

The Canal House

If you're in New York City you might start the day downtown. You'll need coffee and [Abraco](#) in the East Village is expert. Try the olive oil cake for breakfast, too. If it's garden weather, wander north to 9th Street and east to Avenue C and find the [La Plaza Cultural Community Garden](#), a good place for a picnic lunch of [Porchetta](#) sandwiches or a sampling of the [Dumpling Man's](#) best, both of which are on the way. Head to SoHo and visit the Japanese store [Muji](#), where you'll find everything you never knew you needed. It is also on the same block as [CB2](#), where we buy our favorite everyday glassware. While in SoHo, look also for [Despaña](#), a groovy gourmet shop specializing in food and kitchenwares imported from Spain.

At cocktail time, go to the [Brandy Library](#) on the west side for a sidecar or a manhattan before diving into handmade pasta and cured meats at [Lupa](#). Or, head up to 14th street to [La Nacional](#) for a pan of crispy paella and tapas at the former meeting spot of the Spanish Benevolent Society. In the front there is a rustic, but charming room with about eight big farmhouse tables and chairs. In the back there is a very bare-bones "old man" bar with simple barstools and a few televisions blaring whatever soccer dining game is on that day. The all-Spanish wine list is good and affordable and the good feeling is unavoidable.

For an uptown day, start on the upper east side with breakfast at [Café Sabarsky](#) inside the [Neue Galerie](#). They serve at 9 a.m., everyday but Tuesday, and you'll find Viennese coffee, pastries, sausages, and perfect soft-boiled eggs. You'll be ready then to spend an hour or two with Klee, Klimt, Kandinsky, and all the Austrians and Germans on display. If it's a Wednesday or Thursday travel to [Lincoln Center](#) on the west side for an open rehearsal of the [NY Philharmonic](#) — an excellent treat on a budget (check their online schedule before you go, as they don't hold them every week). You'll be a short walk to Zabar's and Fairway, which are gourmet institutions. Buy a picnic lunch and head to Columbus Circle on the West 59th Street corner of [Central Park](#). Don't miss the interactive [Clo Wine Bar](#) in the Time Warner Center. With nearly 100 wines available by the taste, temperature controlled and self-served from their digital sommelier, it is a serious wine education that's so cool you will forgive the designers for the wine-geek technology and lack of charm. For a taste of old and grandiose New York, go for dinner at [La Grenouille](#), or for David Pasternak's pristine seafood at [Esca](#) in midtown. —Julie