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Newsletter
November 2017

November is known for one big holiday, Thanksgiving. Although President Washington declared Thursday, November 26 as a “Day of Publick Thanksgivin’,” it used to fall on whatever date the President at the time gave the proclamation, and thus Thanksgiving used to fall on different days. Eventually, Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving to fall on the *last Thursday* of November and declared that as the standard. However, during Franklin Roosevelt’s time in office, November twice had five Thursdays in the month (as it does this year). The retailers at the time pushed Roosevelt to have Thanksgiving earlier, to give more time for Christmas shopping. Roosevelt agreed and proclaimed the second-to-last Thursday as Thanksgiving. Interestingly enough, some states disagreed with listening to the retailers, and for two years Thanksgiving fell on different dates depending on where you lived. Eventually Congress passed a law declaring Thanksgiving to be the fourth Thursday of November.

The New Year’s Eve trip to Panama is still in the works. If you are interested please let me know. Some of the itinerary is at the end of the newsletter. I need set RSVPs very soon in order to book the flights and make this trip a reality.

October continues with a boat ride up to Bear Mountain on the **Bear Mountain Oktoberfest Cruise**. This full day event takes place with an Oktoberfest theme, Polka band, incredible views and a full day of fun and relaxation. **PLEASE RSVP SOON!** That weekend we continue on Sunday, October 22nd and try a new restaurant for the group, **TORO**. Run by celebrity and top chefs, this tapas style restaurant is one of the best in the Highline area. The following week we revisit our traditional Halloween dinner at **Café Centro**. We keep coming back to this Mediterranean French on Halloween because they give us a delicious meal and throw in a lot of candy. Costumes are optional, but very welcomed!

We start off November on Sunday the 5th with a return to **VILLA BERULIA**. We dined here last year with a great group and had an amazing meal. This family-run, old-school Italian restaurant is such a favorite that many of our members often ask me to return. The next Sunday, November 12th, we head to **RUSSIAN SAMOVAR**. This is also an old-school restaurant, once owned by an old-school Italian, Frank Sinatra! Live music and great Russian food accompanies us on our 4-course meal that night. The next week, on Saturday, November 18th, we head to Besim Kukaj’s **LUNA PIENA**. Owner of almost a dozen restaurants in NYC, Besim lets his Italian roots shine. We have had great success at Maria Pia and Gallo Nero in the past, and live Jazz plays here on this night. The following Thursday, November 23rd, we return to **ETCETERA ETCETERA** for our annual Thanksgiving meal. Our past few times at this restaurant were well-enjoyed, so we might make this our turkey-day tradition. The following Sunday, November 26th, we head to a new Italian restaurant for the group, **PETALUMA**. They have been serving Italian-American food to the Upper East Side since 1984. Finally, we end the month on Thursday, November 30th at a downtown nightlife and restaurant hotspot called **SONS OF ESSEX**, that coincidentally is owned by the same restaurant group as Petaluma (OK, not a coincidence). What more can you ask for than a midweek great meal in the heart of the hippest part of NYC, surrounded by friends in a place where celebrities often outnumber guests?

The following October events are still available for Single Gourmet Members and their guests:

Bear Mountain Oktoberfest Cruise with German Music Meet at Pier 83, Saturday, October 21st, 8:30am boarding. Full Day Cruise returning 5pm, \$65 boat ride only. PLEASE RSVP ASAP

Toro NYC 85 10th Ave (corner W 15th) Sunday, Oct 22, 5:30pm optional drinks; 6:15pm dinner, \$74: Tapas style, glass of wine, tax, tip

Café Centro (Halloween) 200 Park Avenue @45th Street (Metlife), Tuesday, October 31st, 5:45 pm optional drinks, 6:30 pm dinner, \$83: 3 courses, glass of wine, coffee, tax & tip

The following November events are available for Single Gourmet Members and their guests:



Villa Berulia Restaurant — 4.4 Zagat rating
107 E 34th St (between Park and Lex)
Sunday, November 5th
5:30pm optional drinks, 6:30pm dinner
\$88: 3 courses, glass of wine, coffee, tax & tip

