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October 2018

I'm still working on not being terrible... as well as on overcoming my procrastination habits, and my fear of failure (success?). For those of you who are still with me, thank you all for your patience. At least the weather is finally getting cooler. Not much of a transition, though... it's been cold these past few nights!

We start our October with brunch in the East Village at the amazing **Virginia's on Saturday, October 6**. We did brunch here last year in the summer, and it was a success! Afterwards, you can stroll around the East Village and Tompkins Square park and enjoy the fall foliage (hopefully there will be some by then!). We will then have a little break from October 8-15, when a group of 19 of us will be enjoying a trip to Iceland. (I asked Aaron if he could run a dinner on the 14th, but it's his birthday that weekend, so he's not available.) On **Tuesday, October 16**, one of our members, Lynn Vergano, will have a **FREE event: an art exhibit and lecture at the United Nations from 3-5 PM**, and she has invited us all to go! Lynn is a world-renowned expert in the style of oriental watercolor, and has won numerous awards. Light refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Our dinners continue on **Wednesday, October 17 at Swing 46 Jazz & Supper Club** for a great meal and an evening of big band and swing dancing! Take advantage of the included swing dance lesson, taught by a professional dancer, listen to the multi-piece band play the tunes of past generations, and grab a partner and get on the dance floor. As many of you saw at the Harvard Club, I know the basics, and am happy to dance with you! We follow that up with **Russian Samovar on Sunday, October 21**. When we went there last year, it was very popular with over 35 people in attendance enjoying delicious food and live music. Finally on **Sunday, October 28, we will have dinner at Morso**. This Italian gem owned by the famous and highly successful restaurateur Pino Luongo hits all the right marks. I am working on dinner on Halloween night; it will likely be at Café Centro or another French restaurant.

For our travel events, one spot remains for the **Iceland** trip, with the price going back to \$4995 because fares have risen only slightly, and it's so close to the departure date. The promotion is still valid: if you refer someone who is not a current member to join us on this trip, you will receive a \$99 credit, AND your friend will receive a complimentary one-year membership to The Single Gourmet (normally non-members have to join and pay the \$99 membership fee before they join us for a trip). Your \$99 credit is applicable toward your upcoming membership dues, or any event(s) you attend within the next 6 months. **Note: you do not have to go on this trip to refer a non-member and receive the credit.**

CUBA for New Year's Eve 2018-2019, still has space remaining. We will leave NYC on December 27, for an 8-day trip, returning on January 3. This time we will go not only to Havana, but to other parts of Cuba not explored on our last trip such as Cienfuegos and Trinidad. We need 15 people for this trip, but as of yet, have only 6. Do NOT book a flight until I confirm that we have 15 people.

For any of these trips, please secure spaces ASAP. If you have not received an email or a phone call from me confirming your interest in a trip, please let me know. If you have already paid a deposit, there is no need to re-confirm.

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



Virginia's (brunch)
647 E 11 St (between Ave B and Ave C)
Saturday, October 6
12:00 pm optional drinks, 12:30 pm brunch
\$59 includes 3 courses, 1 Mimosa or Bloody Mary, tea or coffee, tax & tip

When Virginia's opened in 2015, it was one of the most exciting restaurant openings in NYC in recent memory. Virginia's is the brainchild of Per Se alum Christian Ramos and Reed Adelson (Locanda

Verde), who originally met while working at world famous Charlie Trotter's in Chicago (voted 30th best in the world, 5th best in the USA and 2 Michelin Stars). Rated an extremely high 4.8 on Google reviews, 4.5 on Yelp, 4.5 TripAdvisor and Zagat rated 24, they say, "original and well-crafted describes the fare at this cozy East Village bistro where the New American menu changes frequently for memorable results making this an overall winner." The Daily News writes, "And what you get is powerhouse food that's smart, skillful and completely lacking in pretense. An all-star team started this place, with cooks from temples like Charlie Trotter's and Per Se. You can see that pedigree in all their plates this once-grimy corner is Manhattan's dining frontier." What better way to see the changes in alphabet city than joining us for an amazing brunch?

