

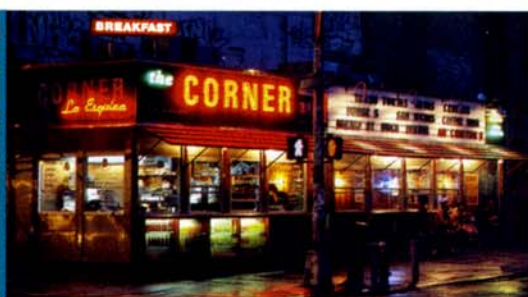
# Which dish won't ruin

What to order—when you're watching your waistline—at the city's best restaurants.

**JEAN GEORGES**

Central Park West at 60th St.; 212-299-3900

A pioneer in lightening up classic cuisine, Jean-Georges Vongerichten was one of the first to use reductions in place of heavy sauces. His flagship restaurant is perched in Central Park's Trump International Hotel and Tower.

**LA ESQUINA**

106 Kenmare St.; 646-613-7100

Having to get past a clipboard-wielding doorman and through the basement kitchen of this upscale taqueria only adds to its mystique. Chef Rene Ortiz's amazing Mexican menu draws young hipsters and Karl Lagerfeld alike.

**LE CIRQUE**

151 E. 58th St.;  
212-644-0202

A favorite of both Henry Kissinger and ladies with Hermès bags, no place in



**Sweetbreads with Licorice and Asian Pear**  
Estimated calories: 252  
Estimated fat: 20 grams

Traditionally these succulent little bites of organ meat are pan-fried and served with a cream sauce, but here they are flash-sautéed, which prevents them from soaking up a lot of fat. Sweetbreads are actually rich in nutrients, and the accompaniments add a bonus, too: The elements in licorice, including glycyrrhizic acid, are great for helping out your adrenal glands, which weaken under stress. Oz says, "I've been using licorice for high-powered executives for years." Asian pears are high in fiber and vitamin C and contain phytochemicals, which are good for the heart. If you're going four-star, you might as well be a little adventurous.



**Turbot in Chateau Chalone Sauce**  
Estimated calories: 875  
Estimated fat: 28 grams

Contrary to conventional wisdom, ordering fish is not always the guilt-free choice. The wine sauce featured with this dish sounds promising, but there is butter lurking everywhere in the recipe, which not only adds calories, says Oz, but also "neutralizes the benefits of the fish's omega-3 oils." For one thing, the turbot is sautéed in butter. Then there's the fact that the (admittedly scrumptious) Chateau Chalone sauce is butter-based—and even the vegetables are sautéed in it. Jean Georges' typically light touch seems to have gotten a little heavy-handed on this one.



**Chile Relleno**  
Estimated calories: 541  
Estimated fat: 16 grams

At most Mexican restaurants, this dish consists of a pepper that has been stuffed with melted cheese, meat, raisins and nuts, then covered with egg batter and deep-fried, and served with tomato sauce. In this totally organic version, the chef starts by fire-roasting the peppers, then fills them with gluten-free, high-protein quinoa and roasted kobocha squash, which is rich in fiber and cancer-busting carotenoids. Just a sprinkling of cheese is added, and the dressing is a toasted pumpkin seed salsa. As a winter bonus, bell peppers even aid in clearing out the sinuses. Oz calls this "a symphony of good nutrients."



**Grilled Shrimp à la Plancha**  
Estimated calories: 638  
Estimated fat: 20 grams

Ah, shrimp grilled on a wooden plank—what could be lighter? But don't be fooled into thinking this spicy, flavorful dish is your healthiest menu choice. Sadly, the secret to its deliciousness is chorizo sausage, which pumps up the calorie and fat content—a lot. "I grew up eating chorizo in Cuba," says Oz. His expert-by-birthright advice? "Save it for a holiday." Shrimp itself, though high in protein and low in calories, packs a lot of cholesterol. Add a side of rice and the bed of superstarchy hominy the shrimp is served on, and you're in surprisingly hearty territory.



**Lobster Bisque**  
Estimated calories: 400  
Estimated fat: 20 grams

Bisques are normally cream-based and notoriously decadent. But this version relies on lobster stock alone to create the rich taste, and smooths it out with milk rather than cream. Believe it or not, using milk instead of cream cuts calories by well more than half. And pureed vegetables add thickness and texture to the soup without beefing up the calorie count. The crustacean's also high in B vitamins, while the tomatoes contain lycopene, which acts as an immune booster. Oz approves: "This just may be the French version of cold-fighting chicken soup." Yum.

