



Clockwise from left: Smoked Atlantic salmon at METHOD; pulled pork sandwich from Jax BBQ; the Jalisco Switchblade at Bo Peep—made with equal parts smoke, sweet and spice.



Smoking Allowed

MIDTOWN IS HEATING UP THIS SUMMER WITH A NEW BARBECUE JOINT AND OTHER SMOKY FAVORITES. —MATTHEW WEXLER

Wander along Ninth Avenue just south of Port Authority and you'll discover a firecracker neighborhood on the cusp of the soon-to-open Hudson Yards. Affectionately dubbed by some as Hell's Pantry, the eclectic and unassuming stretch of bodegas, storefront restaurants and local grocers is one that pitmaster and restaurateur Nick Accardi is familiar with. He opened the adjacent Tavola, an Italian trattoria, in 2012, and is now taking things low and slow at his new barbecue joint, Jax BBQ.

No stranger to the smoke pit, Accardi picked up his skills after a chance meeting with legendary pitmaster Mike Mills at the Big Apple Barbecue (held this year June 9 and 10 at Madison Square Park). "He was

so gracious," says Accardi of Mills' invitation to fly out to Las Vegas and learn the tricks of the trade. "With so many awards under his belt, Mike wasn't overprotective of his methods, so I headed out to hang with the team and learned how to use the pit. I saw how they were misting with apple juice versus cider and how to develop a good bark."

Maximizing JAX's tiny 400-square-foot kitchen, Accardi installed a modern but mighty stainless steel pit, stoking it with a combination of white oak, cherry and birch logs. "Unlike hickory, these woods don't impart a lot of opinion," says Accardi. "They're not oily or heavy. Rather, they allow the meat to develop its own profile."

Saint Louis ribs, pork shoulder and brisket are smoked up to 14 hours

at a steady 225 degrees. Dry rubs and sauces are all made in-house, relying on whole spices and some unconventional ingredients like anchovy and fennel seed to balance sweet and vinegary notes. Accardi has also sourced local favorites like Pat LaFrieda for a customized burger blend, Esposito Meat Market for Texas link sausage and Little Pie Company for a tart and tangy Key lime pie.

Accardi accumulated antique gas station signs, bar stools from a 1930s Woolworth and customized black leather banquettes to create a rockabilly vibe. He also commissioned murals that pay homage to vintage tattoo art, creating a visual feast as decadent as the heaping platters of barbecue that await. 496 Ninth Ave., 212.273.1168, jaxbbq.nyc.com

GET TOASTED

Jalisco Switchblade, Bo Peep at the Rag Trader

A hazy libation featuring tequila, spiced carrot juice and smoked pineapple syrup, garnished with a charred sprig of rosemary. 70 W. 36th St., 917.261.5495, ragtradernyc.com/bo-peep

Smoked Salmon Sushi Box, METHOD Japanese Kitchen & Sake Bar

Chef Yasuhiro Honma cold smokes Atlantic salmon for his riff on a Philadelphia roll, which layers cream cheese, shiso leaf and salmon roe before sealing in a ceramic vessel infused with cherry wood smoke. 746 10th Ave., 212.582.2146, kitchensakebar.method.nyc

Umami Smoke, The Harrow New York

Master mixologist Cliff Mejia macerates shiitake, oyster and porcini mushrooms in bourbon before stirring with Benedictine, Cynar, sweet vermouth and orange bitters. Decanted in a maplewood smoke vase, the cocktail is finished with a drop of truffle oil. 720 10th Ave., 212.757.6977, theharrownewyork.com