

## The (Kosher) Power Lunch

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*Where the observant in NYC real estate dine and do deals*

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**The kitchen at Reserve Cut, a kosher steakhouse in the Financial District**

It wasn't that long ago that gourmet glatt steakhouses were basically non-existent, meaning that when observant Jews sat down for a high-powered business lunch over some juicy prime beef, they were often left to order a salad.

Although there were kosher steakhouses in the city, there were few during the 1990s that rose to the level of a first-class dining experience where real estate industry bigwigs could wine and dine clients.

"We're old enough to remember when there was just one," said Brown Harris Stevens' Diane Abrams, who frequently entertains clients with her BHS teammate Felise Gross at many of the city's top kosher kitchens.

That one was Lou G. Siegel's, a Garment District institution that shut down in the mid-1990s after a nearly 80-year run.

Today, however, any observant real estate pro with the gelt to spend — and there are plenty of them in this town — can run down the list of the city’s best steak spots. While Fred’s at Barneys, Michael’s in Midtown, the Four Seasons are some of the go-to dining spots for many New York power players, there are a world of kosher haunts too, including those where real estate deals are getting sealed.

They are a lot pricier than their non-kosher counterparts. That’s largely due to the stringent standards required to be certified kosher — only the half front of the cattle can be used and many cuts are rejected because the quality is not up to par. So while a 16 oz. rib eye at Del Frisco’s or Wolfgang’s might cost about \$50, that same slab of meat might be \$20 more expensive at a kosher steakhouse.

Still, these eateries are great places to rub shoulders with industry figures who frequent the same small set of restaurants.

“It’s not like there’s four or five hundred places to go,” Westwood Realty Associates’ Steven Vegh explained.

## **Prime Grill**

### **550 Madison Avenue**

Ask an industry pro where to go for the best kosher steak, and before you finish the question you’re likely to get the answer: Prime Grill.

The 16-year-old restaurant is regarded as the city’s first high-end kosher steakhouse. And while the business crowd is by no means limited to the real estate set — finance and political titans are also regulars — it’s the go-to place to rub shoulders with the industry’s hungry machers.

“Once a month, I meet with Gary Barnett on the Upper West Side. The only place he will go is the Prime Grill, a kosher steakhouse,” Sam Sidhu, the founder of development firm Megalith Capital Management, told The Real Deal a few months ago.

Big names like Barnett and George Klein are indeed known to frequent the restaurant, which is located at the base of the former Sony Building on Madison Avenue. Prime Grill’s landlord, Joseph Chetrit, is also a customer. He is converting Sony’s former headquarters into 96 luxury condos with an expected total sellout of \$1.8 billion. The penthouse will have an asking price of \$150 million.

“It’s probably the hottest building in New York City,” Prime Grill founder and owner Joey Allaham told TRD. “We’re very excited about the \$2 billion renovation coming down.”

Allaham is a fourth-generation Syrian butcher who immigrated to the U.S. more than 20 years ago. He first opened shop on East 49th Street in 2000 and briefly relocated to 55th Street before landing at Prime Grill’s current home late last year.

The restaurant's décor is classic steakhouse, with both white tablecloth dining and plush red leather booths. There are also three private dining rooms.

The place is also serious about keeping kosher. The restaurant's mashgiash — the head rabbi who oversees the kitchen — meticulously inspects food and processes to make sure everything complies with kosher standards. He's even been known to sleep in the restaurant before an impending snow storm.

The full dinner menu includes sushi and sashimi, beef tartar and classic Jewish comfort food like "Grandma Bella's chicken noodle soup."

Eastern Consolidated's James Famularo, a regular at the establishment, said real estate brokers like to visit restaurants in general. "Everyone likes to see if somebody's got a good concept and a good team," he said. "Then maybe they can help them find their next location."

## **Reserve Cut**

### **40 Broad Street**

If Prime Grill is the conservative, button-downed establishment for business meals, then Reserve Cut is its hip younger cousin — both figuratively and literally.

The restaurant opened in 2013 at the trendy Setai Hotel near Wall Street and is helmed by Albert Allaham, the younger cousin to Prime Grill's Joey Allaham.

As the only kosher steakhouse option in the Financial District, it draws heavily from the Downtown and Brooklyn real estate sets. Ralph Herzka of Meridian Capital is said to dine there frequently, as are members of Brooklyn's Syrian Jewish community.

The restaurant is more contemporary than Prime Grill, with a chic setting that's dimly lit for dinner. A giant glass wine cellar sits at the center of the 200-seat dining room.

The menu features nearly a dozen cuts of prime steak sourced from Allaham's Brooklyn butcher shop, Prime Cut, and also offers a full sushi menu.

Dining here can lead to fortuitous encounters. Stefani Markowitz, president of residential brokerage firm Rutenberg Realty, recalled having lunch with a developer at the restaurant and being approached afterwards by a nearby diner. By the time the two finished talking, she had nabbed a new exclusive listing.

## **Mike's Bistro**

### **127 East 54th Street**

When a business meal doesn't necessarily mean power lunch, many industry pros head to Mike's Bistro for its relaxed atmosphere.

“You can wear jeans or a suit; you can drink beer or champagne,” the restaurant’s website says. The eatery is known for inventive signature dishes like duck gnocchi as well as chef Mike Gershkovich, who frequently stops by tables to schmooze with diners.

“It’s got a really lovely, great ambiance,” said BHS’ Abrams. “When you walk in you see an elegant bar. It looks more like a place where singles might come. You can carry on a conversation and it’s not overly noisy.”

Daily specials include a prime-grade côte de boeuf for two (available Mondays and Tuesdays) clocking in at \$115. But Abrams recommends stopping by for lunch, when the restaurant offers a four-course prix fixe for \$75.

## **Abigael’s**

### **1407 Broadway at 39th Street**

Abigael’s, named for King David’s wife, recently opened a Brooklyn branch at the Barclays Center, where it’s the exclusive kosher caterer to the private suites and Jay Z’s 40/40 club.

But it’s the original 17-year-old establishment in Midtown that put Abigael’s on the map. The 12,000-square-foot restaurant — which is the brainchild of celebrity chef and winner of the prestigious James Beard award, Jeff Nathan — seats 375 people and even has an area for additional seating when a guest’s security detail is in tow.

“We’re in Midtown; we get everybody,” Nathan said. “A lot of people’s names I’m not at liberty to say.” With basic dishes such as chili and chicken fried steak, the restaurant hits the sweet spot between formal business lunch and casual fare. “Abigael’s is probably the perfect medium,” said JTRE Holdings CEO Jack Terzi. “You’re not going to be there for two hours. You can be in and out in an hour and it’s a decent meal.”

## **Mr. Broadway**

### **1372 Broadway at 38th Street**

Mr. Broadway has been around since 1933. And while it does offer steak, it’s more of a burger-and-beer type of joint.

The restaurant does have a dining room in the back, but the real action is up front during midday, when the lunchtime crowd lines up at the deli counter for a quick kosher meal on the go. “Mr. Broadway is a different animal,” said **Danny Hedaya**, president of **Platinum Properties**. “It depends on when you go. There are a bunch of tables and people are in and out pretty quickly.” The menu offers a variety of burgers including a Hawaiian version served with salami and pineapple, as well as chops, southern fried chicken and a Chinese/sushi menu.

While Hedaya is based in the Financial District, he said that when he’s in Midtown he tries to make a point to stop at the restaurant, where he strongly recommends the shawarma served on a baguette with hummus.

“I’d argue it’s one of the best in the city,” he said.