

B A R  
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PORTRAIT OF A SUCCESS:  
**MONKEY BAR**

BY GARY REGAN

# MONKEY BAR & RESTAURANT

*New York City*

A swank new Manhattan restaurant  
is invented to accompany an expert  
restoration of a classic New York watering hole



**W**hen it first opened in 1932, **Monkey Bar** was originally just that—a bar, and one that occupied a whopping 1,100 square feet of space contiguous to the **Elysée Hotel** in midtown Manhattan. During its heyday throughout the '40s and '50s, **Monkey Bar** reveled in its reputation as a central stomping ground for New York's drinking-hours elite. With its kickily cartoonish, big city style, the bar attracted convivial crowds of celebrities (Tallulah Bankhead, Tennessee Williams, etc.), society figures, and assorted Manhattan dwellers with time enough and more to linger in its smoky shadows over a few well-constructed drinks. Colorful personalities were the norm, such as resident music maker Johnny Pane, who would hurl his empty glass across the piano to draw attention to a need for a refill.

Now **Monkey Bar** is also a restaurant. After its closure in 1992, **Peter** and **Penny Glazier**, in partnership with **Burt** and **Judy Resnick**, took over and renovated the space. Through the strategic removal of one wall, they have smoothly linked the bar area to the former dining room of the **Elysée Hotel**. And while intent upon bringing the restaurant to life with chef **John Schenk's** eclectic American fare, as part of their commitment to restore the bar to its original splendid vigor, they have provided it with its own full bar menu. How committed were they? Enough to plow over \$250,000 into the restoration of the bar area alone.

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

Architect **David Rockwell**, of **The Rockwell Group**, created the new interior design, retaining much of the old decor while carefully blending in some snazzy improvements. Now one can enter either from the street, through monkey-etched glass doors, or from the **Elysée** lobby, through glass doors painted with more colorful monkeys to echo the original **Charles Vella** barroom murals, now brightly restored. Streaks of red, yellow, and green dance across the cobalt blue linoleum floor in visual syncopation with the crayon-colors wall paintings. Barstools shaped like cocktail olives, complete with red pimiento stuffing seats, line up before the restored mahogany bar that sweeps the length of the room; a baby grand piano roosts nearby. Facing the bar, black

## MONKEY BAR

60 East 54 Street, New York, NY 10022  
(212) 838-2600

**OWNERS** Peter and Penny Glazier (who also own **Symphony Café**, **Gianni's**, and **Bridgewaters**, all in NYC) with **Burt** and **Judy Resnick**

**GENERAL MANAGER** Tony Fortuna, formerly of **Lespinasse**, **Lafayette**, and **Mad.61**, all NYC

**MANAGER** Amy Sacco, formerly of **Vong** and **Bouley**, NYC

**HEAD BARTENDER** Kelly Ryan, formerly of **Vong**

**CHEF** John Schenk, formerly of **Mad.61** and **West Broadway**, NYC

**PASTRY CHEF** Stacie Pierce

**ARCHITECT** David Rockwell, **The Rockwell Group**, NYC

**DATE OF OPENING** September 19, 1994

**HOURS OF OPERATION** Seven days; bar: noon to 1 a.m.; restaurant: noon to 3 p.m. (lunch) and 5 to 11 p.m. (dinner)

**STYLE OF CUISINE** American, with an Asian touch

**SIZE** Bar: 1,400 square feet; dining room: 2,500 square feet

**SEATING CAPACITY** Bar: 40 at bar-side tables and 13 on barstools; dining room: 130

**FOOD/BEVERAGE RATIO** 50/50

**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT** Singing pianist in the bar, Tuesday through Friday, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m.

**BEER LIST** Amstel Light; Heineken; Sierra Nevada Pale Ale; Pilsner Urquell; Bass Ale; Samuel Adams; Clausthaler (nonalcoholic)

**WINES BY THE GLASS** Sparkling: **Perrier Jouët Brut**, **Iron Horse Brut**; White: **Estancia Chardonnay**, **Ojai Sauvignon Blanc**, **Domaine Montigny Sancerre**; Red: **Chalk Hill Cabernet Sauvignon**, **Château Cazalis Bordeaux**, **Galera Pinot Noir**

**PORT AND DESSERT WINES** **Bonny Doon Vin de Glacière Orange Muscat 1993**, **Domaine Coyeux N.V. Muscat Beaumes de Venise**, **Château La Tour Blanche Sauternes 1986**, **Antinori Vin Santo 1988**, **Taylor Fladgate L.B.V. 1987**, **Dow Vintage 1977**, **Colheita 1983**

**COGNAC, ARMAGNAC, AND CALVADOS** **Courvoisier V.S.**, **Rémy Martin V.S.O.P.**, **Rémy Martin X.O.**, **Hine Antique**, **Larresingle Armagnac X.O.**, **Busnel Hors D'Age 15 Years**

**GRAPPAS** **Jacopo Poli**, **Antinori Tignanello**, **Di Sebastiani Barbera California**

### TOP SELLERS

**Cocktail:** Martini  
**Beer:** Amstel Light  
**Single malt Scotch:** Glenfiddich  
**Blended Scotch:** Dewar's  
**Vodka:** Absolut  
**Gin:** Tanqueray  
**Tequila:** Jose Cuervo Gold  
**American straight whiskey:** Jack Daniel's  
**Blended whiskey:** Canadian Club  
**Rum:** Bacardi Light

### ESSENTIALS

**Sound system:** R.D.A. Systems  
**Ice machine:** Ice-O-Matic  
**Glassware:** Schott Zweisel and Bormioli Rocco  
**Flatware:** Sambonet  
**China:** Woodmere

For manufacturers' info, see page 99.

diner-style tables with ridged stainless steel borders are pulled up to comfortable red and tan patterned banquettes. For added joviality overhead, monkey sconces illuminate the scene.

Only accessible through the hotel lobby in the past, the dining room now sprawls just a few steps down from the bar, each presenting an inviting view of the other. The wide curvy staircase also encourages slow, conversation-stopping entrances to be made by long legs and stilettos. Two dining levels are separated by golden metal railings with sculpted monkeys clambering here and there among vining leaves; monkeys hang from the light fixtures, too. Huge, plush, upholstered russet columns add vertical



Monkey Bar's barroom (opposite) draws a constant crowd of the fun, sophisticated hungry. In the dining room (above), Monkeys swing on vined railings that separate upper and lower levels. Photos by Paul Warchol.