

July 13, 2009

## The Not-at-All Standard Grill

### Eatery in Balazs' hotel rejuvenates meatpacking district.



#### THE STANDARD GRILL

848 Washington St.  
Corner of Washington and West 13th  
Street

Map | Subway  
212-645-4100



**CITY** New York

**STATE** NY, 10014

**CUISINE** American

**WEBSITE** www.thestandardgrill.com

**PRICE** Entrées, \$15-\$25

**SERVING** Breakfast, lunch, dinner,  
late-night, seven days

**CREDIT CARDS** American Express,  
MasterCard, Visa

**SUBWAY** A, C, E at 14th Street

**NEIGHBORHOOD** Meatpacking District

**NOISE** Noisy

**RESERVATIONS** Absolutely

**HOURS** Sun-Wed, 5 p.m.-midnight;  
Thu-Sat, 5 p.m.-1 a.m.

I can't wait to return.

I will definitely go back.

I'll let them simmer a while.

**NO HATS** Never again.

They're calling it a soft opening. Nice try. After the usual rehearsals and jolly up of friends and family, The Standard Grill is open. Evening two. Already, heat-seeking nomads are three deep at the bar, and from my heavy leather chair I am looking right at Anna Wintour. I know for sure this is the place to be tonight.

I often hear that the meatpacking district is over—abandoned turf for riffraff and tourists—but I suspect the High Line Park and this appealing canteen in André Balazs' hotel tower on stilts will be the Botox that makes it look young and hot all over again. Helena Christensen strides by creating a little frisson. Isn't this why we had to rush here so early? We want to be here.

A busboy brings crusty rolls in a brown paper bag, a small dish of long red radishes and another with chunks of parmigiana. I'll admit it: As congenitally critical as this foursome is, we're poised for wonderful.

The Rum Swindle (\$10 cocktails) is not too sweet. Perhaps that's a slightly skimpy portion of steak tartare for \$14, but still, it's a starter two might share. A sweet pea ravioli entrée for \$15 evens that out. The Kentucky bacon on our iceberg wedge and also on the burger is strangely stiff, like a Popsicle stick, perhaps cooked too far ahead. But the burger is rich and juicy, and we love the lemony cumin-coriander-turmeric-rubbed lamb chops beside fabulous crispy polenta cake, spiked with mascarpone, olives and basil.

I'm definitely eating more than my share of crusty potato chunks drizzled with smoked pepper aioli. "Did someone order this?" I ask. No. It's "on the house"—a generous bowl for every table. Possibly my favorite taste of the evening.



Two nights later all I am thinking about is how soon can I get back to The Standard Grill. Dan Silverman, whose food I loved at Lever House, definitely merits time to get his crew ready for breakfast, lunch and eventually late-night dinner.

Yet it feels like a club already: Aerin Lauder, Fernanda Niven, Cristina Cuomo, Frank DiGiacomo. All are here.

A packed house is challenging the kitchen (still in previews, remember). The grilled asparagus is less perfect than last time, but there are whole pedigreed anchovies on the Caesar-like Satur Farms romaine and a splendor of fresh sardines, grilled whole and served beside sweet and sour radicchio with balsamic and pine nuts, on parsley oil with scattered leaves of celery and parsley.

The "Million Dollar" whole roast chicken for two looks marvelous in that black iron skillet, and \$32 to feed two is a million dollar concept, but it could be slightly less cooked for my taste. DeBragga & Spitler's New York strip is perfect—love those duck fat smashed potatoes with sweet cloves of garlic and olives.

With drinks, sides and entrées \$15 to \$25 (plus a \$65 rib eye for two), we're getting away with spending just \$50 to \$60 per person, tax and tip included, but we could do burgers and salads for less or easily spend much more on cocktails, a \$70 Bordeaux and desserts all around. Shaved lime and mint ice is refreshing, but it's shaved ice. And the humble pie with its rhubarb mush is humble indeed and, I hope, a work in progress.

The truth is I would go back tonight. I'd try the rib eye, halibut hollandaise, the pork chop and the brownie, even if it does come with toasted marshmallow. —Gael Greene