

# Bruno Jamais: A Secret Well Kept

By Babbie De Derian, Travel Editor



**BRUNO JAMAIS impressed me with its award - winning décor (Hospitality Design Magazine's 2004 Best Design Award), live music and upscale clientele.**

The owner of BRUNOS JAMAIS restaurant and club, brutally handsome and charming Bruno Jamais and Chef John Keller wowed my palate with an exceptional, elegant and sensuous menu. Tucked

away in a historic brownstone, with only a small logo to identify its presence, this well kept secret has it all... ambiance, classic French cuisine with an Asian twist and an attentive staff that provides first class service.

Bruno Jamais began his career in America as the Maitre D at Daniel's, where under the tutelage of the renowned Daniel Boulud, he learned what it takes to preside over one of the country's most prestigious restaurants. He honed his skills dealing with powerful people and celebrities during a stint at Alain Ducasse. He jokingly says that he enjoys "food, sex and food" in his spare time. Jamais future plans include opening a restaurant in the Hamptons and a downtown supper club.

Chef John Keller, a graduate of The New York Restaurant School peeled grapes and tomatoes without pay at Le Bernardin to learn the philosophy, elegance and know how of a top notch kitchen then interned at Nobu. Plans to open his own restaurant in the Meatpacking District fell through; Bruno was looking for a new chef, they met, and the rest is history. In eight months, he has completely changed the menu, honoring Bruno's commitment to excellence and purity of product and preparation.

Bruno Jamais blends the comfort of a clubby living room with the elegance of a first class dining salon. Entering the building, I find myself in a long hallway lined with hundreds of bottles of rare and rich French wines, carefully selected by sommelier Michael Peltier. An opaque glass door slides open at the press a wall button, and I am inside the restaurant. Peter from Morocco seats us at a cozy booth. I can't help but notice The Duchess of York at the next table. Dinner begins with an amuse bouche: a sea scallop marinated in ginger juice, yuzu (Japanese citron) and extra virgin olive oil, topped with American sturgeon.

Several appetizers follow: chunky tuna tartar made with lemon ginger oil is served with a cucumber mint salad... Chef Keller's signature Lobster Brulee, (chunks of fresh lobster meat and chanterelle mushroom puree), broiled with a red chili pepper mayo glaze is pure decadence... then to refresh our palates (much the same as a sorbet), a salad of julienne Belgian endive and apples, blue cheese and spiced walnuts, dressed with a white balsamic vinaigrette. The next course, Braised Lamb Shank Tagine, (braised with Moroccan spices and a touch of port wine) is succulent, sexy and elegant (thanks to a subtle, sweet and spicy

balance of black cumin, star anise, clove and cinnamon stick).

After dinner, I chat with Chef Keller to find out more about his culinary skills.

**TIM:** How do you best describe your food?

**John:** I like subtlety so I use spices and sauces that accentuate and compliment, not overpower the main protein ingredient. I play around and change my dishes to test the reaction. We serve dinner until midnight and then switch to a late night menu.

Bruno allows me to do what I like and experiment. I welcome his constructive input and suggestions.

**TIM:** What is your biggest challenge as a 29 year old chef?

**John:** Honestly, I am a little torn. Food has become too much of a science with chemicals and machines. Some I like, others take away from the purity of being a chef.

**TIM:** Candidly speaking, what in your repertoire can use fine tuning?

**John:** I need to focus more on my deserts to put a more innovative spin on them.

**TIM:** What is your next exciting challenge?

**John:** We are starting to do champagne tasting dinners, once a month. There are new menus to create. I am making a white chocolate and raspberry tart to serve with caramel ice cream, and a fresh berry and champagne Terrine for our Tattinger March 20th tasting.

**BRUNO JAMAIS** is located at 24 East 81<sup>st</sup> Street, NYC. For more on the champagne tasting menus and reservations: 212-396-3444.



lobster brulee



caviar on carpaccio