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Dining Out

DINING BRIEFS



HE'S THE TOP Harold Dieterle, chef at Perilla in Greenwich Village.

NEW PLACES

PERILLA

9 Jones Street (West Fourth Street),
Greenwich Village; (212) 929-6868

I don't mean to take anything away from the cooking, but the new restaurant Perilla isn't buzz-buzz-buzzing with stylishly dressed taster-makers because of its roasted octopus with grapefruit, its spicy duck meatballs or its wagyu skirt steak, appealing as they are.

The reason is television. Perilla is where the winner of the first season of "Top Chef," Harold Dieterle, has come to roost, and that's bound to pique enough diners' curiosity to keep the half-circle booths in its dining room occupied for a while.

I was curious myself. "Top Chef" often presents kooky challenges, like fashioning appetizers from the contents of a vending machine, and it's pure show business: slick editing, stacy confrontations. Would Perilla

be a contrived theater of similarly ramped-up drama?

Not at all. Like a bistro with elegant tailoring, it has a low-key glow rather than a high-wattage sheen. And the menu — on which appetizers range from \$8 to \$12, entrees from \$21 to \$32 — isn't flamboyant. In its seasonality, its breakdown of dishes (raw hamachi, beef carpaccio, roasted chicken, crispy skate wing), it plays things very straightforward and very safe.

It's a reminder that before Mr. Dieterle heeded the siren song of reality television, he hummed a workaday tune, cooking at the Harrison in TriBeCa.

In this endeavor, his creativity shows up around the edges: the Okinawa yam gnocchi with the duck meatballs; the black bean glaze on black cod; the ramp and poppy seed mignonette with bay scallops.

He's not mugging for his audience. That season is over.