

GILDED PALATES

Susan and Barry Wine in the kitchen of the original *Quilted Giraffe*, in New Paltz.



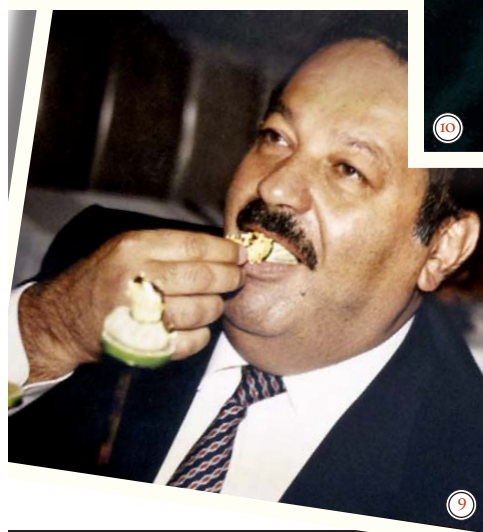
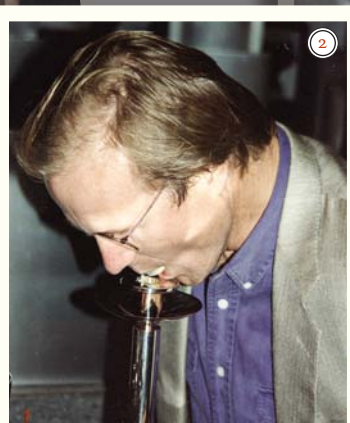
It was where high society met haute cuisine, where four-star dining became a three-ring circus, and where it seemed the party that was New York in the 1980s might never end. The comedown wasn't easy, but for the legendary *Quilted Giraffe*—the restaurant that defined an entire era and forever changed how America eats—the buzz is as strong as ever.

CAVIAR & COCAINE

SAUDI ARMS DEALER ADNAN KHASHOGGI ARRIVED EARLY FOR dinner. He came with an entourage, as he always did, a group of eight at Table Seven up front near the door. It was also Woody Allen's favorite perch. Upstairs, in a quiet corner, Rupert Murdoch gave Ed Koch a ribbing, the irascible mayor—into his third term—cowed by a tabloid king still on his way up. Back on the ground floor a few sour-faced Johnsons quibbled conspicuously over their Band-Aid fortune as Basia, the chambermaid heiress who'd taken it all, sat imperious at the head of the table. Back near the kitchen Italian playboy Gianni Agnelli squired a woman so breathtaking even the gay maître d' went weak at the knees. Khashoggi, oblivious, tucked into his rack of lamb with Chinese mustard, sipped his '79 Petrus, his '61 Krug. At the