MENU

Starters (choice of):

- Market Greens, Radish, Sherry Vinaigrette, Peach
- Ricotta Toast, Wildflower Honey, Aleppo

Mains (choice of):

- Whole Wheat Pancakes, Market Strawberries, Vermont Maple Syrup
- Virginia's Burger, Cabot Cheddar, Vidalia Onion Marmalade
- House made chilaquiles, cilantro, poached eggs

Dessert:

- Toasted Vanilla Bean Flan, Caramel



Art Exhibition & Lecture featuring Lynn Vergano
777 1st Ave, 10th Floor (entrance at E 44th St)
Tuesday, October 16
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
FREE (but RSVP is required)
event includes refreshments and light hors d'oeuvres

Lynn Vergano (a fellow member of The Single Gourmet!) is a world-renowned expert in the style of oriental watercolor. She has lectured, judged, and critiqued artwork. Her lectures and paintings have been presented at the United Nations, various universities, numerous museums, charitable organizations, religious groups, and art centers. She has been interviewed on television, radio and in newspapers around the world. Her intriguing, highly individualistic paintings have been presented in one-woman exhibitions in Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy, Brazil, Mexico, and New Zealand, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, World Trade Center, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and other museums across the United States.



Swing 46 (dinner & swing dancing with live music)
349 W 46th St (between 8th & 9th Ave)
Wednesday, October 17
6:00 pm optional drinks, 7:00 pm dinner
\$86 includes 3 courses, 1 glass of wine, entertainment fee, tax & tip

Join us for a great meal and a live Big Band at Swing 46 Jazz and Supper Club. NYC's swing dance community raves about this supper club, and our members love it! If you want to Lindy Hop, Jitterbug, Waltz, or Freestyle we will be doing it all. If you do not

know how to swing dance, dance lessons are included and offered in between the band break. "Nice casual" is the dress code (no sneakers or jeans). We ate here two years ago and even if you don't dance, the food was great, the band was incredible, the music spectacular, and the dance lessons were all well worth it! The entertainment fee is \$15 for others, but it is included for us.

MENU:

Appetizers (choice of):

- Fresh Mozzarella with basil, ripe tomatoes and a balsamic glaze
- Organic Field Greens homemade sage vinaigrette
- Caesar Salad crisp romaine, herb croutons shaved parmesan cheese

Entrees (choice of):

- Angus Hanger Steak – cabernet demi glace, yukon golden mashed potatoes ribbon thin cajun onion rings
- BBQ Ribs – with Sweet Potato Fries
- Roast Half Chicken – marinated roast chicken, mashed potatoes, sautéed fresh vegetables
- Salmon Filet – sesame seared salmon filet, teriyaki ginger sauce rice and fresh sautéed vegetables
- Prince Edward Island Mussels – white wine, garlic & herb seafood broth, toasted garlic crostini
- Vegetarian Pasta Primavera – sautéed mixed vegetables, garlic and herbs tomato basil marinara
- Rigatoni and Shrimp – creamy rich garlic sauce with a hint of tomato

Dessert (choice of):

- Warm Chocolate Brownies with Fresh Cream
- Fresh Fruit Sorbet



Russian Samovar (Russian)
256 W 52 Street (between Broadway & 8th Ave)
Sunday, October 21
5:45 pm optional drinks, 6:30 pm dinner
\$79 prix fixe includes 4 courses, 1 glass of wine, tea or coffee, tax & tip

Last year when we went here, we had over 35 people! 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.

MENU:

Appetizers (choice of):

- Olivier – Traditional Russian chicken, potato, and vegetable salad with light homemade mayonnaise
- Vinegret – Traditional beet and vegetable salad (vegetarian)
- Eggplant Caviar – Caviar-style eggplant served on brown wheat toast corners (vegetarian)

Soups (choice of):

- Borscht – Traditional Russian beet soup served hot or cold
- Chicken Frikadelki Soup – Chicken meatballs and vegetables in a traditional chicken broth

Entrees (choice of):

- Chicken Shashlik – Marinated chicken thighs, skewered and grilled
- Grilled Salmon – Served with roasted vegetables
- Beef Stroganoff – Sirloin tips sautéed with mushrooms in a cream sauce, served over egg noodles or mashed potatoes

Dessert (choice of):

- Smetannik Cake – Traditional layered cake made with sour cream
- Ice Cream or Sorbet – ask the server for available flavors



Morso (Italian)

420 E 59th St (between 1 Ave & Sutton Pl)

Sunday, October 28

5:45 pm optional drinks, 6:30 pm dinner

\$78 prix fixe includes 3 courses, 1 glass of wine, tea or coffee, tax & tip

Zagat rated 4.4. They say “Pino Luongo knows what he’s doing at this classy East Midtown oasis, a dependable source of marvelous Italian cuisine served by staffers who genuinely care; the contemporary room features Pop Art on the walls and a dramatic view of the Queensboro Bridge from the outdoor terrace.” Morso is a culmination of a life in food and a passion for culinary excellence. With the essence of his Tuscan homeland at heart and a truly original style of cooking; Pino Luongo

shaped the Italian menus that we now consider classic, with restaurants including Le Madri, Mad 61, Coco Pazzo, Tuscan Square, and Centolire. For Morso, his values remain unchanged; great, seasonal ingredients skillfully prepared, and shared with family and friends.

