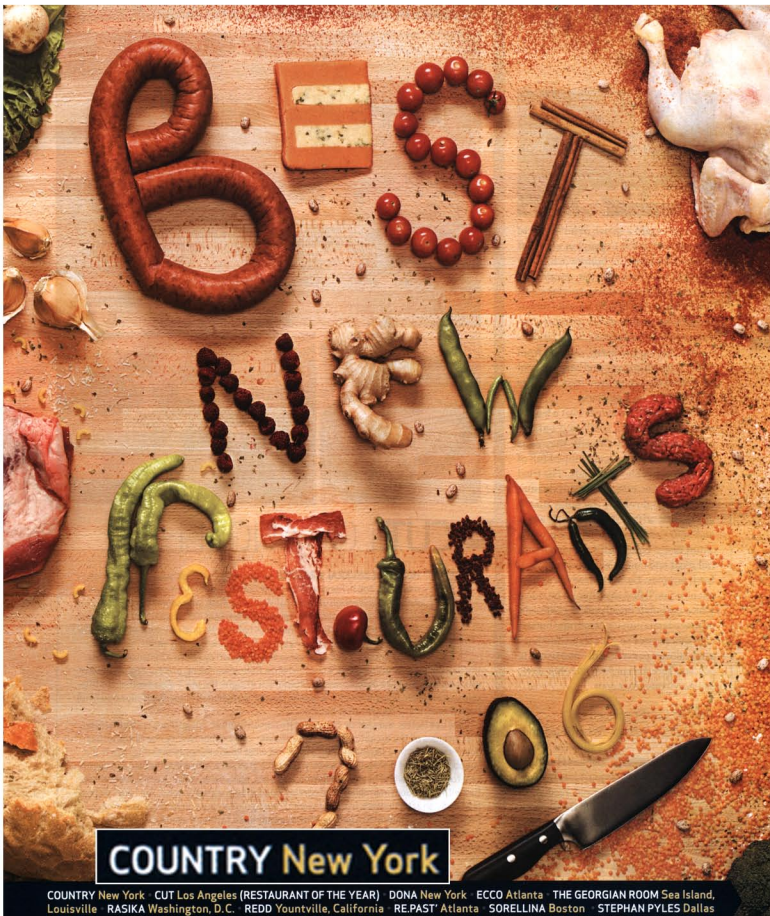




From fine regional Indian in D.C. to a reimagined chophouse in Los Angeles, John Mariani has once again scouted the country in search of the best new eateries. Inside, the twenty most exciting places to dine right now. PHOTOGRAPH BY DARREN BRAUN



COUNTRY New York

COUNTRY New York · CUT Los Angeles (RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR) · DONA New York · ECCO Atlanta · THE GEORGIAN ROOM Sea Island, Louisville · RASIKA Washington, D.C. · REDD Yountville, California · RE-PAST Atlanta · SORELLINA Boston · STEPHAN PYLES Dallas

COUNTRY New York



Country is simply one of the most civilized spaces in New York. An extraordinary 1911 Tiffany glass dome sits twenty feet above a room bold enough for clinching a business deal and romantic enough to bring friends the night before your wedding. You arrive via a staircase angled to give you a look at the two levels Country occupies—including the dimly lit first-floor café with a zinc bar.

Geoffrey Zakarian, who also runs Town on West Fifty-sixth Street, brings a command of classic American ingredients that justifies the restaurant's name—evident from the very first bite of soft, yeasty Parker House rolls lavished with good butter. (You can tell a lot by a place's butter.) It's hard not to be wowed by the crisp skin of his signature spit-roasted sizzling chicken with chewy Swiss chard and soft artichokes, and the Berkshire pork has the rapture of fat that pork rarely exhibits these days, giving it a nice sweetness. The grilled prime rib of beef is a generous slab, cooked impeccably to your taste and served with tiny ricotta ravioli that soak up the red-wine reduction.

In bringing Country to the city, Zakarian has again proven he is a master interpreter of American cuisine and ensured that New York will remain the epicenter for such sophisticated taste. *Carlton Hotel, 90 Madison Avenue; 212-889-7100; countryinnewyork.com.*

THE HURRIED MAN'S GUIDE

THE BEST NEW RESTAURANTS 2006

COUNTRY, New York

Carlton Hotel; 212-889-7100; countryinnewyork.com

Cuisine: American creative

Average entrée: \$22

Don't-miss dish: Lobster with salsify, chanterelles, and black truffles.

Regulars know: The downstairs café serves one of the best brunches in N.Y.C.