

OPENINGS

## Sauvage, 'Wild' Sister Resto to Maison Premiere, Opens in Greenpoint



Maison Premiere's new sister restaurant, Sauvage (Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

Maison Premiere has been the Belle of the Brooklyn Ball since it opened in 2011—the Williamsburg oyster bar is perpetually brimming with enraptured guests and hovering, perspiring would-be waiters for a seat at the horseshoe bar. Earlier this month, their off-the-chain booze operation earned them the James Beard Award for "Outstanding Bar Program." I mean, where else can you find a *classy, non-diabetes-forming* answer to the tiki trend, an *unrivaled* selection of absinthe drips, and a \$20 martini that looks worthy of Macaulay Culkin's character in a sorely needed *Richie Rich Redux*?



(Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

So, really, how could the Maison Premiere team top their favorite first-born? Enter **Sauvage**, the brand new sister restaurant to Maison that opened yesterday just opposite McCarren Park. Joshua Boissy, who owns the place along with Krystof Ziaka, assured us that Sauvage was far from being simply Maison Premiere II, as there are "really no similarities. Aside from the same standards for design and for food and execution, it's a very different concept and very different food."



(Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

While Maison is more like a "time machine to the turn of the [last] century," Boissy said, Sauvage has an eclectic design and a menu that's more "producer-focused" than it is varietal. "It's like walking into a restaurant in 2016 in New York City with the feeling that there was something else here before us—in no way are we trying to be old." Plus, Sauvage is taking on a whole new market as a full-service restaurant-bar with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. (For the first several weeks of operation, Sauvage will be serving dinner only.) And so European-style "Cafe culture" informs both the space and the drinks.



Plymouth Rock Pot-au-Feu with Chicken Skin Schmaltz Toast (Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

In designing the cocktail menu at Sauvage, Will Elliott, the **super-star bartender** at Maison Premiere, kept in mind that guests will be "drinking here more during the day than at night," per Boissy. As a result, the "cafe-style cocktail program" favors lower-proof spirits, like aperitifs and digestifs, as well as cocktails with "striking, bright colors" that aren't too boozy, such as spritzers.

That ABV-lightness is owed, in part, to the six fine selections of ice on offer—no, really. "We're focusing on ice really heavily, instead of focusing on the garnish," said Boissy, even rattling off the dimensions of one of the elongated cubes that will occupy high balls for Tom Collins and the like (6" by 1.5" inches).

In designing the cocktail menu at Sauvage, Will Elliott, the **super-star bartender** at Maison Premiere, kept in mind that guests will be "drinking here more during the day than at night," per Boissy. As a result, the "cafe-style cocktail program" favors lower-proof spirits, like aperitifs and digestifs, as well as cocktails with "striking, bright colors" that aren't too boozy, such as spritzers.

That ABV-lightness is owed, in part, to the six fine selections of ice on offer—no, really. "We're focusing on ice really heavily, instead of focusing on the garnish," said Boissy, even rattling off the dimensions of one of the elongated cubes that will occupy high balls for Tom Collins and the like (6" by 1.5" inches).



The Pasta Cobbler with argola pasta, cherry, quinoa, chamomile. (Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

What really sets Sauvage apart from the North Brooklyn restaurant pack, however, is its 200-odd small-batch liquors and "under the radar" spirits. "I don't recognize one bottle," Boissy said. Which shouldn't be dismissed as hubris. "It's not about: Look-it, we have a bunch of weird shit that nobody knows," he explained. "It's more about: We're supporting a bunch of family-run, small producers. They're hands-on, they're not controlled by big corporations, they're putting out great products without any additives, food coloring and dyes and all these other ingredients that big companies dilute their products with."

The word "Sauvage" (meaning "wild and natural" in French) applies to everything from the cafe's food and drinks to its design and decor. It also refers to a French wine movement that's getting back to the roots of old-time vineyard cultivation and winemaking techniques, and so naturally the new restaurant is going for gold with the wine selection. "Certainly we are inspired by the naturalist wine movement that bears that moniker," read a recent jobs posting for bar staff, which also hinted toward a strong emphasis on French wines and wine-based cocktails. (You hear that, **James Murphy**?)

Somewhat counterintuitively, when it comes to applying their "producer-focused" philosophy to the food, what comes out the other end is greater simplicity. For example, Sauvage will be focused on serving oysters from just one producer at a time. "So it's two expressions of the same oyster," Boissy explained, "only one has been in the water a few years longer."

The kitchen, run by chef Lisa Giffen (who honed her knife at uber-fine-dining establishments like **Daniel**), will be putting out what Boissy described as "approachable" food. "The menu feels very creative—there's some French influence in the technique and style, but I'd like to think it's pretty darn American," he said. "Some of the sauces for fish and salads are inspired by the regional Alpine wines that Krystof loves."

At the same time, there'll be out-there selections like a variety of game, and dishes like lobster with pig's blood (ha ha, uh don't worry, the blood is served on the side). But light and healthy food is also well represented, thanks to a "substantial vegetable section." The menu also features reinterpretations of old classics—"reimaginings from the past" such as leek terrine, and a dish that turns classic roasted chicken on its head by employing a unique breed of heritage chicken.

Other dishes include a whole stuffed fish, squid ink garganella, Porter house pork chop, pike (what Boissy said is "similar to black bass") and, perhaps the most epic, a half pig head.



Mountain Pike with Vegetables and a Sour Beer Sabayon (Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

The idea at Sauvage is to blend styles and motifs to create a palette all its own: Think Art Nouveau light fixtures, tropical plants, black-and-white photos, old-school leather booths, and eye-popping, graphic French posters from the '60s. While Maison started out as a somewhat DIY design and grew into the tony but worn-in place it is now, at Sauvage everything is remarkably well-made from the start. "Every piece of furniture, every light fixture in the restaurant was handcrafted," Boissy explained. "Every piece in the dining room was handmade by artisans out of French walnut, brass, bronze. So it's incredibly detailed, it was created in a way that you would have seen restaurants built 100 years ago. True artisans were working on every single aspect of this, nothing was bought from stores."



(Photo: Katie Burton, courtesy of Sauvage)

The owners were inspired to create these surroundings during various research trips last year, including one to Paris where younger chefs were taking over old spaces and updating the food. "There was Bar Vivant, which is this very new, hip, young French natural wine bar with small plates and cool music," Boissy recalled. "It's not an old restaurant or a bistro or a brasserie, it's a new French restaurant but in an old space, so there's old and there's new in one place."

They saw the same thing in LA, where stalwarts like the Beverly Hills Hotel brought together old-world charm and hip newness. "There was this rich grandness about it," Boissy explained. "I like decadent places, I like old hotels, and old hotel bars, those places are really grand and invoke this sense of success and celebration, and we think our dining rooms should feel that way."

Boissy believes that feeling should be accessible to everyone. "[At Maison], we think people should be able to come in and spend \$25 on a plate and have a \$6 to \$7 glass of wine or beer and feel grand and good and happy, and feel like they're somewhere really decadent, even though it's not fine dining," he said. "We wanted to do that again here."

Unfortunately, that doesn't mean there's going to be an insane dollar-oysters happy hour at Sauvage, too. "The neighborhood was a very different place in 2011," Boissy explained. "Our neighbor pays \$25,000 for rent, and nowadays you can't even attempt that or you'll go out of business in a week."

**Sauvage** is located at 905 Lorimer in Greenpoint. See the full dinner menu below.

**Correction:** a previous version of this article stated that Sauvage is located in Williamsburg, it's in fact located just across the border in Greenpoint.