MENU:

Appetizer (choice of):

- Caprese – buffalo mozzarella w/ tomatoes, extra-virgin olive oil & basil
- Ortolana con Vegetali – mixed greens, grilled vegetable salad, red wine vinaigrette

Entrée (choice of):

- Spaghetti rustica – pasta w/tomato sauce & caramelized onions
- Salmone – roasted w/ pickled fennel & radish salad, mustard dressing
- Pollo Martini – parmesan encrusted chicken breast, white wine & lemon sauce with caramelized baby carrots & string beans
- Veal Scaloppine Saltimbocca – with artichokes, fingerling potatoes, roasted cherry tomatoes, white wine sauce, prosciutto, melted fontina cheese

Dessert (choice of):

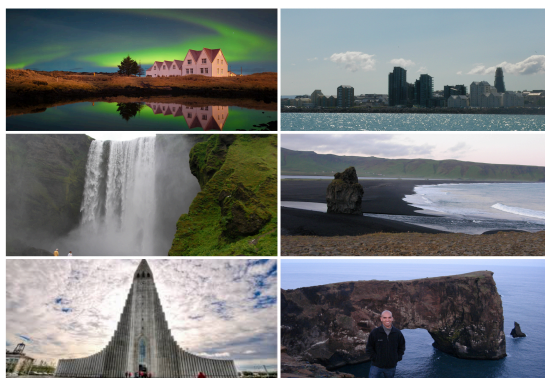
- Decadent Chocolate Cake
- Sorbet of the day

1. Virginia's (brunch)	Sat, October 6	12:00 pm	\$59 _____
2. Art exhibit & lecture at the United Nations	Tue, October 16	3:00 pm	FREE _____
3. Swing 46 (dinner & swing dancing)	Wed, October 17	6:00 pm	\$86 _____
4. Russian Samovar (Russian)	Sun, October 21	5:45 pm	\$79 _____
5. Morso (Italian)	Sun, October 28	5:45 pm	\$78 _____

REFUND POLICY: Due to restaurant deposit and guarantee requirements, cancellations for dinners are accepted up to ONE WEEK prior to the event. If you cancel 4-6 days prior, you will receive a credit toward a future event, but there will be **no refunds for cancellations made 0-3 days before a dinner**. Ticketed events (tours, shows, and ANY non-dinner event) are **non-refundable within 7 days** of the event.

ALL menus listed are subject to change without notice due to restaurant supply.

ICELAND



TRIP: ICELAND & THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

October 8-15

6 days, 6 nights

\$4995

**1 space (maybe 2) remaining as of September 21
(subject to hotel room availability)**

**FULL PAYMENT DUE upon reservation
includes airfare, hotels, tours, all meals,
1 glass of wine with dinner, tips,
and premium entrance to The Blue Lagoon
minus \$350 if flying on your own
minus \$400 if sharing a room**

This itinerary is 95% complete, and we will go all around the island to survey the spectacular scenery that the island has to offer. This includes amazing waterfalls and black sand beaches, huge craters and small geysers, the classic Golden Circle, a whale watching expedition, and we will end the trip with a day of luxury at the Blue Lagoon. By the way, yes that is me (John) in the photo on the bottom right; I visited Iceland for a week back in the summer of 2009, during the time of year when they call it the land of the midnight sun.

DAY "ZERO": FLIGHT FROM JFK AIRPORT IN NEW YORK TO KEF IN ICELAND

NOTE: this will be a 6-hour, non-stop, red-eye flight, leaving JFK at about 9 PM, on October 8, arriving at about 7 AM October 9. We will check into the hotel in the afternoon after a tour of Reykjavik. Early check-in is available for an additional fee, as are upgrades to larger hotel rooms, subject to availability.

Day 1 – Tuesday, October 9: Reykjavik

Arrival in Keflavik airport early in the morning and transfer to hotel in Reykjavík. After arrival in Reykjavik, a 4-hour city tour. Part of it is on foot stopping at restaurants tasting Icelandic cuisine at various restaurants. Overnight: Hotel Alda, Reykjavik.