Since 1981, Villa Berulia has been serving delicious Croatian & Italian food in a hidden gem tucked away right out in the open on 34th street. Zagat says, “exceptional hospitality is the strong suit of this Murray Hill family affair that follows through with excellent Italian fare.” The elderly brother and sister owners will insist on shaking your hand and offering a

warm welcome and thank you. Recommended by many members of our group over the years, it is rated 4 stars on YELP and 4.5 stars on TripAdvisor and will be an amazing meal in a classic, tuxedo service old-school restaurant. Our menu includes classic Cesar salad, soup of the day, eggplant rollatini with entrees of scallops in white wine sauce, grilled whole branzino, chicken picatta, slow braised short ribs, vegetarian pasta, and they are known for their baby lamb chops (though this is a supplemental upcharge of \$15 paid directly to them), and a chefs’ selection of desserts.



Russian Samovar — Live Jazz/Piano/Vocals
256 W 52nd Street
Sunday, November 12th
5:45 pm optional drinks, 6:30 pm dinner
\$78: 4 courses, glass of wine, coffee/tea, tax & tip

Michelin guide recommended: “This hot spot caters to hockey players, Russian intelligentsia, and vodka aficionados alike.

Russian Samovar is both quirky and elegant, with musicians tickling the piano and violin. The staff is attentive, sweet, and can walk you through delicious fare.” The restaurant was founded in 1986, by Russian poet Joseph Brodsky with entrepreneur Roman Kaplan and famous Russian ballet dancer Michael Baryshnikov. Frank Sinatra once owned the restaurant and had many concerts here and often spent time with his friends here. It kept its charming tradition to become a favorite place for Russians and a home for famous Russian poets and writers. For the last 15 years Russian Samovar has been a place for poetry reading, live music and special occasions for Russian immigrants. Our menu starts with a traditional Russian chicken, potato, and vegetable salad, or caviar-style eggplant served on brown wheat toast corners, or a traditional beet and vegetable salad. The second course is a mushroom soup, a chicken soup, or their famous Russian borscht. Our third course is a roasted duck breast, or beef stroganoff or grilled salmon. Traditional Russian cake or ice cream for dessert.



Luna Piena — Live Jazz @ 8pm
243 East 53rd (between 2nd and 3rd Aves)
Saturday, November 18th
6:45 pm optional drinks 7:30 dinner
\$77: 3 courses, glass of wine, coffee/tea, tax & tip

Owned by restaurateur Besim Kukaj (owner of 10 Italian restaurants including **Maria Pia** and **Gallo Nero** which we have visited), Luna Piena is a long-time neighborhood favorite that offers a gorgeous bar

and back open-air dining area with a garden of plants and a waterfall. Luna Piena’s cuisine is authentic Italian as the owner and Chef both hail from Italy. There will be live music by jazz vocalist Eustacia Foster. Our entrees: grilled chicken with mixed greens, cannellini, chicken marsala, veal scaloppini, potato crusted Mediterranean bass/branzino, eggplant parmesan, homemade meat lasagna, homemade gnocci with tomato sauce, mozzarella, ricotta and lots of choices for appetizers and desserts.



Etcetera Etcetera – Thanksgiving
352 W 44th St (between 8th & 9th Aves)
Thursday, November 23rd
5:00pm Optional Pre-dinner drinks, 5:30pm Dinner
\$88: 3 courses, glass of wine, coffee/tea, tax & tip

The Michelin Guide writes that Etcetera Etcetera “puts out seriously solid, well prepared food,” and is a “hip and modern breath of clean, fresh air in the Theater District... modern and contemporary, Milan meets Miami sensibility.” Zagat says 23 for food and “splendid.” If

you enjoyed Vice Versa a few months back with us, you will enjoy this theater district bustling fun restaurant. “With its sleek, gorgeous interior and friendly staff, Etcetera Etcetera has become a heavenly haven and shimmering neighborhood fixture for discriminating New Yorkers,” and is a favorite of one of our members who sings open mic cabaret here. Our menu will be Thanksgiving themed.



Petaluma
1356 First Ave (at E 73rd St)
Sunday, November 26th
5:45pm optional drinks, 6:30pm dinner
\$75: 3 courses, glass of wine, tax & tip

An Italian American Grill, Petaluma has been serving the Upper East Side of Manhattan for over 30 years. This restaurant has been highly recommended by some of the locals who are members of our

group. The eatery, named after a town in California, brims with natural light pouring through large windows that makes for a comfortable atmosphere. The interior is darker, woodier and more rustic. Recently renovated and with an updated menu selection that’s attuned to today’s health and dietary concerns, they still kept the traditional, signature Italian favorites. The new chef, C. J. Bivona, who was the chef at Yardbird Southern Table & Grill in Miami Beach, has installed an ambitious Italian menu that has been a recent hit for the neighborhood.



