

NEW YORKER



TABLES FOR TWO

THE EDDY

342 E. 6th St. (646-895-9884)

IF YOU WERE AROUND for the heyday, in the eighties and nineties, of Indian row, on East Sixth Street in the East Village, you probably experienced a birthday party at the shabby jewel box *Rose of India*—a fleeting, euphoric assault of blaring electric sitar, thousands of flashing Christmas lights, and a six-dollar chana saag. Amid the several remaining curry joints on that block is an unexpected gem, serving nothing curried whatsoever. The Eddy is a pretty little place with white walls, candlelight, garden-inspired dishes, and an anachronistic sense of romance.

The food, however, is modern, and leans toward cerebral. A concise, often changing à-la-carte menu (there is also a sixty-five-dollar tasting-menu option) features bar snacks that are ingenious refinements of junk food. The chef, Brendan McHale, who once cooked at the well-regarded (now defunct) *Jack's Luxury Oyster Bar*, fries beef tendon and fills it with charred-onion cream and generous dollops of trout roe. It puffs up like *chicharrón*, or, according to one new beef-tendon convert, like a *Funyun*. Bacon bits liven up regulation tater tots topped with mustard and pea purée, and apple-ginger ice turns *Wellfleet* oysters into ice pops: crunchy, creamy, tart, sweet. Salmon rillettes (the salmon is cured in salt and Lapsang tea, cooked in olive oil, and mixed with tarragon, dill, lemon zest, and chili pepper) come in a tiny jar alongside perfectly fried potato skins that are dusted with some crazy homemade cool-ranch-flavored powder.

For the appetizers, there's a formula: take a dish with several strong elements and add one more. Usually that doesn't work, but at the Eddy—with the octopus, the scallop crudo, the burrata—it does. In a town lousy with burrata, McHale's, which is piled with super-sweet maple-glazed squash wedges, doused in an otherworldly verdant oil made of anise hyssop, and topped with pepitas, might be the best right now. The entrées can be hit-or-miss. A tea-smoked duck was too rare, and cut too thick to handle politely; the arctic char was too sweet with parsnips and sunchokes. Rib eye, oddly piled on one side of an otherwise empty plate, was satisfyingly smothered in *St. Albay* fondue. The best might be the vegetarian option, a plate of huge ricotta-filled gnocchi, fried in brown butter and surrounded by mushrooms, cubes of squash, and pistachios.

Here's another formula: savvy, mannerly servers, fussy cocktails with vaguely British names and lots of citrus peel, a room quiet enough for conversation. Kelvin Uffie, the bartender who developed the cocktails—the *Morgan Le Fay*, the *Parlor Friar II*—likes to put on a show of ambidexterity, pouring two drinks at a time from up high into heavy cut glass. He does this in the small front room as it packs full of young people. It feels like a fun, fancy living-room party, and, who knows, maybe it's somebody's birthday.

—Shauna Lyon

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL KIRCHMAN

Open daily for dinner. Entrées \$24-432.