Day 2 – Wednesday, October 10: South Coast of Iceland

Here the journey to the countryside starts. Today we'll enjoy the beautiful south coast of Iceland. We'll see two waterfalls, Seljalandsfoss and Skogafoss. After lunchbreak we are going glacier hiking on Sólheimajökull. After the glacier we will head to the black sandy beach of Reynisfjara, stop at the village of Vik, and experience the moss in Eldhraun lava. Overnight: Hotel Hekla, Vik.

Day 3 – Thursday, October 11: Glacier Day

This is glacier day, with a drive east from Kirkjubæjarklaustur to Skaftafell and Jökulsárlón. We take a boat ride duck boat on the Glacier Lagoon, and explore the Diamond Beach, with icebergs on black sand. Overnight: Hotel Hekla, Vik.

Day 4 – Friday, October 12: The Golden Circle

Today we'll head west and explore the sights of the famous Golden Circle. First we stop at Kerið crater. We'll see the big and beautiful Gullfoss waterfall and visit the nearby Geysir geothermal area with the spouting hot spring Strokkur. Further west we'll visit Þingvellir, where Icelanders established their parliament in 930. The parliament is located in the Rift Valley, between North American and Euro-Asian tectonic places. Overnight: Hotel Hamar, Borgarnes.

Day 5 – Saturday, October 13: Snæfellsnes Peninsula

On this day we'll drive to Snæfellsnes Peninsula, where we'll see magnificent beaches, and possibly some seals at Ytri Tunga, lava formatted bird cliffs at Arnarstapi, and a black pebble beach at Djúpalónssandur. In the northern section of the Peninsula we'll see Kirkjufell, the most photographed mountain in Iceland. Overnight: Hotel Alda, Reykjavik

Day 6 – Sunday, October 14: Blue Lagoon and Whalewatching

Today we are going whalewatching from Reykjavik harbor. In the afternoon we will dip into the biggest hot tub in the world. A visit to The Blue Lagoon visit is an experience of a lifetime. Overnight: Hotel Alda, Reykjavik.

Day 7 – Monday, October 15: Reykjavik and Departure

Leisure time in the morning in Reykjavik. Transfer to the airport early in the afternoon

CUBA**NEW YEAR'S EVE 2018-2019****IN CUBA****December 27 - January 3**

**\$4695 + airfare, visa, Cuban medical insurance
minus \$375 if sharing a room**

**Includes all meals, hotels, transportation, and tour guides in Cuba
does NOT include airfare**

Hola Senoras y Senores, we are returning to Cuba for New Year's Eve! Two years ago, Aaron pioneered this trip and everyone raved about it. On this trip we will land in Havana, and travel to cities that we did not visit the last time. The doors to Cuba are not as open as they were before the change of administration of the US government, but it is still possible to go, and it is a privilege to be able to go now while Cuba is still open to us. However, as time goes by, it probably will be more open to tourists, and things will change as more Americans go down to visit. If you missed the trip two years ago, come this time so you can say, "I got to go while it was still, well, Cuba!"

While the trip we have planned is going to be amazing, Cuba is not a luxury destination. It is still very much left as it was decades ago. There are no chain stores, no ads, few signs, and it is basically a commercial-free zone. Cuba is culturally, historically, and politically rich, but not in terms of standard amenities you might expect. There is little internet connection, and international cell phone service is minimal. US credit cards don't work in Cuba, so converting cash at the airport is necessary. So much is happening now, and it is going to be one of these trips where you'll tell yourself "wow, so close and yet, so far..." OK? So, now that this is out of the way, go get yourself a Cuba Libre and read on the fabulous itineraries we have for you!!

ITINERARY (subject to minor changes)

HISTORY AND CULTURE PRIVATE TOUR

- Discover the heart and soul of the Cuban society
- Eight days and seven nights in the Pearl of the Caribbean
- Thursday December 27, 2018 to Thursday January 3, 2019
- Fully escorted by full time expert English-speaking Cuban guide
- Luxury tour coach and full time chauffer

Day 1 – Thursday, December 27 / HELLO CUBA

- Arrival at Havana's José Martí International airport
- Change money into Cuban Convertible Pesos while waiting for your luggage
- Meet your guide and bus driver after you exit Cuban customs
- Enjoy a group welcome dinner with your guide and tourmates at restaurant La Guarida

Day 2 – Friday, December 28 / FUSTER STUDIO / MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