Sons of Essex
133 Essex Street (2 blocks east of 2nd Ave)
Thursday, November 30th
5:45pm optional drinks, 6:30pm dinner
\$74: 3 courses, glass of wine, tax & tip

The Sons of Essex menu reflects the diverse melting pot of cultures that has gentrified the Lower East Side. The old school “Bowery Boys” atmosphere and “Gangs of New York” vibe pays homage to the

history of the Lower East Side, fusing traditional American comfort food with a diverse range of spices of Lower East Side immigrant’s past, sourcing local ingredients from Essex Street Market fruits & vegetables. With a speakeasy vibe (a deli counter up front hides the back restaurant), this has been a Lower East Side hotspot for celebrities for years. “New American” comfort food in a vintage setting, the owners spared no expense decorating with reclaimed wood, gilded frames, antique leather-bound books, photographs, and prohibition-era fixtures.

To reserve at any or all the events please go to our website or call us at (646-825-0268), email us at aaron@thesingelgourmet.net or mail checks to: The Single Gourmet, c/o Aaron Lefkowitz, 69 west 9th Street Apt #6A, New York, NY 10011.

CANCELLATION POLICY: If you cancel within 72 hours of a meal event there are **no refunds**. Ticketed events (tours, shows, ANY non-dinner event) **are non-refundable** within 7 days of the event
Also note: **ALL menus listed are subject to change without notice due to restaurant supply.**

1.	Bear Mountain Oktoberfest Cruise:	Sat, Oct 21 st	8:30am	\$65 _____
2.	TORO — Top Rated Tapas	Sun, Oct 22 nd	5:30pm	\$74 _____
3.	Café Centro — Halloween tradition	Tue, Oct 31 st	5:30pm	\$83 _____
4.	Villa Berulia	Sun, Nov 5 th	5:45pm	\$88 _____
5.	Russian Samovar	Sun, Nov 12 th	5:45pm	\$78 _____
6.	Luna Piena	Sat, Nov 18 th	6:45pm	\$77 _____
7.	Etcetera Etcetera — Thanksgiving	Thu, Nov 23 rd	5:00pm	\$88 _____
8.	Petaluma	Sun, Nov 26 th	5:45pm	\$75 _____
9.	Sons of Essex	Thu, Nov 30 th	5:45pm	\$74 _____
10.	Panama — New Years	Dec 27 th to Jan 4 th		\$500 Deposit

NEW YEARS in Panama Dec 27th - Jan 4th

8 nights, 9 days: This itinerary is still in development.

\$4500 single occupancy deluxe (NOT INCLUDING AIRFARE)

There will be beach time on this trip!

Day 1, Wednesday, Dec 27: Welcome to Panama City, Panama the vibrant, cosmopolitan and beautiful capital of the Republic of Panama, located on the Pacific side of the American continent. Built in 1519 by Pedro Arias Davila, a Spanish Governor, it has been considered one of the most important cities of the Americas. Upon arrival at Panama's Tocumen International Airport we will be met by our guide and taken to the **InterContinental Miramar Hotel** in Panama City, a luxurious iconic hotel that overlooks the Pacific Ocean and the bay of Panama, and located within walking distance of the Financial Center of Panama. Each of the elegantly appointed spacious suites has breathtaking ocean views, perfect for viewing vessels entering the world famous Panama Canal. First night dinner at leisure on own, no plans the first night.