By JAY CHESHES

GOLD FRAME: MARODEE PHOTOGRAPH/ALAMY; ALL OTHERS: COURTESY BARRY WINE ARCHIVE



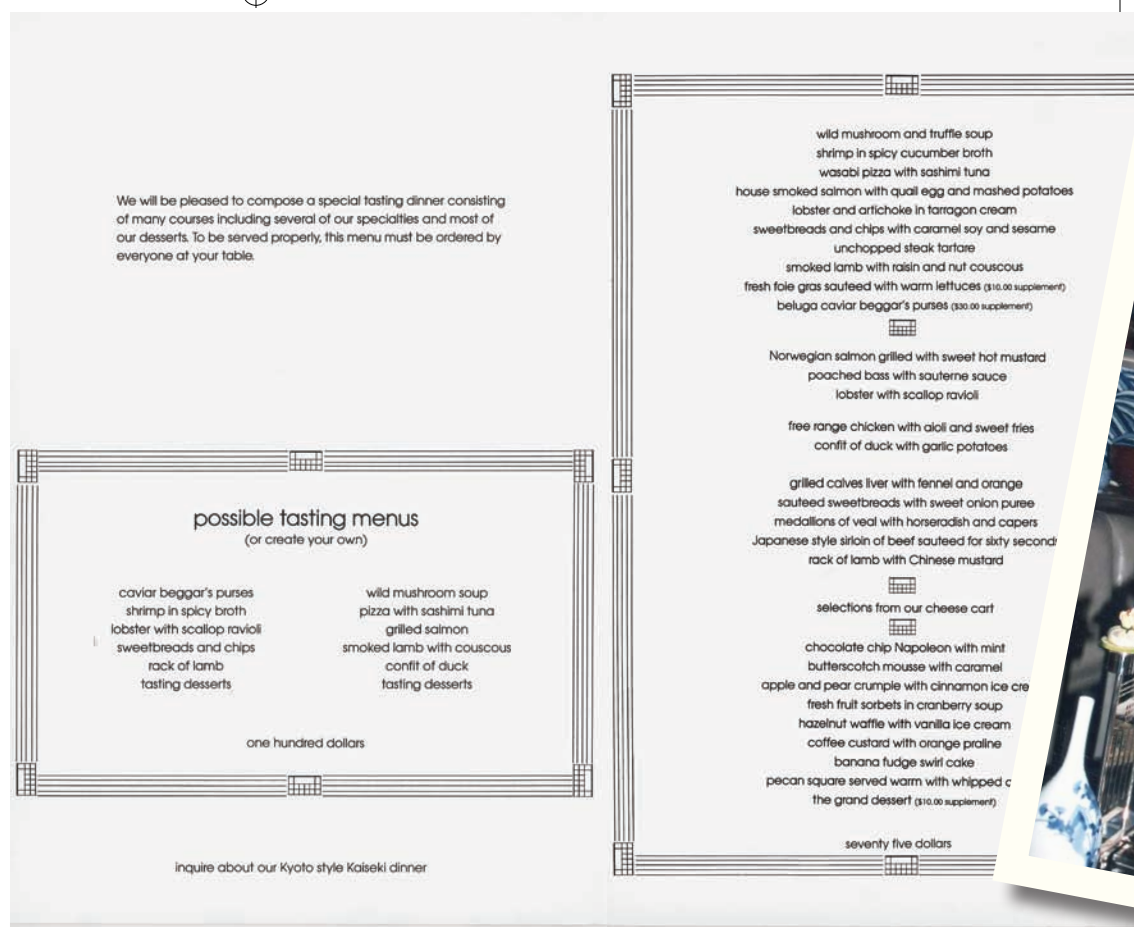
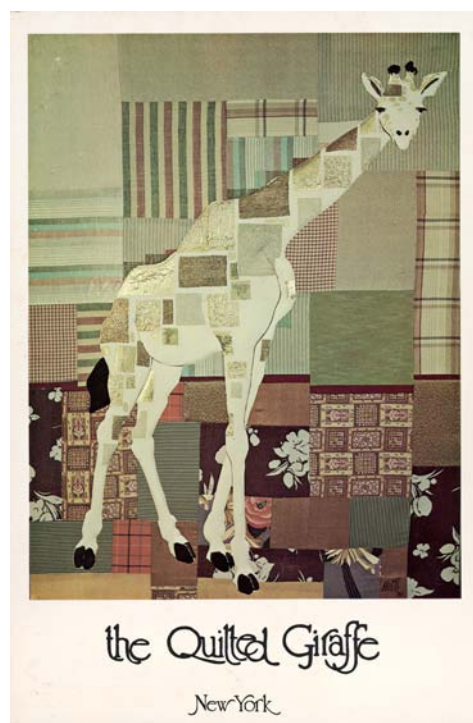
OPEN WIDE
They came to the Quilted Giraffe ready for beggar's purses—the signature dish—and their close-ups:
1. Bobby Flay. 2. William Hurt. 3. Mario Buatta. 4. Quincy Jones; 5. Diane Sawyer. 6. Happy customer. 7. Bruce Paltrow and daughter Gwyneth. 8. Warren Beatty. 9. Carlos Slim. 10. Roger Ebert. 11-14. Hungry patrons.

end of the meal he made his way to the host stand, borrowed the phone, dialed the pilot on his private jet. “Keep the engines running,” he growled. The Iran-contra scandal broke wide open later that night. Khashoggi, one of its principal architects and arguably the richest man in the world, was long gone when it did.

It was November 25, 1986—just another Tuesday evening at the Quilted Giraffe in midtown Manhattan. Or it might as well have been.

Susan Wine, who ran the restaurant with her now ex-husband Barry for 18 years, remembers the night Khashoggi skipped town. “I come home, turn on the television, and the whole thing’s blown up,” she says, sitting at the big dining room table at her country house in New Paltz, New York, about 80 miles north of New York City. Susan remarried a few years back, but the Quilted Giraffe is with her still, in the commemorative plates she kept from the restaurant, the holiday cards she blew up into posters, and the stories that still feel as fresh as last week: Jacqueline Onassis coming in for lunch in her blue Chanel suit accompanied by Jayne Wrightsman; Andy Warhol snapping pictures of everything; Henry Kissinger getting, as Susan recalls, “bombed.” “I can still tell you what night somebody sat at Table Seven or Table Five,” she says with a feverish smile, her auburn hair in a youthful bob.

It was New York in the ‘80s, when sex and drugs, power and money made such a



conspicuous, combustible mess. The Quilted Giraffe—which opened in 1979 at Second Avenue and 50th Street and eventually moved to 550 Madison—was there through it all, the ultimate high-wattage clubhouse, with luxurious food and a clientele always eager to spend. For a time it was the country’s priciest restaurant, with an average American Express charge of \$442. The distinction then was still a badge of honor. “We used to look out and count the \$1,500 couples,” Jan Birnbaum, who was at the Quilted Giraffe in the mid-’80s and is now a chef in San Francisco, told me.

At the Quilted Giraffe, though, you always got what you paid for. “We were extraordinarily generous with truffles, with caviar,” says Barry Wine, now a restaurant consultant and part-time jewelry designer under the label Butter + Bling. (He transforms vintage costume jewelry into one-of-a-kind rings.) His chestnut mop turned a luxuriant white long ago, but a few nips and tucks make his actual age—68—hard to discern. He has kept the house and barn in New Paltz—dating to 1797—that he and Susan bought in 1973. It’s his weekend place; Susan lives half a mile away. He spends most of his time in a penthouse studio in Chelsea, and he remains committed to keeping the Quilted Giraffe’s reputation aloft.

