



## Hot Plates

**Bite-size dish on new restaurants: Lunetta, Dell'anima, Smith's, Bacaro, Blue Ribbon Sushi Bar & Grill**

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### **Dell'anima**

"We're leaving at 5 a.m. after prepping and getting in at 11 a.m.!" quips chef Gabriel Thompson, describing the opening rush at this new Italian wine bar-cum-restaurant in the Village. It's a complete 180 for the chef, who made the switch from mega-food-emporium Del Posto to this intimate affair. Although he's no longer under the tutelage of Del Posto's Mark Ladner ("One of the best people I've worked for—he knows what the hell he's doing, but he's also very humble and has a great palate"), Thompson is now able to showcase his take on contemporary Italian fare, with a variety of bruschettas (including a bone-marrow custard version), handmade pastas (pizzoccheri with sage, potato and fontina) and meats (braised lamb shank with polenta). "I'm inspired by ingredients—when I start describing the food to the waitstaff, everything starts having lemon and olive oil, parsley, anchovies," says Thompson, who actually grew up a vegetarian with a "hippie mom" who espoused soy sauce over ketchup ("I still get a gag reflex when I eat ketchup," he says). The wine program, crafted by owner Joe Campanale (Babbo), delivers a well-rounded Italian selection of about a hundred bottles. Ultimately, says Thompson, the goal was to create a neighborhood spot that's accessible, from its democratic wine list to the open kitchen to the six-seat "chef's counter." "I'm not elitist," he says. "When I get stressed out, my girlfriend's mom says, 'It's not like we're making peace in the Middle East. We're making food.'" 38 Eighth Ave. at Jane St., 212-366-6633