Day 2: Thursday, Dec 28: Private Full Day Guided Authentic Panama City and **Miraflores Locks Visitors Center Tour**. We start by visiting the ruins of the original Panama City that was torched by the Pirate Henry Morgan in 1671. Climb the Cathedral Tower for a panoramic view of the surrounding ruins, Panama Bay, and the giant skyscrapers of modern Panama City. Then with our local guide leading the way, we will venture deep into the alleyways of "real" Panama City to discover how humble Panamanians live their daily lives with visits to the pedestrian only thoroughfare of Avenida Central. A stroll by the simple local stalls of Sal Si Puedes, and we'll get an inside look at the unique low-income neighborhood of El Chorillo. We will also visit Mercado de los Mariscos (Fish Market) where we can see the fishing boats anchored and watch vendors sell to the public the fresh catches obtained from the local fisherman. Lunch will be at the Fish Market or our favorite place on Amador Causeway which is Mi Ranchito. The Palapa-style restaurant also boasts views across Panama Bay of modern Panama City! After lunch we will wander the colonial cobblestone streets of Casco Antiguo which was founded in 1673 and is the oldest area of Panama City. We'll see the monument to the French entrepreneurs who began the Panama Canal, or the art museum in the converted strong house, known as Las Bovedas that was once used for storing gold. Other points of interest are the famed flat arch of Santo Domingo Church, the beautiful gold-plated altar of the San Jose Church, the Panama Canal Museum, the National Theater, the National Cathedral, and the Presidential Palace. **Miraflores Locks/ Panama Canal:** This classic experience brings you to the very best Panama has to offer: the Panama Canal! An expert canal guide will take us back in time. This tour will also include a visit to the Miraflores Locks Exhibits. We will take a journey to the top of Ancon Hill to admire some of the best vistas in all of Panama City. A trip to the top of Ancon Hill is one of the highlights of the guided Authentic Panama City Tour. Group Welcome Dinner at **Las Bovedas Restaurant** in Colonial Casco Antiguo. The word bóveda means vault or dungeon in Spanish and when Casco Viejo was established, the location of Las Bóvedas was just that, a holding cell for prisoners and slaves. The restaurant bears no resemblance to a jail cell now, with lovely indoor and outdoor seating. It offers an exquisite menu featuring fresh ingredients and excellent service.

Day 3: Friday, Dec 29th: **Chagres River Adventure and Visit to Embera Quera Indigenous Community:** This trip is truly paradise found in its purest form! The enchanting journey takes us deep into the dense jungles of Chagres where the Emberá Indians have lived for centuries. Our adventure begins with a 15-minute ride up the river in dugout canoes, the Emberá traditional, hand carved boats. Upon arrival at the village you will be taken back in time as you are immersed in the ancient Emberá cultural dances and music that have not changed much since Columbus arrived in the 1500s. The Indians will invite visitors to explore the area's abundant variety of birds and wildlife during a trek that takes you through the untouched jungle and past sparkling waterfalls. During your visit, the Emberás will give you a glimpse into their mystical rituals and amazing knowledge of medicinal plants and other natural remedies. The Emberá women are known as one of the world's finest basket makers, and you will be able to watch them create these beautiful objects made out of palm leaves and dyed with natural dyes. You can also have your body painted with the natural fruit dye called Jagua, used by the Indians for body decorations as well as for its health-giving properties. Before returning back to civilization, the Indians will offer us a traditional meal of fresh fish and plantains and you will have an opportunity to purchase some of their beautiful handicrafts.

Day 4: Saturday, Dec 30th: Private Group Transfer to Gamboa Pier, Panama Canal Partial Transit Tour – Southbound Private Group Transfer to Resort, Night at **Gamboa Rainforest Resort**.

Day 5: Sunday, Dec 31st: Pipeline Road Nature Hike and Bird Watching Tour: morning hike through Soberania National Park observing a variety of exotic tropical birds while enjoying the surrounding trees and plants of this area. Pipeline Road, where our hike takes place, is a dirt road that goes through the heart of this national park and affords us views of some of the diverse bird life that abounds in the area. Pipeline road has for several years set world record bird counts in a 24-hour period – up to 367 different species of birds. Of course, just because this tour focuses on observing the bird life, it does not mean that you might not hear or even see Howler monkeys or other mammal life like sloth, anteaters and agoutis. Special New Year's Eve Dinner event.

