

INSIDE NEW YORK 2009

DINING

UPSCALE

Payard Patisserie *French*

From the mahogany doors to the bi-level dining room, Payard captures the spirit of an age-old Parisian bistro. Dark lacquered wood and ivory marble are reminiscent of chocolate and cream, both of which are trophy ingredients in Payard's gorgeous confections—eye candy displayed in the café that is enough to distract any diner bound for dinner. A proper meal should not be skipped, but used as a prelude to a sweet finale. Twice-baked upside-down cheese soufflé is velvety and drowned in a decadent parmesan cream sauce and white truffle oil. And steamed sea bass is tender and light, in a broth with fennel, lemon, and thyme. But dessert is the unequivocal main attraction; the bistro's composed desserts include dark chocolate soufflé and a hazelnut candy bar—a gourmet take on a Snicker's. Or feel free to order a feast from the glass cases out front: tarts dolled up with fresh fruit, marzipan, and meringue, neat slices of Opera cake, glossy chocolate éclairs, mousse cakes in a number of colors, mini cookies, champagne truffles...

1032 Lexington Ave (near 74th St). 212-717-5252.
Mon-Thurs 5:45pm-10:30pm, Fri-Sat 5:45pm-11:00pm. Lunch Mon-Sat 12pm-3pm. Tea Mon-Sat 3:30pm-5pm. 6 to 77th. Average entrée \$30.