

## DINING

### The Half King: Bar Fare That's a Cut Above

Chef Gregory Baumel Serves Food with Flair at Reasonable Prices

By [TheImproper.com](#)

One of the best things about New York is the wide variety of restaurants and bars in practically every neighborhood. But the restaurant business is notoriously tough, and if you don't deliver on quality food at good prices, you won't stay open for long.

One place that's leaving customers satisfied and coming back for more is the **Half King Bar & Restaurant** in Manhattan. Located on 23rd Street and 10th Ave., the Half King offers bar fare that easily matches the quality of entrees found in higher end restaurants, but at reasonable prices.

This isn't your average comfort food. Executive Chef **Gregory Baumel** (pictured below) elevates simple bar cuisine to a new level of elegance. While many restaurant reviewers focus on the celebrity owner of the Half King (award-winning writer **Sebastian Junger**, author of *The Perfect Storm*), food aficionados understand that if the food ain't good, people won't come back.



Chef Baumel, a native New Yorker who was born a few blocks away in Hells Kitchen, has been cooking at the pub since 2002. Baumel, who has previously worked at **Perretti's Italian Café** in Manhattan as well as with noted Chefs **Michael Weinstein** and **Ernie Bogen**, creates masterpieces out of straightforward bar fare.

Baumel says it's important for him to satisfy customers' appetites while delivering great "perceived value." "We try to make sure no entrée is over \$20," he says. Judging by the happy crowd we saw at the Half King on a Monday, it was obvious patrons were more than satisfied with the quality—and value.

At the Half King, savory appetizers come in generous portions. For example, the **Fresh Water Mussels with Coconut Milk** is to die for, and a generous **Tasting Platter** overflows with pigs in a



blanket, gooey fried mozzarella sticks and blue-chip nachos complete with four different dipping sauces. We also recommend a refreshing appetizer made of stacked tomato, mozzarella cheese and basil lightly drizzled with balsamic vinaigrette. This is bar cuisine at its best.

But don't forget to save room for the main course. While the Half King is known for its array of eight tasty **Burger Boxes**, entrees such as the **Paella** and **Scallops** are elegantly prepared—as delicious as it is pleasing to the eye. Not surprisingly, the desserts also get a thumbs-up. The **Chocolate and Banana Bread Pudding** and the **Warm Fudge Walnut Brownie with Hot Fudge and Vanilla Gelato** were incredible. Frankly, you won't find a better dessert even if you paid twice the price.



Founded in 2000, the Half King is managed by **Sinead Duell** and co-owned by Junger and partners **Scott Anderson** and **Nanette Burstein**. On Mondays, the place is packed with attractive patrons seeking a hearty meal, after-work drinks and intellectual stimulation. Literary readings are held in a separate dining area off the main dining room and bar. Wednesdays boast free pigs in a blanket during happy hour, and on Thursdays, customers can enjoy free nachos and salsa.

The Half King maintains an upbeat rock n' roll atmosphere with a large sidewalk café and a welcoming back garden that is enclosed and heated during the winter. Each week, the pub hosts a reading series in association with publishers such as **Doubleday**, **Harper Collins** and **Scribner**, as well as *Esquire*, *National Geographic*, *Vanity Fair* and *Harper's* magazines.

The place is positively booming—and with good reason. A warm, inviting, casual-dining environment coupled with great food will ensure the Half King's cup is never just half-full.

### **The Half King Bar & Restaurant**

**505 W 23rd St.**

**New York, NY 10011**

**TEL: 212.462.4300**

**FAX: 212.462.4504**

For more information, check out the [Half King website](#).

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