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A View To Chew On: Upgrading The Perfect New York Steakhouse




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Windows for days at Porter House Bar and Grill.

Earlier this year, *New York Magazine* restaurant critic Adam Platt dubbed [Porter House](#), in the Time Warner Center by Columbus Circle, the best steakhouse in New York for the second year running.

“[I]f you have the resources,” he advised, “fight for one of the tables by the window”.

Interior architecture and design firm [Jeffrey Beers International](#) (JBI) designed the original Porter House in 2006 and its subsequent top-to-bottom redesign in 2016—coinciding with an updated menu—in close consultation with [Chef Michael Lomonaco](#) (who has another space next door, the piano-soundtracked craft cocktail lounge Center Bar). The redesign resulted in new flooring, new textures and materials, a snazzy new color scheme, new lighting, new chairs and new banquettes, not to mention the new, heftier name of Porter House Bar & Grill. 

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/darrynking/2018/05/24/a-view-to-chew-on-upgrading-the-perfect-new-york-steakhouse/#3047da757d52>

One thing that hasn't changed is, yes, the stunning view, through windows that stretch across the whole north- and east-facing length of the restaurant. Even if you're not seated right by them, it's still quite a production, visible anywhere in the dining room.

As it is, I was very comfortably sat by them on a recent night in early spring, in a high-back banquette adorned with numerous cushions. My dining partner and I were able to enjoy the commotion of Columbus Circle from a pleasantly removed vantage point, and watch as night fell over southern Central Park.



Porter House dining room in 2006



The redesigned Porter House dining room in 2016

The transformation of day into twilight, and twilight into night, is just as enchanting inside. At around 6pm, Porter House is happily buzzing with locals and tourists, exuding the energy of those who've just clocked off work or for whom a day job is a distant memory. As I arrive, there are several fellows nursing scotches at the marble and granite bar, catching up with the day's news via a number of television screens.

In the dining room, separated from the bar and lounge area by a striking custom glass wine display, natural light streams through those windows, highlighting the pristine white of the tablecloths, the tasteful gray of the banquettes, and sparkle of the chrome fixtures.

But as darkness descends and the steakhouse nears its 11pm closing time—several east and west coast oysters, glasses of red wine, and one exquisitely marbled (and *New York Magazine*-endorsed), [chili-rubbed USDA Prime rib eye later](#)—it assumes a new identity. (By the way, the beef, from Southern California's Brandt farm, is carnivorous ecstasy.)

Diners either side of our banquette clear out—the bros in suits, an elegant silver-haired couple—and famished newcomers arrive, freshly liberated, one supposes, from a night at the opera. Even our stylish mustachioed server is replaced with an older, bespectacled gent, as one shift ends and another begins. (Both are wearing ties

and waistcoats, of course.) I mightn't have believed it if I hadn't experienced it, but the 275-seat, 7,800-square foot space gradually feels wonderfully intimate—a cunning and welcome magic trick of atmosphere.

Now it's time for the stylish chandeliers to shine—mini-lamps arranged in concentric circles overhead, sort of resembling ultra-chic Christmas trees—the perfect lighting by which to enjoy the decadent crown jewel of Porter House's dessert menu, the seven-layer South Carolina Coconut Cake with toasted coconut icing. Not one for the faint of heart. (In fact, my dining partner was still dizzy with the succulent pleasures of the Cote de Boeuf.)

Michael Pandolfi of JBI was kind enough to unpack their collaboration with Porter House Bar and Grill, before and after the redesign, and the resulting restaurant's effortless combo of modern and classic. ←

Michael, what's JBI's main consideration when designing a destination like [Porter House](#)?

We designed the original Porter House back in 2006 and it was very successful and became one of the classic steakhouses of NYC. The owners wanted us to take a look at the design and see where it could be improved in both design and layout. Most importantly, they wanted the new Porter House to be sophisticated and timeless to work with an updated menu.

Initially we spent time on research of classic New York steakhouses and what the next evolution of steakhouses in New York would be. We met with Michael Lomonaco the Head Chef at Porterhouse and discussed new design ideas and it was a very collaborative experience.



The granite and marble Porter House bar.

The steakhouse is a quintessential New York experience—does that affect how JBI approaches the design, either to meet or defy expectations?

New York City has many different types of steakhouses so it is always a challenge to design a space that will stand out but also fit the personality of the owner and chef. Porter House is located on the fourth floor of the Time Warner Center in Columbus Circle and has stunning views of Central Park throughout the dining room. We spent a lot of time working through the layout, colors and finishes that would work with the views since the entire length of the restaurant is windows.

What does the 2016 redesign retain from the original 2006 design?

The original design had cherry wood beams and millwork throughout the bar and dining room which was very warm and brought that classic steakhouse feel to the space. We wanted to keep the warmth of that wood in the space and build the new design around it.

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What new textures and materials were introduced, and what was the thinking behind them?

The bar flooring was changed to a custom black, gray and white marble stone floor that added visual texture and pattern to the space. All the fabrics were specifically selected to have colors and textures that complimented the warm millwork throughout. Polished chrome was used on new chandeliers, bar shelving and the wine display to add a layer of reflection and movement in the space.

And the color palette?

The new blue, gray and polished chrome palette added a new layer of sophistication to Porter House and set it up to remain one of the best steakhouses in NYC.



OK, one last look at that view