The restaurant, Barry says, was where you went “if you wanted to take a date and impress her, wanted to propose, wanted to have a close

for a big Wall Street deal.” It was, really, the first establishment of its kind: a fine-dining restaurant with American waiters and American cooks. It was the first in New York to compete at the highest level, with Lutèce and Côte Basque, serving “exquisitely original food,” as Bryan Miller described it in 1989, in a four-star review in the *The New York Times*. (The paper would award the restaurant four stars on three separate occasions.)

The Quilted Giraffe translated the newest ideas from across the Atlantic into an American idiom at a time when even French chefs in New York hadn’t quite caught up with nouvelle cuisine. (There were other upstarts—Dodin Bouffant and Le Plaisir were, for a while, serious competitors—but they were gone in a flash.) Barry, the impresario with no formal food training, was always willing to break with convention. His food was French and American, and sometimes Japanese, too—duck confit with creamed corn, lobster yakitori with sweet potato fritters, pecan squares for dessert. It was fusion before there was fusion, and haute comfort, too.

But food was only part of the draw. The Quilted Giraffe was more of a circus than Le Cirque ever was, as power-packed as the Four Seasons Grill Room, and sometimes as wild as Studio 54. The Giraffe was where Tom Wolfe’s *Masters of the Universe* would have dined in real life, and it was where Bret Easton Ellis’s *American Psycho*, Patrick Bateman, brought his





THE MAESTRO
From top: Barry Wine, chef, impresario, and fearless dilettante, at 550 Madison, circa 1991; a violinist invades the kitchen; the Quilted Giraffe on Second Avenue. Opposite: The menu, featuring the quilted giraffe painting, which Susan Wine still owns, and the \$100 tasting menu, with beggar's purses.



prey: "I handed the Zagat to Jean and asked her to find the most expensive restaurant in Manhattan. She made a nine o'clock reservation at the Quilted Giraffe."

IT'S BEEN NEARLY 20 YEARS SINCE THE restaurant shuttered. It closed on New Year's Eve 1992—an evening at once joyous and tearful, the end of an era. The waiters came together for one last time to synchronize the restaurant's famously ostentatious champagne pour just before midnight. The '80s were done. Black Monday—October 19, 1987—had been the beginning of the end. It's hard to fathom in today's economic climate, when a 500-point swing in the Dow is a daily occurrence, but Black Monday was the first crash since the Great Depression, the Dow losing 22.6 percent of its value by the closing bell. "We did incredible business that night," Barry recalls. "It was as if the Wall Street guys all knew it would be the last chance they'd have to use their corporate cards." The Gulf War didn't help, three years later. "In the first couple of weeks," Susan says, "nobody went to

smuggled back from Europe and sold under the table. Barry would swap in Dominican wrappers himself before he got on the plane.

Then there was the night Susan allegedly ejected three women, tossing their furs out into the alley after they had begged to be squeezed in for dinner between reservation times and two hours later refused to get up. Susan, for one, doesn't remember the incident, although she admits it may have happened. "Nobody else was going to do my dirty work," she says. "I was the bitch at the front door."

And how about the con man who brought two high-priced call girls to dinner, ordering tasting menus and bottles of Cristal before running out at dessert, leaving his dates with the bill? Wayne King, the maître d' who worked the door for years, swears it happened, with one screaming, "He fucked me in the bathroom!" and "He didn't pay us!" and the other insisting, "We can't cover this bill!" There were certainly plenty of scoundrels mixed in with the Astors, Gutfreunds, and other socialite regulars: Ivan Boesky, Michael Milken, and John DeLoe, who came in with his model

THE QUILTED GIRAFFE WAS MORE OF A CIRCUS THAN LE CIRQUE, AS POWER-PACKED AS THE FOUR SEASONS GRILL ROOM, AND SOMETIMES AS WILD AS STUDIO 54.

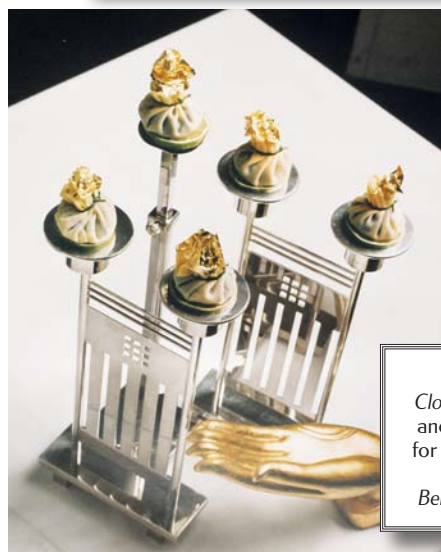
dinner anywhere in New York." New tax laws targeting business deductions for dinner and lunch also helped end the party.

After the restaurant closed and '90s sobriety began to sink in, Quilted Giraffe lore took on a life of its own. The best stories became the stuff of legend, more outrageous with every telling. Like the evening one of the millionaire Bass brothers came in to celebrate a big oil deal. "One of the guys at the table was talking about how he'd gone out and bought a Ferrari that day," says the restaurant's longtime sommelier, Billy Guilfoyle, who is now an instructor at the Culinary Institute of America. "He asked me, 'What should we drink?' and I'm pointing out big-ticket items, and he's just looking at the price, 'No, more—we want to spend more.'" They ended up with a double magnum of '62 Lafite Rothschild. "Every time I tell the story the price gets higher," Guilfoyle admits, "but I believe it was \$3,000."

