



Chef unveils food hits

A new book on the Big Apple's culinary highlights makes for a mouth-watering read, as **Mark Irving** discovers

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of Shannon Bennett's reputation could safely predict any book of his would focus on the sublime, not the so-so.

After all, the shaggy-haired chef has made it his mission to offer the best of dining experiences at his Melbourne CBD restaurant *Vue de monde*; so it's no surprise that his book on what New York has to offer in the way of eateries and accommodation centres on the quality end of town.

Should any further proof be needed, Shannon Bennett's *New York* carries the subtitle: *A Personal Guide to the City's Best*. It's a mouth-watering paean to New York's multifaceted and multicultural culinary character.

If you've never been, it'll make you want to book a flight tomorrow; if you *have* enjoyed a taste of the Big Apple, it'll make you hanker for another bite.

I've been to New York City on three occasions but only passed through each time. My visits also occurred when I was an impecunious student, too young and easily overwhelmed by the sheer hustle and bustle of Manhattan — and too broke to take advantage of what the city had to offer of a gastronomic nature. I'm full of regret now at what I missed and Shannon Bennett's *New York* has done nothing to assuage that disappointment.

His book not only traverses the best of New York's eating establishments (and extends to outer boroughs such as Brooklyn as well as Hoboken, just on the other side of the Hudson River in the

neighbouring State of New Jersey), but it also covers hotels, includes recipes and boasts some wonderfully evocative photographs of New York City.

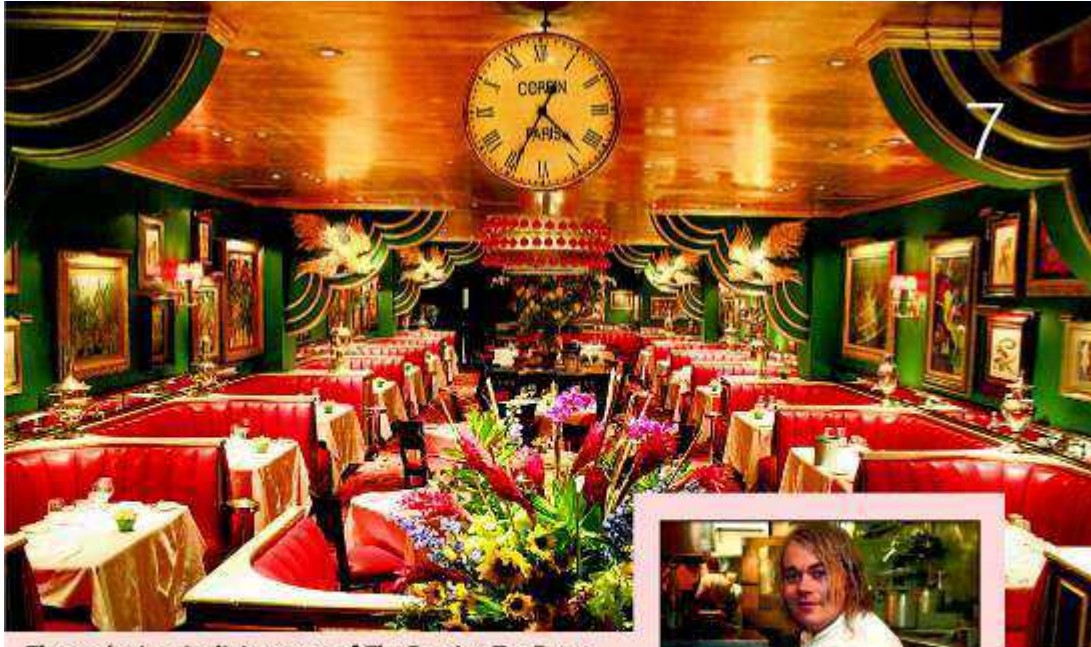
Bennett reckons New York is the most exciting food city outside France. "So what does New York mean to me? Woody Allen films, opulent apartments with snobby doormen and The Russian Tea Room. For some reason this dining space sticks in my mind as the pinnacle of what all grand dining rooms in New York should feel like," he writes.

Aaaaaahhh, The Russian Tea Room! Where Dustin Hoffman had lunch with his agent, played by Sydney Pollack, in *Tootsie*. Imperial Russian food as befits an eatery founded by members of the Russian Imperial Ballet in 1927; also where you can get an express three-course lunch for \$35 — which is a salient point because Bennett's book includes the good-value and interesting places ("The Jane is the coolest budget-priced hotel in Manhattan"), not just the ruinously expensive.

Cafes and grills, delicatessens and bistros, steakhouses, pubs and bars — they all get a mention. They just need to be GOOD.

Like Bennett's previous book, on Paris, Shannon Bennett's *New York* is co-written with Scott Murray. Numerous other friends contribute, too, so the book benefits from more than one voice. They all add to the mix and stir the desire to enjoy a taste of what they enjoyed.

Shannon Bennett's *New York* is published by The Miegunyah Press, an imprint of Melbourne University Publishing. Hardback. Price: \$44.99



The opulent main dining room of The Russian Tea Room.

SHANNON BENNETT'S NEW YORK FAVOURITES:



Shannon Bennett

Top five hotels... ("where I go for a once-in-a-lifetime experience").

- 1 The Greenwich Hotel (TriBeCa)
- 2 The Surrey (Upper East Side)
- 3 The Bowery Hotel (East Village)
- 4 The Standard (Meatpacking District)
- 5 Crosby Street Hotel (SoHo)

Most exciting restaurants (and their chefs)

- 1 Corton (Paul Liebrandt)
- 2 Le Bernardin (Eric Ripert)
- 3 Per Se (Thomas Keller)
- 4 The Spotted Pig (April Bloomfield)
- 5 Masa (Masa Takayama)