# your diet?

The average American gains between three to six pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year's. But that doesn't mean you have to survive on the Zone diet; some of the city's most fab restaurants have low-cal offerings. The trick is in navigating menus—especially since indulgent-sounding dishes can be surprisingly healthy and those that appear diet-friendly are often laced with fat. Here, nutritionist Oz Garcia analyzes recipes from five boîtes for their estimated fat and calorie content. —Beth Landman



the city is filled with more boldface characters than Sirio Maccioni's legendary dining spot, now in the Bloomberg Building.

**PRIMEHOUSE**

381 Park Ave. S.; 212-824-2600

This vast steakhouse opened in the fall, and all the beef comes from the offspring of a steer named Prime. Unlike some sawdust-strewn Midtown steer palaces, Primehouse boasts elegant tableside service.

**WAKIYA**

2 Lexington Ave.; 212-995-1330

With chef Yuji Wakiya at the helm, you might think this ruby- and black-lacquered spot would be turning out Japanese specialties. Instead, fans Tom Cruise and Sienna Miller flock for his inspired take on Chinese cuisine.



**X**  
**Poached Lobster with Vanilla Cognac**  
Estimated calories: 825  
Estimated fat: 52 grams

Shellfish poached with vanilla and served with quince and chestnuts actually *sounds* like spa cuisine. Right? No such luck. What that gorgeous, sophisticated Le Cirque menu doesn't reveal is that the lobster is poached in butter, not stock. Oh, and the seafood arrives swimming in a heavenly, creamy sauce that's heady with cognac—which is hardly calorie-free (it has about the same amount as a glass of champagne). Even though Oz says that "pound for pound, lobster is one of the highest sources of protein of all shellfish," this dish is the definition of a sybaritic feast.

**✓**  
**Berkshire Pork Chop**  
Estimated calories: 595  
Estimated fat: 16 grams

This hearty winter meal feels like a feast, but it won't tip the scale. Although we associate pig with fat, pork chops—unlike bacon or ham—have less fat than many cuts of beef. The cinnamon in the dish helps stabilize blood sugar, while the apples are great for reducing cholesterol, and because they act as an anticarcinogen, says Oz, "they may help you dodge a cancer bullet." A hit of maple syrup makes it taste naughty while adding few calories and iron to boot. Bonus: When you order a juicy pork chop, the people at your table will breathe a sigh of relief that you're not one of those types who come to a steakhouse and order the salad.

**X**  
**Chilean Sea Bass with Crispy Sushi Rice**  
Estimated calories: 700  
Estimated fat: 54 grams

Asian presentations of fish tend to be light, but you would make a big mistake if you assumed as much with this entrée. Chilean sea bass is one of the fattiest sea creatures around (even though it's good fat, it can still pack on the pounds). Soy and ginger wouldn't normally be a problem, but this sauce tastes particularly delectable thanks to a generous helping of butter. Even the sushi rice, which sounds unimpeachable, has been fried and shaped into a little cake. No doubt it's delicious, but if you're watching your weight, go for the pork chop or seared tuna instead. That's right—the pork chop is a better choice.

**✓**  
**Tofu Pasta**  
Estimated calories: 490  
Estimated fat: 13 grams

You see pasta and think pounds, right? Well, good news: This Chinese version is made with tofu, so it's full of protein, fairly low-calorie and rich in calcium and phytochemicals. Soy itself regulates and balances hormones, as well as protects against heart attacks and bone deterioration. (Wow, soy is a virtual wonder food!) What's more, sesame oil is low in evil saturated fats and high in sesamol and sesamin—two powerful antioxidants which are known to reduce high blood pressure. "This is filling, low in calories, and every ingredient is beneficial," says Oz. A home run.

**X**  
**Shanghai Soup Dumplings**  
Estimated calories: 900  
Estimated fat: 32 grams

Unlike the lean pork chops at Primehouse, Wakiya's harmless-looking little soup dumplings are filled with a tasty but fatty cut of pork. Combined with the recipe's additional elements of sugar, salt and butter, this is what Oz dubs "trouble in a pouch." Sadly, such is the price you often pay for comfort food. But what's worse, these pouches have no vegetables tucked in them, so you're not even sneaking in some vitamins. And considering how the sugar and salt combo swells up the dumplings, don't be surprised if you can't get your rings off your fingers when you get home.

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY: STEVEN FREEMAN FOR PAGE SIX MAGAZINE; STYLING: SARAH T. GREENBERG; RESTAURANTS: FROM LEFT: THOMAS HINTON; COURTESY LA ESQUINA; MARION CURTIS; LORENZO CINIGLIO; COURTESY GRAMERCY PARK HOTEL