And what of the bankers who swilled Petrus from the bottle and lit Cuban cigars with hundred-dollar bills burned down to the Benjamins? The Habanos were certainly there,

wife, Cristina Ferrare, just before his arrest on drug conspiracy charges, in 1982. Bernie Madoff, when he still seemed a stand-up guy, had lunch sent to his office from the Quilted Giraffe. And 23-year-old grifter David Bloom, who made off with \$10 million by posing as a finance whiz with high-powered friends, brought his marks in for dinner, excusing himself to take calls from important clients like the Duke of Wellington and the Sultan of Brunei. No place said you'd arrived quite like the Quilted Giraffe, and nothing has ever really taken its place.

The restaurant couldn't have had a less auspicious start. It was 1975. Barry and Susan Wine of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were living in New Paltz. He was a lawyer who had branched into real estate, buying up property all over town. She ran an art gallery and dress shop there, in one of Barry's buildings. Then he had the idea to add a restaurant, too, a bistro designed to drive traffic to the shops next door. They called it the Quilted Giraffe after the Quilted Bear, a restaurant they liked in Scottsdale, Arizona. The first cooks were fresh out



FINER DINERS

Clockwise from left: A beggar's purse presentation; **Dustin Hoffman** and **Warren Beatty** (post-*Ishtar*, with **Barry Wine**) brandish mallets for opening sake casks; **Yo-Yo Ma** and a custom dessert; an apology from **Arthur Sulzberger Jr.**; **Itzhak Perlman** takes a bite. Below: The Wines pose with **Jasper Johns** and art collectors, 1990.



The New York Times
229 WEST 43 STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036

Mr. Barry Wine
The Quilted Giraffe
955 Second Avenue
New York, NY

October 2,

Dear Mr. Wine,

I just talked to Sydney Gruson, and I under-
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such short notice,
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apologies.

future opportunity
o hope that you will
Sulzberger. If you

Sincerely,

Arthur Sulzberger, Jr.



of the nearby Culinary Institute of America, and so inexperienced they didn't even know to wash the spinach they served in a salad with canned mandarin oranges. They didn't last long, replaced by a succession of more seasoned cooks. Still, it remained a place, as Barry describes it, "for ladies who lunch," with quiche and ratatouille. "Pure Julia Child."

It might have continued in that vein if fate hadn't intervened. It was New Year's Eve 1976. Just before service the chef phoned to say his car had broken down on his way in, leaving a crowded dining room and a rudderless kitchen. With no other options, Barry stepped in. "My brother-in-law, an orthodontist, was visiting," he recalls. "We said, 'We can do this.' We just thought about it: Something takes 10 minutes to cook, something takes five minutes, at 8:05 you put the duck in the pan, at 8:13 you throw in the scallops." And just like that the country lawyer with no food training reinvented himself as a professional chef. Within the year Barry had closed his law office and Susan had sold off her shops. They were now devoted full-time to building a serious restaurant.

In the spring of 1978 they traveled to France on an eating tour, the first of many. They dined at Le Pré Catelan, in Paris, and Michel Guérard's Les Prés d'Eugénie, among other icons of nouvelle cuisine. "The restaurants in which we ate have no counterparts here," Susan wrote in a letter to friends after the trip. Back home they began to emulate the food and service they'd seen in France. Even their menus were now written in French ("La Caviar Beluga," "Le Canard au Poivre des Isles").

By 1979 their little country bistro had become among the fanciest in the Hudson Valley, frequented by moneyed New York week-enders. The *Village Voice* had published a rave. In *New York* magazine Gael Greene praised what she called "a celebration of amateurs." It was time, the Wines agreed, to take a chance on Manhattan. The new Quilted Giraffe opened on Memorial Day, in the old Bonanza Coffee Shop on Second Avenue, one block from Lutèce. It was an intimate space: a dozen tables surrounded by cream walls, dark wainscoting, and frosted Deco glass. A giant mosaic-style painting of a quilted giraffe eventually hung in the dining room. (Susan has it still, in one

of the hallways of her New Paltz house.) The French wines were stored in a pickle cooler that had been left in the basement.

A few waiters came down from New Paltz, but other than that the Wines were starting anew. Susan ran the dining room, and for the first time they hired a pedigreed chef, Mark Chayette, who had cooked in France with Guérard at Les Prés d'Eugénie and in New York at Regine's. He would translate Barry's ideas into food that actually worked. At \$28.50 for a three-course meal, the opening menu—featuring "flavored cheese with red caviar" and "lobster and lotte with melon and raspberries"—was exorbitant. But from the very beginning Barry knew better than to give it away. "I used to raise the price \$5 every four months—\$35 to \$40, \$45 to \$50," he says. Money brings money; that was clear from day one.

