



HOME AND WORK

This Chef's SoHo Loft Is Strictly Invitation Only

Yann Nury's New York atelier, where he hosts the lucky few for meals, doubles as a secret design haven.

In the dining area of the chef Yann Nury's Manhattan loft, a pair of early 20th-century Bank of France counting tables, surrounded by 1960s Pierre Chapo S11 dining chairs. The sofa is by Charles Zana; along the wall is a 1952 L'Unité d'Habitation Air France cabinet by Jean Prouvé and Charlotte Perriand.

By [Kurt Soller](#) Photographs by David Chow

March 13, 2023

WHEN THE FRENCH chef Yann Nury moved to New York 17 years ago to work in private events for the restaurateur [Daniel Boulud](#), he'd often be sent to cook in Park Avenue penthouses — “some of the most beautiful places in the city,” he recalls. But the home he really coveted was a client's loft on Wooster Street in Manhattan's SoHo: “The rounded windows, the view ... the fact that the whole space was shared. It's always stayed in my mind,” he says. If Paris, where he'd worked for years at the esteemed French catering firm Lenôtre, is about “sophisticated luxury,” as Nury sees it, “New York is fancy street culture.”

Nury, 39, is explaining the city's appeal while sitting 12 floors above Crosby Street, in an open-plan loft inside a 1901 cast-iron-and-brick building just below Houston Street. Unusually for the area, there are windows not just at either end of the narrow nearly 3,000-square-foot space but also along its northern wall; huge and almost square, they frame Edward Hopper-like vignettes of the Williamsburg Bridge and downtown rooftops. When he found the place four years ago, it was "terrible," Nury says, overstuffed with furniture and fitted with wall-to-wall carpeting.

The chef gutted the apartment — leaving original details like distressed wood floors and industrial pipes that run the length of the 16-foot-high ceiling — to create La Residence, as he calls it. In collaboration with the Parisian architect [Charles Zana](#), who also designed the low dark green mohair sofa in a back seating area beneath a tall mirrored bar, Nury went about building a home where the kitchen isn't just the nucleus but the entire atom. Amid a custom Molteni stove from Lyon, more than 100 vintage copper pots (some made for historic hotels, including the Ritz in Paris) and a cache of one-of-a-kind knives — hidden like prized possessions inside a 19th-century Polish filing cabinet — there's space for half a dozen prep cooks. They come to help Nury run his namesake business, which co-hosts culinary events for private clients and luxury brands like Hermès and Louis Vuitton.



The chef's Irving Penn-inspired spread, including, clockwise from top left, Wagyu beef Wellington and butternut squash; mille-feuille with persimmon and vanilla; kaiser rolls; boulangère potatoes with black truffles; turbot on the bone with seaweed beurre blanc and red fingerling potatoes; and smoked and braised cabbage.



Nury's collection of original Michelin guides, dating to 1900, and Rufino Tamayo's "Watermelon" (1986), above housemade breads, including épis de blé and laminated brioche.

Many of Nury's cooks previously worked in fine-dining restaurants, where they might have spent hours turning artichokes in basements without, say, the restorative benefits of natural light and views of the Chrysler Building. Here, they share two gray Italian-marble work tables that are so large and heavy they had to be craned in through the skylight. (Made by the Milanese artist Henry Timi from soft Ceppo di Gré stone that's been left unhoned, they're pleurably tactile, as if your hands — or knives — won't ever slip.) Behind the kitchen, there's a breakfast nook with shelves displaying a complete collection of Michelin guides, first published in 1900. In front of it — before you arrive in the living space, bar, bathroom and office beyond — is a dining area with seating for 20, centered on a pair of iron gold-bar counting tables that were manufactured a century or so ago for the Bank of France and purchased by Nury at the Marché aux Puces outside of Paris. They're flanked by a set of 1960s Pierre Chapo S11 chairs in worn wood and distressed leather, which soften the effect of the metal and marble.

There's no bedroom. Because while this might be a space for living well, it's not actually meant to be lived in. Rather, it's an atelier of sorts, somewhere to “play at home,” the chef says. Before renting the loft, Nury, who resides in the suburbs north of Manhattan with his wife and their two children, worked out of a Queens commissary kitchen when he wasn't, for example, cooking a Mexican ranch-themed feast for a French couture house. “But it's hard to be innovative if you don't have the right space to be creative,” he says. “It was important to be surrounded by things that inspire me.”



A selection of hors d'oeuvres cooling in the loft's kitchen.



A composed lobster dish served at Nury's apartment, which he calls La Residence.

NURY WILL ALSO host events here — but as with all homes, you have to be welcomed in. “There’s never going to be a phone number you can call” to make a reservation, says Claudia Kozma Kaplan, who became the president of Nury’s company last year. “Yann has never wanted a restaurant. It’s truly by invitation only.” In that sense, eating his food satisfies two distinct but related contemporary cravings: first, a desire for privacy and discretion, one that has fueled many new members-only clubs in cities around the world; and second, a chance to gloat about a gorgeous meal that none of your friends (or enemies) can likely try themselves.

But what does he serve? Lunch might begin with wild Malossol Astrakhan caviar, accompanied not with blinis and crème fraîche but by slightly melted sourdough-and-Mexican-vanilla ice cream — a salty-sweet starter that’s become a signature dish over the years. What follows could be beef Wellington with intricately latticed puff pastry, or Dover sole, roasted whole in a buttery pan sauce. “European cooking is my comfort zone — but lighter and purer,” Nury says. “That duality between tradition and modernity is what’s calling me.” Although six people on staff shape countless crisp tartlet shells for hundreds of events globally each year, not everything served is delicate or ornate: Nury won Kaplan over with his grilled cheese — aged Comte layered between sourdough with shallot chutney and truffles. “When people go out, they want to eat food they understand,” the chef says, not “that whole six-hour thing where you feel lectured and patronized.”



Nury adding the finishing touches to some hors d'oeuvres.



Nury's sketchbook, where he dreams up and illustrates new dishes.

Unlike a more conventional caterer (a word that he and Kaplan avoid using), Nury oversees every aspect of the experience, from the flowers to the servers to the stemware to anything else a diner might encounter. Even before he started his business a little over a decade ago, he'd been accruing rare vintage tableware — 20th-century Cartier sterling-silver flatware; Limoges china by J.L. Coquet; discontinued Baccarat glasses; and delicate [Josef Hoffmann](#) for Lobmeyr candy dishes — for his growing collection. Some pieces are at the loft, where they're displayed inside a four-unit cabinet created by the French designers [Jean Prouvé](#) and [Charlotte Perriand](#) in 1952 for Air France employees stationed in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo. Nury has been amassing things since he was a child in Aubenas Ardèche, a village in southwestern France: He was close to his grandfather, a butcher turned antiques dealer, and spent his younger years accumulating copies of “Tintin” and “Asterix & Obelix.” Eventually, that obsession matured into acquiring Irving Penn fruit still lifes, which decorate the loft's walls in old Dutch frames. Recently, Nury found one of Prouvé's prefabricated 6 x 6 houses, from 1944, which will remain disassembled in a warehouse until, someday, a client chooses it for a special event.

“I have a sickness — I need an excuse to keep buying stuff,” he says. The loft now complete, he and Kaplan are seeking other venues to fill with great food and design. Perhaps a residence in Los Angeles, and then one in Paris? As a child, Nury says, he dreamed of being a hotelier. That's still the end goal: “It'd have to be culinary focused, because the first thing people say [after a trip] is, ‘It was great, but the food sucked.’” But then, of course, he'd have to start taking reservations.

Photo assistant: Arthur Hunking