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### Essentials

#### Info & map

► Restaurant: TriBeCafe

# Restaurants & Bars

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Critic's Rating



### This week's events

- Eating
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#### Restaurant review

### TriBeCafe

#### Discover Western food, à la Japan.

277 Church St between Franklin and White Sts (212-343-0277). Subway: 1 to Franklin St. Mon–Wed 6pm–1:30am; Thu–Sat 6pm–2:30am. Average main course: \$10.



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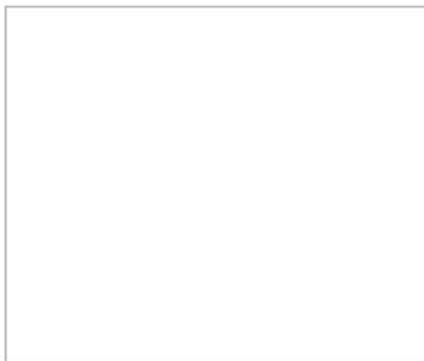
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Even though the presence of *izakaya*, *robataya*, and ramen and soba houses has exploded in Gotham over the past few years, restaurants dedicated to *yoshoku*—a uniquely Japanese interpretation of Western cuisine—have yet to become part of New Yorkers' dining vocabulary. While a few examples of *yoshoku* are already on menus in NYC (*tonkatsu* and curry rice, for example), the owners of TriBeCafe, who also run the Japanese-Italian restaurant Greenwich Grill, have opened an entire restaurant devoted to the genre. The small, laid-back eatery, decorated with iron light fixtures and tatami wallpaper, is an ideal place to delve into the roster of dishes, many of them simultaneously strange and familiar (low prices encourage experimentation). *Gambas*, which bring to mind the popular tapas dish of shrimp with olive oil and garlic, featured plump crustaceans, potatoes and brussels sprouts in an intense sauce thickened with melted anchovies. A heaping \$7 plate of *banbanji* salad (a Japanese retooling of Chinese sesame chicken) was loaded with juicy slices of steamed poultry in a spicy sesame dressing. Strands of warm spaghetti, meanwhile, were coated in tiny balls of *mentaiko* (spicy cod roe), a tasty and inexpensive alternative to Italian *bottarga*. And the robust, fried-egg–topped “Hamburg” steak (a bunless pork-and-beef mix, more Salisbury steak than burger) arrived on a sizzling platter with corn kernels, creamy mashed potatoes and mushroom sauce; cut into the stack and the yolk mingles with the meat's juices. Rounding out the proficiently executed fare is professional service and a smart selection of wines, sakes, cocktails and beers. For dessert, choose the traditional *crème caramel* over the liquidy green-tea soufflé—after so many reimagined dishes, there's no shame in ending with the familiar.—TONY

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