It was the dawn of an American food revolution. Diners with money began to seriously fetishize food, and the Quilted Giraffe very quickly became the place where they did it. It was an almost instant success. It started with the lawyers and bankers, and then the politicians, movie stars, and media titans, too. Arthur Sulzberger Jr. once sent a four-paragraph apology on *New York Times* letterhead for a Monday no-show. It often seemed as though there were more precious



jewels in the dining room than in the windows at Van Cleef & Arpels. In the banquettes and bathrooms, busboys and waiters occasionally found baubles worth more than they earned in a year. Bunny Mellon, for instance, according to maitre d' King, sent her driver—and a \$50 reward—for a diamond cuff she had left at the restaurant. (Cocaine was another goody that would turn up in the lost-and-found.)

For a few weeks every summer the operation shut down so the Wines, and sometimes their chef, could travel to Europe—more vacations spent eating for R&D. In 1980, Barry and Susan discovered aumonieres, tiny crepes filled with crème fraîche and caviar, at Vieille Fontaine, just outside Paris. The “beggar’s purses,” as they started calling them, debuted at the Quilted Giraffe not long after that, beluga-stuffed crepe bundles with chives as the purse strings and gold leaf on top. They were extravagant, flashy—bling on a plate. In 1981 they were a \$30 supplement on the \$75 prix-fixe menu. By 1990 they’d been bumped up to \$50. No matter their price, the purses were always hot sellers, the restaurant’s most enduring and iconic dish. “Investment guys would order them by the dozen,” Morgen Jacobsen, who helped run the kitchen in its final years, recalls, “just as a way to spend money.”

AFTER THE BEGGAR’S PURSES TOOK OFF, Barry, eager to keep the hype going, began amping the drama in the way he served them. Delivering them himself, he presented the bundles atop silver pedestals, instructing women patrons, whom he sometimes handcuffed to the dining room railings, to consume them hands-free. “Close your eyes,” he’d say. “Take the whole thing in your mouth.”

All those big spenders helped fund a new car for Barry, a shiny gold Jaguar, and a Rolls-Royce for the restaurant, which was always parked out front, between the Irish bar and the Korean deli. The Wines offered free rides home after dinner with a succession of odd-ball drivers—among them a Chinese gentleman who packed a revolver and a woman who looked like “Buster Poindexter in a bleached-blond wig,” as Wayne King described her. The eating adventures in Europe became more extravagant, with flights on the Concorde and nights on Lake Como and at the Hotel du Cap on the Riviera.

The boom times meant the kitchen had access to the best stuff on the market—the finest caviar, the most premium truffles, Kobe beef when nobody had it. The quail and their eggs came from a farm in New Jersey, and so

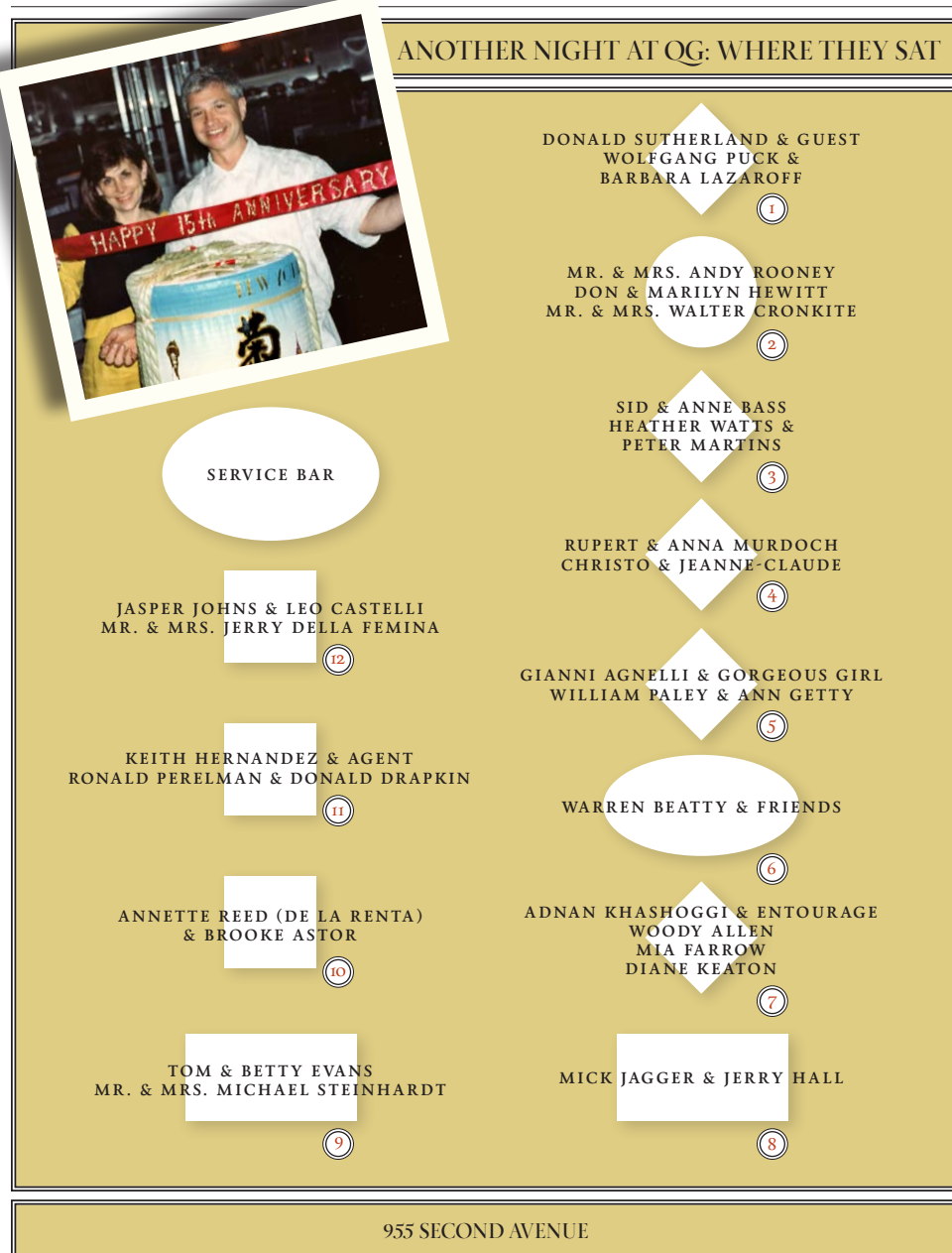
did the butter, which had a higher percentage of fat than could be found anywhere in New York and was delivered in 50-pound blocks in the trunk of a car.

