

Gourmet

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PICHOLINE, MATTHEW'S, DIWAN GRILL
RANDOM NOTES: BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS



Chef Terrance Brennan at Picholine



BY ANDY BIRSH

There are times in New York City when an imaginative person might think that this metropolis was gastronomically on the Mediterranean Sea rather than the Atlantic Ocean. Lavender, fennel, and rosemary dot Manhattan's farmers markets and specialty foods shops; olive oil is for many metropolitans the preferred sautéing and enriching medium; pizza, focaccia, *pita*, and *phyllo* can be found throughout the city; and the resistance many New Yorkers once put up to garlic, heady spices, saffron, and hot peppers has been replaced by a craving for these ingredients.

It is thus very much a sign of the times that one of the

city's most engaging new restaurants should be called PICHOLINE (for a small tender green olive identified with the south of France but harvested mainly in Spain and Italy) and that its chef-proprietor should be an American. Terrance Brennan, the American in question, who was raised in Virginia, many miles from the nearest working olive press, has enjoyed continuous success in his culinary endeavors in Manhattan. He has commanded the stoves at Annabelle's (which closed with his departure), The Polo at the Hotel Westbury, Prix Fixe (which also did not survive in his absence), and Steak Frites. Yet no matter where he has cooked, flavor memories from his stints as a trainee on the Côte d'Azur (under Roger Vergé at Moulins de Mougins) and in Italy have helped inspire his work.