- Breakfast in hotel
- Visit Partagás Cigar Factory
- We'll feast on a delicious lunch hosted by José Fuster, one of Cuba's most important ceramists and painters at his whimsical studio in Jaimanitas, just outside of Havana.
- Visit the National Museum of Fine Arts of Havana, which exhibits Cuban art collections from the colonial times up to contemporary generations. Its first director and well-known architect, Emilio Heredia, founded it in 1913. After frequent moves, it was finally placed on the block once occupied by the old Colon Market. In 1954, a new Palacio of Bellas Artes was opened. The original Palace was recently reconstructed and a second building was taken over for the Museum.
- Return to hotel
- Dinner tonight at private restaurant Mediterraneo Habana
- EVENING HIGHLIGHT: We witness a most dramatic ceremony – El Cañonazo – the Firing of the 9PM Cannon at the Fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña. This enchanting reenactment dates back to 1519 when Havana was enclosed by a tall thick rock wall to protect against pirates and the English. The cannon firing signaled the closing of the city gates for the night. If you were outside at the time, you were in "vedado" or the forbidden zone. Today Vedado is an important cultural hub and beautiful section of modern Havana.

Day 3 – Saturday, December 29 / HAVANA / CIENFUEGOS / TRINIDAD DE CUBA

- Breakfast in hotel
- Early departure to Cienfuegos, a beautiful city of French colonial architecture on a scenic ocean bay.
- Visit to Palacio de Valle upon arrival. The eclectic building was erected at a cost of 1.5 million pesos. French, Arabic, Italian, and Cuban artisans worked with marble, alabaster, brass, glass, and ceramic imported from Spain, Italy and the US. The entrance is primitive Gothic style and leads to a dining room of Mudejar influence, which imitates the famous Patio of the Lions, of Alhambra, in Granada.

- Lunch at Casa Prado private restaurant.
- Coach tour of the city of Cienfuegos
- Guided walking tour of Cienfuegos historical center: Paseo del Prado, Plaza José Martí, Tomás Terry Theater, Casa de la Cultura, The Cathedral
- Check in at hotel Jagua
- Dinner at a private restaurant

Day 4 – Sunday, December 30 / CIENFUEGOS / TRINIDAD / UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

- Breakfast at hotel
- Departure to Trinidad. Walking tour of Trinidad. Declared a national monument by the Cuban government and World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987, this city is very much as it was four centuries ago; the beauty of its baroque architecture and cobblestones squares harking back to a bygone era when Trinidad was a key player in the Caribbean slave trade. It has the spectacular Valle de los Ingenios, a unique Sugar Mill Valley, beautiful churches and public squares, the most important of which is Main Square, considered the second most important square in the country, after Havana's Cathedral Square.
- Stroll around beautiful Plaza Mayor, visit Museo Arquitectura Colonial. Enjoy time at a local artisan street market with splendid woodcarvings, fabric art, crochet pieces, and straw work.
- Lunch at Sol Ananda private restaurant
- Meet with the Santander family, well-known potters who have made unique pottery for over 100 years. Break into small groups to talk with different family members as they complete their pottery and/or ceramic items, and ask questions about the different techniques and offer comments about the resulting products.
- Visit the Valle de los Ingenios where once Sugar Mills stood.
- Return to Cienfuegos
- Dinner at Villa Lagarto private restaurant

Day 5 – Monday, December 31 / CIENFUEGOS / BAY OF PIGS / HAVANA

- Breakfast in hotel
- Departure to Havana
- En route visit Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs)
- Visit Museo Playa Girón to learn about the CIA backed invasion of Bahía de Cochinos
- Lunch at Hostal Enrique in Playa Larga
- Continue to Havana
- Check in at hotel
- Special: Enjoy a ride in old American classic cars to New Year's dinner and show at the Cathedral Square

Day 6 – Tuesday, January 1

- Breakfast in hotel
- In Hotel Florida special presentation and dialogue: "Overview of Cuba's Society" today by a Havana University Professor.
- Group lunch at La Bonita private restaurant
- Departure to Santa María Beach to enjoy the afternoon
- Dinner on our own
- Evening highlight: Enjoy a performance by Buena Vista Social Club at Café Taberna

Day 7 – Wednesday, January 2 / HEMINGWAY

- Breakfast in hotel
- Visit Finca La Vigía (House and farm of Ernest Hemingway Museum)
- Visit Cojímar, small fishing Village one of Hemingway's favorite's places
- TOUR HIGHLIGHT: Cooking class and lunch prepared by private restaurant El Ajiaco
- Return to hotel
- Farewell dinner at private restaurant La Foresta
- EVENING SPECIAL "¡Noche de fiesta Cubana!" party and dancing class with live music at Club Chévere

Day 8 – Thursday, January 3 / ADIOS HAVANA

- Breakfast in hotel
- Check-out of hotel.
- Transfer to José Martí International Airport for flights home.