The Wines hired a gardener to work a five-acre plot at their house in New Paltz, growing food for the restaurant—beans and peas and Cavaillon melons, flowers for the tables, *fraises des bois* for dessert. California had Alice Waters at Chez Panisse blazing the farm-to-table trail. Barry and Susan Wine aren’t remembered as pioneers in that vein, but they should be.

Meanwhile, the most ambitious young cooks in the city made their way to the Quilted Giraffe. A young Thomas Keller applied. Barry turned him away. Tom Colicchio landed a job, a New Jersey boy with his first big break in the city. “I’ve never seen a kitchen run that

smoothly, that consistently,” Colicchio, now a TV star with his own restaurant empire, says. David Kinch, a transplant from New Orleans, came of age at the restaurant, spending four years there in his early twenties before eventually going on to challenge Keller as California’s most creative chef when he opened Manresa. “I don’t think people get how far ahead of its time it was,” Kinch says. “I do, and I feel pretty lucky to have been a part of it.”

Barry liked his chefs to be like him: career changers, untested, willing to try things and fail. (One early flop: herring fillets in cream sauce with bananas and blueberries.) Wayne Nish had been in the printing business, Pat Williams a professional dancer. James Chew had worked as a lawyer, like Barry, and he had even done time as [CONTINUED ON PAGE 168]



[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 131] a Manhattan DA. “It was almost like Barry was running this atelier or something,” Katy Sparks, one of the many women who cooked there, recalls. “He would come into the kitchen with an idea and say, ‘I’m thinking about something with octopus,’ and then everybody would scramble.” As much as half the staff—many more than at any other restaurant in New York—were women.

They were a tight-knit crew, tight like family. Late afternoons the whole team sat down to a proper staff meal, Barry and Susan, sometimes flanked by their children, at the head of the table. The Wines had been raising a family in an apartment upstairs. Their kids—Thatcher and Winnie, just seven and nine when the restaurant opened—grew up in its dining room, paraded their dogs through it, ate there with their friends, landed summer jobs there in high school and college. An intercom system connected the host stand and kitchen to the apartment above. Sometimes little voices echoed through service: “Mommy! Pick up!”

Most nights, after the last diners had gone, the Wines would retire upstairs, and the waiters and cooks would all head out to party. On a quiet night they might hit Paparazzi, the bar across the street, where Hilary Gregg, a native of St. Vincent, who cooked in the kitchen longer than anyone else, would explain to the newcomers how everything worked. Five drinks in he’d start sharing stories from the years he’d spent cooking on Roy Cohn’s yacht. (“A bad man, a very bad man,” he says today.) “You would regret it,” Katherine Alford, who now runs the kitchens at the Food Network, says. “But going out with Hilary was definitely a rite of passage.”

There were late bites at the Chefs Cuisiniers Club—a food industry hangout—and very late nights at the Pyramid Club down on Avenue A. Sometimes Wayne King and his crew of fabulous waiters would drag you along as they sailed through the crowd at Studio 54. The AIDS epidemic would claim many of them over the years.

“No other restaurant I’ve cooked in had the same collaborative, in-the-moment feeling of a team,” says Brooklyn caterer Loren Michelle, who started at the Quilted Giraffe when she was just 21.

The ultimate payoff came at the start of 1984, with the first four-star review in the *Times*. Noel Comess, who would go on to launch Tom Cat Bakery, was running the kitchen by then—a 25-year-old kid with a hefty salary, a corporate credit card, and a license from Barry to travel and eat. He lived

next door to the restaurant and was treated like a surrogate son. After the four-star review, Barry gave him a watch. “If you were a made man,” Comess says, “you got a Rolex.”

