

producebusiness

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NEW YORK FOOD SCENE

Home-Grown From The Rooftop

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

141 West 10th St.,
New York, NY 10014
(212) 414-2355
bbandcny.com

Hours of operation:

Mon. - Wed.: 5:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.

Thurs. - Sat.: 5:30 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Sun.: 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.;

5:30 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.

Cuisine Specialty:

Contemporary American

It's hard to replicate the variety of vegetables and herbs that appear on the seasonal menus at the West Village's Bell, Book and Candle (BBC) - 15 different tomatoes, nearly a dozen types of lettuce, peppers galore, pumpkins, squash, and a wide assortment of culinary herbs. That's because the restaurant, under the guidance of executive chef John Mooney, grows much of its own produce on a rooftop Tower Garden vertical farm. In fact, with more than half the produce on the menu coming from the restaurant's garden, BBC exemplifies local, organic and sustainable.

"As time goes on, we become better at production," notes Mooney. "We continue



to get more organized and efficient because we learned what grows well, and how to keep it healthy for our customers and for the environment." For example, rather than relying on pesticides, Chef

Mooney and the restaurant staff release predatory insects that prey on pests such as aphids (or plant lice). A robust New York City bee population found its way to the BBC rooftop and helps pollinate the various crops.

"We change our food and drink menus with the seasons, and they reflect what we are growing at that moment," says Mooney. "Our garden generally produces between March and December, when we grow great tomatoes, lettuce, herbs, zucchini, zucchini flowers, and much more. I don't have to refrigerate herbs, tomatoes, and lettuce, because I pick and use them the same day. I supplement with things that I can't grow in our hydroponic farm such as corn, onions, root vegetables, and mushrooms."

Popular dishes with patrons include: zucchini flowers stuffed with mushrooms and goat cheese, marinated cherry tomatoes; rooftop melons wrapped in country ham; caramelized cauliflower steaks; the ever-changing mixed green salad; and squash soup. Visitors to Washington D.C. can enjoy Mooney's home-grown cuisine at the newly opened Bidwell.

"I keep fruits and vegetables close to their natural form," says Mooney. "It's easy to showcase good quality."

— MINDY HERMANN



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