Day 6: Monday, Jan 1st: Gatun Boat Expedition, Aerial Tram with Ecological Exhibitions Tour and Lunch at the Resort: Experience the verdant rainforest of Gamboa from within, ascending some 280 feet from the shadowy forest floor, through the dense undergrowth and up to the sun-drenched canopy with its thousand shades of green that are only interrupted by the vibrant colors of flowering trees. Once at the top, you will have the opportunity to climb an observation tower from where you will have uninterrupted views of the vast rainforest of Soberania National Park, while at the same time watch the giant cargo ships maneuver through the Galliard Cut (the narrowest part of the Panama Canal). Once we finish our visit to the Aerial Tram and Natural Exhibits, we will experience an exhilarating 20-minute ride at high speed right through the heart of the Panama Canal. The boat will slow down and enter the labyrinth of jungle-covered islands of Gatun Lake. In this protected area the wildlife is plentiful, and you are likely to encounter capuchin monkeys, 3-toed sloth, howler monkeys, various kinds of toucans, and other bird life as well as caimans, crocodiles, turtles, and a wealth of butterflies. This is an exceptional place to experience the sights and sounds of the jungle up close. Our trained naturalist guides will ensure that you have an outstanding nature experience by tracing the wildlife as well as educating you about it and its habitat throughout this exceptional jungle and canal adventure.

Day 7: Tuesday, Jan 2nd: Panama Railway with Private Panama Canal Expansion, Visitors Center and Historic Portobelo Tour, train passage along the Panama Canal, Private transfer to Corozal station where we board the comfortable train for a historical ride alongside the Panama Canal. This railroad, constructed with immense drama, snakes its way past protected rainforests, the river feeding the Canal, and the Gatun Lake, which was once largest man-made lake in the world. We will have unsurpassed views of the 8th wonder of the world and the giant ships transferring between two seas as well as of the spectacular nature of the isthmus where native Indians still live in the jungle. Originally completed in 1855, the Panama Railroad became the first transcontinental railroad. The French Panama Canal Company purchased the railroad in 1880 to assist in their attempt to build the Panama Canal. In 1904, the United States purchased the New Panama Canal Company's assets from the French, including the railroad. The United States rebuilt and operated the railroad until 1979, when it was transferred to Panama under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. In 1998, Panama privatized the railroad and awarded a 50-year concession to the Panama Canal Company, a joint venture of Kansas City Southern and Mi-Jack Products, to rebuild and operate the line. The new "reborn" railroad began operations in 2000. The visual charms of this train ride will make this an unforgettable trip.

Historic Portobelo: Portobelo is a sleepy bayside town full of colonial history where you will feel transported back in time. Here you will encounter no fewer than 5 colonial fortifications where the canons are still pointing their mouths towards the bay they once protected. Portobelo is also home to the statue of the Black Christ, which according to the legend possesses divine powers that has several times prevented the statue from being removed from here.

Day 8: Wednesday, Jan 3rd: Morning Half Day Shopping Tour: Panama is a strategic point for the transportation of merchandise from all over the world, bringing the opportunity for tourists to buy goods all at great prices! Albrook Mall is an indoor mall that offers a wide variety of discount stores and boutiques. Multi-plaza Pacific Mall is a large indoor air-conditioned mall located in the Punta Pacifica district in Panama City. Also time for the beach today. For dinner we will go to **Las Tinajas Traditional Panamanian Dinner and Folkloric Show:** Panama has been a melting pot of several cultures for quite a long time now. Originally, the native Indian groups created acoustic instruments using parts of plants and shells of different animals. Before then, the Spanish conquerors brought their influences from the Old World. Afro-Caribbeans also contributed to the Panamanian culture when they came for the Canal construction. Also, other small groups contributed to what is today one of the most attractive and folkloric heritages of Latin America. Panama has been considered "The Crossroad of the World" for many years now. Many cultures (Spaniards, Africans, and Indians) widely influenced the culture and this is clearly shown in the food, music, and dances. Experience all these elements combined together that form culture in one place: The Las Tinajas Restaurant where you can enjoy a delicious Panamanian dinner, and move on your chair to the rhythms of the Panamanian "repicadores, pujadores & guiro" (Panamanian folkloric instruments) while you are amazed by the display of beautiful and elegant Polleras, our national dress and one of the most spectacular folkloric dresses in the world. The show is fully allegoric with typical acoustic music and musicians. Women wear the unique 'Pollera', a hand-made cotton dress complimented with precious body and head jewelry which is exhibited while they dance. Men's typical attire is relatively simple; however, their hats are finely hand-made by artisans. Their cotton shirts boast golden or pearl bottoms.

Day 9: Thursday, Jan 4th: Group Transfer to Tocumen International Airport for Flight Home