The four stars changed everything. “It was like a nuke going off in the place,” Comess says. To deal with the endless calls for reservations, the Wines installed a new phone system with four lines. On the weekends they began to notice a new clientele, “bridge and tunnel” types coming in just to “wear their fur coats and fancy shoes,” as King puts it. “They were awful,” Susan says, “the kind of people who just wanted to tell people they’d eaten in that kind of restaurant.” And so the Quilted Giraffe began to close on weekends. Can you imagine a hot spot today closed on Saturday nights?

The weeknight business continued to grow, and the kitchen, emboldened by so much acclaim, began taking more risks—rolling out mustard ice cream, barbecued calf’s liver, kiwi beurre blanc. Barry spent more time than ever hobnobbing with guests—and mounting increasingly elaborate practical jokes. When Andy Rooney, a longtime regular, ordered his usual martini one night, Barry delivered an enormous glass from Think Big! in Soho, with water inside and a chopstick piercing an onion. “That’s very funny,” Rooney quipped, “but I asked for an olive.”

On another occasion, after an amorous couple slipped off their shoes, Barry ordered a waiter to swipe the man’s loafers, delivering them under a cloche after dinner as a “special dessert.” To Warren Beatty, a favorite target, he once sent a beggar’s purse filled with peanut butter. As a running joke he often slipped plastic food he’d brought back from Japan into the actor’s meal—a piece of fake broccoli in with his vegetables, say, or a plastic egg in a moat of real mashed potatoes. “People loved it,” Susan says. “You couldn’t go to Lutèce and get that shtick; you couldn’t go to the Four Seasons and get it. You’re getting the food and the service, and then the chef comes out and plays a practical joke on you. Where else are you going to find that?” In the coming years the aesthetic of the delicious and the surreal would be perfected by Ferran Adrià at El Bulli.

By the time they opened the Casual Quilted Giraffe, in 1986, in the AT&T Building, Barry and Susan had bravado to burn. The design of the menu and the chrome on the walls—the Wines hired future green architecture star William McDonough for the project—were meant to evoke a 1950s diner, but chicken nuggets and a root beer float cost \$23. (You could also order Dom Perignon and six beggar’s

purses for \$150.) At dessert Barry sent out store-bought jelly beans and gummy bears on a silver tray. The restaurant lasted barely a year, and the original Quilted Giraffe moved into the larger space in the summer of 1987. They poured millions into construction, even though the stock market was already tanking. To keep the new location profitable, they again had the Quilted Giraffe open on Saturday nights.

The focus of the food had turned Japanese. Barry had been traveling to Tokyo in search of ideas and ingredients—returning with pricey knives and handmade plates. He served mashed potato sushi and tuna sashimi on wasabi cream pizza. Alongside the \$110 tasting menu he offered “Kaiseki New York Style”—an American twist on a traditional Kyoto dinner service—for \$135. Ever the savvy networker, he’d begun attracting many Japanese patrons. By then the U.S. economy was floundering, while Japan’s was booming.

IN THE END, THOUGH, IT WAS MORE THAN a collapsing economy that did in the Quilted Giraffe. By the late ’80s Barry had begun thinking he might like a way out. The once cohesive staff had grown increasingly fractured. Comess was gone, and Gregg, too. After more than a decade of ruling the dining room, King had moved to Florida to open a restaurant. Among those who remained, bad blood lingered from a fight over tips—Barry had begun giving a percentage of the waiters’ tips to the kitchen staff—and from a failed attempt at unionization. Barry and Susan were also drifting apart.

“He knew 50 was coming,” says Susan, who remains close to her ex. “He didn’t feel he could stand on his feet every day doing this. He was looking for an opportunity to go out on top.” It was there in the dining room, among the Japanese executives, that Barry Wine—the lawyer in chef’s whites—found his golden exit. Sony had taken over the AT&T Building in 1991. Its chairman, a fan of the restaurant, offered to buy it for a considerable sum. Instead of a restaurant, though, the Quilted Giraffe would become the Sony Club, a private oasis for Sony executives, with Barry in charge, for a time, as a well-paid consultant. And that is how the Quilted Giraffe, the restaurant that embodied ’80s excess more than any other, finally ceased to exist, on New Year’s Eve 1992.

“Four stars was a burden. Four stars meant you had to be there,” says Barry at his New York apartment, the latest stock market tumult scrolling by in the background on CNBC. “I did it for 18 years. I’ve always been

the lawyer who changed careers, and I intentionally vowed that I wasn't going to ever be seen in a chef's jacket again."

The gig with Sony didn't last long. More consulting work followed, advising Warner LeRoy on a Rainbow Room reboot and the Blackstone Group on high-end restaurants for its luxury hotel acquisitions. (Chairman Stephen Schwarzman had been a Quilted Giraffe regular.) Barry dabbled in e-commerce, building Restaurant City, a website that never got off the ground. In his spare time he began designing jewelry and women's clothing. Last year he submitted a beggar's purse dress, covered in plastic bundles, to Barneys, hoping it might make the cut for the food-themed windows the store installed in November. (It didn't.) Barry, once front and center, had gradually slipped into the background.

"People aren't interested in fine dining anymore," he says now, surrounded by the Butter + Bling rings he's always giving away. "Sometimes they don't even know what it is. Now we have bloggers and the Food Network. Is Guy Fieri really a role model chef?"

