

B. SMITH'S

The Melting Pot

Wanderlust can be fruitful or creamy or tomato-based. Wanderlust comes in many flavors, but you might not know that if you've never dined at B. Smith's, smack in the heart of the theater district. B. Smith is Barbara Smith, an electrifying black former model who is at home in many European capitals, much of the Caribbean and the American deep south. She's set all that simmering: things island and Continental and funky. Together they shouldn't jibe, but one meal here and it's sly craving ever after.

It's not actually billed as a Chardonnay garlic soup, but that's what those giant Gulf shrimp will arrive in. Whether you're luxuriating over dinner or staying closer to Barbara's bounty of salads and "light plates," these shrimp are the best possible way to begin. Follow them, perhaps, with her "tumble of fresh greens," a sweet vinaigrette sweep of a salad. Or take on one of the most regal light plates ever—a potato-and-leek pancake iced with crème fraîche, smoked salmon and caviar.

Eyes on entrées? Barbara's favorites—and mine—include the duck breast and sausage in a

cabernet sauce, trimmed with greens and cracklings, as well as the lobster ravioli glazed with mascarpone cheese in a light tarragon shellfish bisque. Piquant intoxication, even *before* dessert. White chocolate's the best. That's white chocolate ice cream and macadamia nuts, set in a coconut petal of a cone.

The restaurant and service are as casually elegant as the food. The dining room is spacious, subdued. You can settle in for hours. Not surprisingly, B. Smith's draws one of the more eclectic crowds around. Barbara's come home; boredom be gone.

THE BASICS: B. Smith's Restaurant, 771 Eighth Avenue; 247-2222. Reservations recommended. Complete dinner for two comes to \$70–\$100, but a sampling of the light plates can cost less. **ELIZABETH HANLY**

SECOND HELPING

Last month we reported that the food and service at Canal Bar, a new downtown hot spot at 151 Greenwich Street, were atrocious. The restaurant has since found itself a new chef (a wise move), and things have improved. The food and service are now mediocre. Canal Bar is fine for a quick bite—try the Niçoise Pizza appetizer, pungent with olives and anchovies—but only if you happen to be in the neighborhood.



In B. Smith's casual main room, savor things island, funky and Continental.