

W

Sparkle!
Who's Got
the Biggest
Rocks at the
Oscars?

Tip Top

The Height of Fashion
From Paris, Milan & New York

Teen Billionaires: Europe's
Rich Kids Come of Age

Better Than Botox?
The Latest Magic Creams

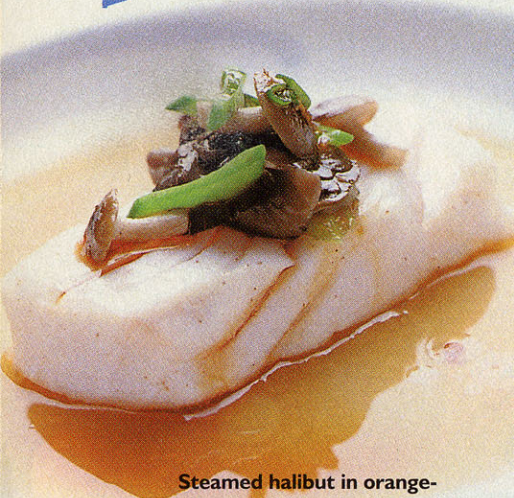
From Russia With Cash:
A Socialite's Rise to Stardom

Plus: Rachel Griffiths, Javier
Bardem, Gabby Karan's Fantasy
Wedding and Suzy Scoop



Euroflash

Two new destinations, in New York and Paris, offer late-night hedonism of the most glamorous order.



Steamed halibut in orange-ginger dashi broth with maitake and oyster mushroom medley



From left: Fabio Granato and Vittorio Assaf with their rare seaweed sculpture

Orient Excess | New York

"GEISHA.... *Gaaay-zha*. The name is sexy, no?"

If excitement is truly contagious, Vittorio Assaf is ready for quarantine. Sipping a macchiato alongside partner Fabio Granato in Serafina Fabulous Grill, one piece of the duo's growing Serafina empire in Manhattan, Assaf is eagerly detailing their next venture, the Japanese-fusion restaurant Geisha—which will be, conveniently, right next door. But to simply call Geisha a restaurant would be to undersell the Serafina Nightlife Experience: Assaf and Granato have built their reputation—one reliably maintained by "Page Six" editors—on a clientele rich with hard-partying jet-setters, Euro playboys, supermodels, DiCaprio posesses and a king or three.

As of this month, those privileged folks will have another place to play. And Geisha, it turns out, has quite a pedigree of its own. Housed in a renovated East Side town house (the top floors of which will be Granato's apartment), the restaurant, a chic homage to the traditional geisha aesthetic, was designed by architect David Rockwell—soon to collaborate with the two again on a new Serafina in the theater district. It will specialize in fusion morsels ("but very good portions," Granato stresses) created by chef Eric Ripert of Le Bernardin, whose sous-chef, Michael Vernon, will oversee Geisha's kitchen.

"It will be Japanese ingredients worked with French techniques," Ripert explains. "A little Thai for spice, also a touch of Vietnamese." That means dishes such as sashimi of yellowtail, hamachi and tuna brushed with yuzu vinaigrette, or halibut with classic Japanese dashi broth, infused with ginger and lemongrass. "Everything has a twist," Ripert says.

In Geisha's seductive interior, the attention to detail is extraordinary: At the downstairs bar, guests can rest their cocktails on a terrazzo bar inlaid with mother-of-pearl, illuminated by backlit orange glass disks modeled on Japanese umbrellas. They can head back to the sushi room, lit by a gigantic fireplace, where Hawaiian chef John Mazo will serve sushi that the owners promise will be downright transcendent. (During a recent tasting, Assaf says, "Oh my God, I was crying.") Upstairs is the restaurant—its walls lined with ivory ceramic replicas of obi belts holding sake bottles—and the pièce de résistance, a gallery of exquisite seaweed sculptures resembling dried flowers. With a subterranean entrance, Geisha, complete with gigantic glass windows at street level, will be completely visible from the sidewalk, creating a literally glowing tableau.

All around, Geisha sounds almost Zen—well, as Zen as Granato and Assaf are likely to get. A downstairs deejay will spin tunes that Assaf describes as "Oriental Up," and the two are debating whether to deck the waitstaff in geisha garb, although they laughingly draw the line at the full Kabuki.

While Geisha's design is complex, Assaf and Granato's mission is simple: to wine, to dine and, most important, "to make people look good." That should keep the supermodels happy—and the playboys even happier. —LAURA BROWN

33 East 61st Street, New York, NY 10021, 212.813.1113