

BEST of NEW YORK

The Absolute Best Raw Bar in New York

By Hugh Merwin



Attention to detail is the name of the game.
Photo: Courtesy of Maison Premiere.

For six weeks, the editors of New York Magazine and Grub Street are publishing *a series of definitive lists that declare the absolute best versions of 101 things to eat, drink, and do*. When it comes to raw bar, the city is awash in various crudos and fluke carpaccios, plenty of lobster-claw cocktail, and, of course, a mess of clams and oysters. The best of the bunch, however, are either high-volume operations like Grand Central Oyster Bar, or venues like Greenpoint Fish & Lobster Co., which uses a smaller scale and commitment to sustainability to its advantage.

The Absolute Best

1. Maison Premiere

298 Bedford Ave., nr. Grand St., Williamsburg; [347-335-0446](tel:347-335-0446)

Fresh fish is essential, but equally important in finding a great raw bar is how well the restaurant handles the product. (You want a place where oysters are always kept cup side down, for example, not sticking up like tombstones through the ice.) At Maison Premiere — known for its popular absinthe and shellfish happy hour, and a comprehensive oyster selection — Lisa Giffen's kitchen does a bang-up job with shucking, so oyster hinges are snapped cleanly. Grit is minimal, adductor muscles are neatly lopped, and bellies are intact. There's attention to detail, in other words. Giffen spent time at *Adour*, Alain Ducasse's plush and defunct midtown dining room, which might explain her love of composed add-on dishes, not to mention condiments that go beyond basic cocktail and tartar sauces. Chilled half-lobster, for example, is served with aioli that smacks of tarragon and pulverized lobster roe.