But around the city and across the country, the Quilted Giraffe, and what it stood for, survives in any restaurant with four-star ambitions and the clientele to match—at, say, Alinea, in Chicago, New York's Eleven Madison Park, the French Laundry, in Yountville, California. Beggar's purses still turn up at catered cocktail parties. The many cooks who spent time at the Quilted Giraffe, and the many more who wish they had, have fanned out across the country. At Mercer Kitchen in Soho, alumnus Chris Beischer even serves a "Barry Wine" tuna wasabi pizza. "In the restaurant business, people forget very quickly," Colicchio says. "But I know that the cooks who worked at the Quilted Giraffe will always carry a piece of it around."

The true contribution of the Quilted Giraffe, Barry says, is perhaps even more profound in terms of how America eats. "In an industry dominated on the luxury side by the French, we showed that Americans could do it better," he says. "We helped introduce a Japanese aesthetic and the idea that you could cook not from a repertoire but from ingredients, that a restaurant could be a legitimate business, that the chef wasn't some guy in the basement sneaking a drink from a bottle in a paper bag. Would that have changed? It was our kind of restaurant that paved the way."

Meanwhile, up at the Sony Club, the Quilted Giraffe's weathered plates and tarnished silver are still being used every day. •

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 110] steps in my mother's swimming pool were so she could get out if she ever went in. The thing is, pugs are not built for aquatic sports; their butts sink rather quickly. No problem—I ordered her a swim vest. Next time I took her in, securely ensconced in her yellow floatie, she happily paddled to the steps, to my mother's delight. Two friends of mine who also own pugs became smitten with the vests and ordered them for their dogs, resulting in my most brilliant idea yet: pug swim dates, which of course had to be held at my mother's house.

Her Bel Air social set was abuzz with news of the Sunday pug races up at her house. She would regale her friends with stories about how she'd call out, "Ready, set, go!" and four pugs, all in matching yellow floaties, would paddle to the steps as if Olympic gold were waiting for them. A few of her friends begged to be invited so they could see this for themselves. When people visited from out of town, she told them to come on Sunday for the pug swim races. When one of her friends insisted that pugs don't swim, she defiantly brought photographs to the next dinner party to prove that they most certainly did.

Since we were taking a lot of pictures on these Sundays, my friend and I used one of those websites to make up a book we called *Pugs in the Pool*, with both text and photographs. Then my mother started taking that to dinner parties, proudly pointing out Gracie—her grandchild—in each photo.

In Bel Air, where the phone lines usually crackle with tales of divorces, scandals, black tie events, or home remodels, the swim team was big news that summer. Which is no small feat. Candy Spelling might be hosting a formal dinner party, but Nancy Reagan is hosting pug swim meets at her house on Sundays.

Most important, though, her house had come alive with fun and laughter. My father was gone, but he seemed so present in the sounds of splashing water and people diving into the pool. When I was a child our summer days were spent swimming; chlorine in my hair was like perfume to me. It seemed fitting that now we returned to water to heal, to move on, to remember laughter.

"Your father would have loved this," my mother said one Sunday as the pugs paddled to the steps. She glanced up at the sky as if to confirm this. I'm sure I felt my father whisper, "Good job." •

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 135] hour the second night. Honestly, if I had known I could be graded on how well I slept, I would have tried to do this sooner. How would I ever sleep soundly again if I accepted my below-average status? Having concrete data to compare one night's rest to another over a full week helped me analyze my habits. Was sleep the top priority to me the night I scored a meager 71, or had watching a few minutes of *Donnie Darko* for the fourth time taken precedence?

Encouraged by my sudden A-student status, I logged on to the app store on my iPhone for even more tech support. There are literally dozens of options: an app that plays the soothing sound of wind on the tundra or a peaceful forest to help you fall asleep; one that records audio while you sleep and displays a graph of how loud and frequent your snores are; or the WakeMate, which includes a wristband to monitor your sleep cycle and wakes you up during your shallowest so you'll feel more refreshed. I chose Deep Sleep with Andrew Johnson, a guided-meditation expert. Despite having to get over his almost comical Scottish brogue (more Scotty from *Star Trek* than Sean Connery), I made it through the introduction before I went out like a light.

"These devices that monitor brain waves, they are really just estimating the quality and kind of sleep the user is getting, as opposed to a sleep lab, which can assess sleep directly by monitoring brain activity. It doesn't compare to what we do in the lab," says Stanford's Kushida. "But I think that anything that can help a person relax, electronic or non-electronic, will benefit sleep. If it helps you, then by all means use it."

What it boils down to, it seems to me, is that if we make sleep a priority—actually turn some of our unfocused jabber about our fatigue into action—we're likely to experience some results. Most of the advice that sleep experts offer is about modifying behavior—drinking less alcohol or caffeine, trying relaxation exercises, getting more regular physical exercise—and these variables are clearly within our control.

As for Millie? Unfortunately, she's not a variable I can control, but maybe I can optimize my own sleep so I'm less likely to wake easily for false alarms. Maybe. My anecdotal research indicates that one day, not long from now, she will be begging, pleading for 10 more minutes of snooze before she has to face another school day. And as her official human alarm clock, I can't promise that I'll use my "gentle wake" feature to make that happen. •