While I looked for these restaurants, I had some previous knowledge about a couple of them which I had previously heard or read about. My top three restaurants that I interested in going were Gramercy Tavern, River Café and Manhatta. While doing my research one of the most important thing for me was the type of food and menu they offered. I won’t have a good experience if I don’t feel like I can enjoy my food, especially because I am slightly picky when it comes to food. Secondly, the prices and hours of operations because I have work and school that I can’t afford to miss out on either for this project, it is not very professional. Lastly, because it is a project about observing everything from food to service and décor, I wanted to make sure the restaurant I went to had good reviews in terms of service because of my serving background and how much I strive to provide optimum service, despite not working in fine dining, it is all about the experience for the guest. After considering all the aforementioned conditions, I chose to make a reservation for River Café.

Opening in June of 1977 in the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights. When Michael Buzzy O’Keeffe worked hard to get permits to build this beautiful restaurant, the area looked decayed with nothing but trucks coming into the piers. However, he saw something more, something special with lots of great possibilities, despite the financial crisis NYC was facing and dangers of building along waterfront. The River Café was born, becoming the inventors of the term “range free chicken” as Mr. O’Keeffe wanted to offer the highest level of cuisine from the freshest ingredients he could get. Today, this restaurant has a beautiful view under the Brooklyn bridge that can serve for perfect special occasions. Mr. O’Keeffe remains the owner of The River Cafe. Currently, Chef Brad Steelman maintains control of the kitchen with a menu celebrating the changing of the seasons with a classic American Cuisine menu. Joseph DeLissio remains the wine director since the opening of the restaurant in 1977.

I will be attending River Café with my girlfriend on Sunday March 22nd, 2020 for their brunch menu. While making this reservation I asked my girlfriend to listen because she is a hostess at a Greek restaurant in the Upper West side which serves casual fine dining. The hostess was very polite over the phone and helpful. She had a warm and friendly greet, asking me the basic information for a reservation, with the addition of “do you have any dietary restrictions or food allergies?”, which actually made me smile because for a hostess to ask this and note it down means the level of service they offer is much more elevated than I could imagine. I personally see this small gesture as a very important step in the correct direction to what hospitality means. She too asked me if there was any special occasion as I explained it was a part of a project to which I did not receive any odd reply or change of tone, making this experience on the phone very pleasant and welcoming. Right off the bat, she is setting the tone for the restaurant as she is the face of the restaurant being the first impression I will receive when I arrive. Having this connection over the phone gives me great hopes of what is to follow.

The River Café is open everyday of the week, with breakfast service Monday through Friday, Lunch only Saturdays, Brunch only Sundays, and serving Dinner every day. I have read the New York times article on The River Café from 2017, mainly speaking about its history than any current food critique in any way. I too have read guests comments from Yelp and from Open Table. As we know, the best comments always pop first in both ends, but I like to hear about the bad because no place is perfect and servers as well as cooks and managers have bad days as we are all human and could make mistakes. On the Yelp side of things I was able to open the one star reviews, hearing from feeling discriminated slightly because of color of race to people complaining about the cat owned by the restaurant ruining diners experiences and wedding receptions as well. Similarly, someone else complained about the lack of help from Maitre’D on accepting a reservation for 16 people, which was an issue with prices and the way the menu had to be set up due to the children and the way the restaurant it self works. On the other hand, on Open Table, (which is their reservation system), I was not able to pull up low rating comments, and where the great comments complemented food, service (despite no server or staff member in specific), presentation and décor of the restaurant itself. As you can see, there are people who have different experiences all together. I can’t go with a good or bad outlook before experiencing it myself. So far, thanks to the Hostess who took my reservation over the phone, I am feeling very excited and intrigued on everything this restaurant has to offer.

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