



Restaurant	Zagat 2008	Zagat 2002
1 Daniel	\$132	\$87
2 Le Bernardin	\$129	\$84
3 Jean Georges (pictured)	\$126	\$86
4 La Grenoville	\$120	\$85
5 Chanterelle	\$119	\$80
6 Aureole	\$105	\$73
7 Veritas	\$98	\$75

**GRAND PRIX:** Daniel on the Upper East Side nailed the top spot

## Top Zagat restaurant

By CYNTHIA KILIAN

Hang on to your credit cards, New York.

The price of a luxurious meal in the Big Apple has soared higher than a cherries flambé, according to the Zagat 2008 New York City Restaurants survey hitting stores today.

Among the 20 priciest restaurants, the average tab is \$143.06, a staggering jump from \$84.45 in 2002. That's a bullish 69.4 percent hike that apparently doesn't faze deep-pocketed Manhattan foodies.

"These are restaurants frequented by young Wall Street types who don't have to worry about how much things cost and who are perfectly willing to spend \$100 or 200 for a meal," said publisher Tim Zagat, who calls Gotham "The Dining Capital of the World."

There are at least nine eateries that are on both the 2008 and 2002 Zagat lists of most pricey. They include:

■ Star chef Daniel Boulud's Upper East Side namesake Daniel, where a typical dinner now costs \$132, as opposed to \$87 in 2002 — a 51.7 percent boost.

### Most popular

- 1 Union Square Café, 21 E. 16th St.
- 2 Gramercy Tavern, 42 E. 20th St.
- 3 Le Bernardin, 155 W. 51st St.
- 4 Babbo, 110 Waverly Place
- 5 Jean Georges, 1 Central Park West

■ Le Bernardin, where the average dinner bill is \$129, compared to \$84 six years ago — a 53.5 percent increase.

■ Jean Georges, which will take \$126 out of your wallet for the same dinner that cost \$86 in the 2002 guide — a 46.5 percent hike.

Meanwhile, No. 1-rated newcomer Gordon Ramsay, weighs in at \$126 per prix fixe meal. At those prices, it's good to know surveyors agree TV's "Hell's Kitchen" taskmaster "leaves the terror in the kitchen."

But on the more down-to-earth side, the \$39.46-per-dinner city average is only three cents more than last year. That's in line with

### Top newcomers

- 1 Gordon Ramsay, The London NYC, 151 W. 54th St.
- 2 Kefi, 222 W. 79th St.
- 3 Maze, at The London NYC, 151 W. 54th St.
- 4 Smoke Joint, 87 S. Elliot Place, Brooklyn
- 5 Pera, 303 Madison Ave.

modest increases of under 1 percent a year since 9/11.

"The restaurant industry has been delivering a great deal of value for the last five or six years. More value than the consumer price index," Zagat said.

While stratospherically priced restaurants such as Per Se and Masa in the Time Warner Center up the ante, there are a host of inexpensive newcomers keeping overall prices down.

As for the city's top restaurants, kudos go to Daniel, which has regained the top position from seafood palace Le Bernardin.

This year, Le Bernardin comes in at No. 3 after Sushi Yasuda,

barbecue — such as the fare at Smoke Joint and Hill Country — as well as small-plate menus and top chefs putting their stamp on hamburgers.

And Brooklyn is booming with 30 new entries on the survey.

There's also a swing towards the casual, with formal eateries like the Lenox Room, Alain Ducasse and March closing since the last guide.

"If you look at any of the new restaurants, practically none of them require you to wear a jacket and none of them require you to wear a tie," Zagat said.

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