a graceful, curving colonnade sport Y-shaped tops inspired by homes in Strasbourg, France, near where Kreuther grew up.



The chic dining room, accented with reclaimed wood and bits of greenery, is a relaxed affair for the chef's \$98 four-course menu. Photo: Anne Wermiel [Modal Trigger](#) Second-course offerings include a sturgeon and sauerkraut tart with American caviar mousseline and applewood smoke. Photo: Anne Wermiel/

A few fussy touches intrude. "Where's the mouse?" a friend giggled about a leather pad on which long, skinny flatware is set. An all-treble soundtrack screeched one quiet night like an AM transistor radio. Do we want music at all? But any sour notes fade with caring service from general manager Thierry Chouquet's floor crew and sommelier Emilie Perrier's masterfully chosen wines. Two great \$110 choices: a powerful Alsatian pinot noir, 2010 Domaine Valentin Zusslin "Bollenberg Harmonie"; and well-rounded 2003 Azelia Barolo.

At this early stage, the whole place suggests a great vintage sampled a year before its peak. Kreuther wisely proclaims no "concept." The menu merely reflects his famous love affair with herbs, his Alsatian farm-country roots and a gift for coaxing the deepest, most elemental flavors from earth and sea.

Except for cabbage-wrapped squab and foie gras croustillant, as seductive as it was at the Modern, most dishes are new.

[Modal Trigger](#) A gorgeous foie gras terrine awaits Midtown diners at Gabriel Kreuther. Photo: Anne Wermiel

Kreuther layers sliced hamachi, foie gras and black truffle, and compresses them under a weight; the concentrated essences drew "oohs." So did herb-crusting mero (Hawaiian bass) with sweet bouchot mussels embedded between flesh and thyme-breaded crust.

The year's most beautiful dish is surely a sliced, raw, marinated sea scallop floating atop jalapeño coulis. The ceviche-esque apparition is served in a flying saucer-like crystal bowl that the waiter plugs into a pedestal. The scallop seemed born to the interplay of sweet, salty and spicy notes from Meyer lemon, paper-thin radishes, crunchy tempura and Espelette pepper.

A woody aroma precedes thyme-kissed Colorado lamb done three ways. It's displayed in a crèche of smoking hay and served as a rack with "lacquered breast" (bacon) and natural jus. A cup of lamb consommé brimming with nubby enoki mushrooms had to be the best thing anyone in a city of 8 million got to eat that night.

A review so early is a leap of faith. There's no telling what Gabriel Kreuther will be like a year from now. But there's no question what it is today: a great new restaurant just around the corner from four stars.