

# The New York Times

## Dining In

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\$25 AND UNDER

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### A Deli on the Upper West Side With Weeks of Tradition

As a child on Long Island, I used to fantasize about Andel's, the local Jewish delicatessen. I'd walk through the door to be captured in a billowy aromatic embrace of vinegar and coriander, cabbage and rye, garlic and pepper. I'd look at the glass display cases, piled high with potato knishes, kugels, whitefish and funny gummy candies that looked like slices of fruit. I'd see the franks on the grill with a tray of sauerkraut, and mysterious steaming canisters, where the pastrami and corned beef lived. If only I could be locked in the delicatessen overnight, I thought, free to eat whatever I wanted.

You can't just open a place like Andel's — or Katz's or the Carnegie, two of Manhattan's leading delis. They're products of years of nosing and kibitzing, with a patina of sights, sounds and smells as singular and cranky as the old men who used to run them. They are a dying breed, the conventional wisdom goes, a victim of changing demographics and a taste for healthier foods. A Jewish delicatessen in New York is as rare these days as a good egg cream.

Yet, now comes Artie's Delicatessen on the Upper West Side, open just

#### Artie's New York Delicatessen

2280 Broadway, near 83rd Street,  
(212) 678-9999

**BEST DISHES:** Pastrami sandwich, chicken soup, hot dogs, potato pancakes, flanken in a pot, egg cream.

**PRICE RANGE:** Sandwiches, \$4.95 to \$10.95; main courses, \$7.95 to \$17.95.

**CREDIT CARDS:** American Express, Mastercard, Visa.

**HOURS:** Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to midnight; Friday and Saturday to 1 a.m.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Everything is on one level.

five weeks and perpetually packed by a cross section of New Yorkers. Artie's is named for Arthur Cutler, the entrepreneur who helped create popular restaurants like Carmine's, Ollie's and Virgil's. Mr. Cutler had been planning a Jewish delicatessen for the Upper West Side when he died in 1996. Artie's, the culmination of that project, is run by Jeffrey Bank and Chris Metz, two young restaurateurs with deli experience. While an Upper West Side deli seems less arti-

ficial than some other Cutler restaurants, it is still strange to see this expression of New York's 19th century rising at the dawn of the 21st.

Artie's does not yet have the rich aroma of a longtime deli. It's more like a young wine that gives hints of what it might become. The counter display, which ought to look as bountiful as an overstuffed sandwich, seems a little skimpy. Yet, over the course of several visits, Artie's has already shown real improvement.

Take pastrami, the be-all and end-all of a deli. Mr. Bank says Artie's recipe was taken from Bernstein's on Essex, which no longer exists but was a much-loved Lower East Side deli that also offered Chinese food. My first sandwich (\$7.50) was tasty but timidly seasoned, with hints of garlic and coriander but not nearly robust enough. Weeks later, the pastrami was much better, as forceful as Carnegie's or Katz's. Still, those versions of pastrami combine the seasonings with the flavor of the beef; Artie's pastrami now is all in the seasoning. But it's got potential.

Chicken soup (\$3.25) was at first pretty pallid stuff, but it is now a nice golden-brown with a little more body, though it still needs a shake of salt and pepper. Hot dogs (\$1.85) need no

such improvement. The franks are excellent, slender, garlicky and crisp around the edges, arriving already spread with mustard and sauerkraut. Potato pancakes (\$2.25) are exceptionally crisp, with a solid center trailing crunchy slivers of potato.

Artie's carries other Jewish favorites, like flanken in a pot (\$13.95), the tender, tasty beef served on the bone in a mushroom-barley soup. Stuffed cabbage (\$10.95), densely packed with ground beef and rice, is good, though the traditional red sauce is as sticky sweet as ever. Come to think of it, maybe Artie's got that recipe from Bernstein's Chinese menu.

The dining room is bright and functional, and it's clear that Artie's has also been working on the deli atmosphere. At first, the waiters and countermen seemed rude and grumpy, without the charm of genuine deli waiters, who, as everyone knows, are on hiatus from their real jobs in standup comedy. But there seems to have been staff turnover, and on my last visit, real deli patter emerged. While Artie's may not be ready to take its place among the deli elite, it shows promise. And it already makes a fine egg cream.