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NEW YORK

Chef's Favorites *Hearty Winter Fare*

Aquavit

Recommended: Chef's Tasting

Price: \$105 (Add \$65 for wine pairings) Number of Courses: 8
Cuisine: Scandinavian Neighborhood: Midtown East Side

Johan's favorite winter ingredient: Salsify

When hearing the restaurant name - Aquavit – many Manhattan culinary enthusiasts automatically think of two words: “Marcus Samuelsson.” But Chef Samuelsson wasn't always a co-owner in the storied NYC eatery, open since 1987. It wasn't until 1995 that he received that title, bestowed upon him by proprietor Håkan Swahn. Samuelsson started at Aquavit, his first restaurant in America, in 1991 as an apprentice – and during four years, he worked his way up to sous chef, executive chef, and finally chef-owner. As executive chef, Samuelsson received a three-star *New York Times* review, and at 24, he was the youngest chef to ever receive one. In 2005, Aquavit moved to their current home, where their four separate rooms blend opulence with the inspired minimalism of Scandinavian designers. In 2006, Marcus and Håkan welcomed a new executive chef, Johan Svensson, who is proudly walking in the footsteps of Samuelsson's beautiful French preparations of Scandinavian cuisine.

The four distinct rooms include the private party room, which can accommodate up to 100 people, the formal dining room, the bar/lounge, and the café. The dining room is home to the eight-course chef's tasting menu which brings together two appetizer courses, followed by three mains, and two desserts – certainly worth the slightly over \$100 price tag. A three-course prix fixe is also available in the dining room for \$78 per person. The bar/lounge and the café provide a more traditional Scandinavian menu – Swedish meatballs and gravlax – ordered a la carte and complemented with a large list of beers, ales, wine and specialty cocktails. On Sunday it's time for a smorgasbord, offering herring, charcuteries, and knäckebröd among several other Scandinavian specialties, at just \$48.

