



EAT • THE NEW SUPPER CLUB

TASTE OF THE UNDERGROUND

On a recent Saturday, 35 guests arrive at an unassuming brownstone on a Brooklyn residential street that on this evening doubles as an epicurean sanctuary. In the kitchen, Daniel and Alicia, the evening's co-chefs, outline the six-course menu: arugula soup topped with roe and radish coins, *sous vide* eggs on a bed of roasted-garlic farro and prosciutto, caramelized foie gras with poached pear and so on. "The whole thing takes us 30 hours," says Daniel as Alicia scrutinizes a pan of pork-belly chunks submerged in their own anise-infused fat. "The adrenaline keeps you going."

In the past decade, as the restaurant scene has traded fussy and corporate for artisanal and local, furtive supper clubs have arisen in cities such as Chicago, Paris and New York, the home of Daniel and Alicia's Bite Club. (They won't disclose their last name for fear of the health department; neither works full time in the restaurant industry nor possesses any formal culinary training.) It's the dining equivalent of the underground music scene—but in cramped apartments and with Michelin-worthy cooking instead of grimy

warehouses and clamorous power chords.

The guests find their assigned seats and exchange stories of how they discovered Bite Club. J.B., a Parisian expat, was tipped off by a French newspaper. "You know what to expect in a restaurant—the same thing," he says. "Here you're part of a secret." Entrance is gained via the Bite Club website (nybiteclub.com); after being approved, members receive e-mail invitations to the dinners, which are held two or three times a month in vacant apartments and loaned residences and cost \$70 to \$100 per person.

As the lights lower in the dining room, an expectant hush falls over guests as servers carry out plates of homemade ricotta piped onto beet carpaccio and pecorino-inflected beet ravioli. Within a few minutes the din of conversation ratchets back up, registering increased approval with each course. "I spent years eating at restaurants in Manhattan on a business account," says a rakish man in his 60s as he polishes off a tart of ganache and homemade Nutella. "Those places could be machine-like. This is different; there's passion in the air."

—Alexander Provan