

Back to the Future

Forget that madcap rush from the airport to Manhattan: Now that JetBlue has opened its new JFK terminal, your next trip to New York City begins and ends in the heart of Queens.

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From *The Advocate* February 1, 2009



Revamping terminal 5 was a risky move for JetBlue. Designed by Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen to personify TWA's futuristic vision -- original construction was completed in 1962 -- the landmark spaceport at New York City's JFK International Airport had since become a retro relic. It was also TWA's tombstone, marking the end of an era of glamorous stewardesses with winsome smiles and updos deftly pouring martinis. But as contemporary airlines cut snacks, legroom, and -- at times -- basic human courtesies, the ghostly terminal also reminded travelers of a time when flying was fun, affordable, and pleasantly efficient. For JetBlue, the little low-cost airline that could, the hope of renewing such promise made JFK's T5 the perfect choice for its New York hub.

Consistent with the gay-supportive brand's commitment to consumer-friendly design and stress-free travel innovations, JetBlue has expanded T5's shell with 22 dining, bar, and lounge options -- many with menus by famed New York City chefs; a small mall of surprisingly chic retailers like jet-set favorite Muji; tons of natural light; and, with 20 security lanes, the largest and possibly least bottlenecked checkpoint in the United States.

Most of T5's services are in the Marketplace, a 55,000-square-foot shopping and dining area just beyond security. Stadium-style seating is designed to capture the space's vibrancy; a massive ring of suspended LCD screens exhibits New York-related video art (Times Square meets MoMA); and a mouth-watering food court takes inspiration more from Whole Foods than McDonald's.

At the end of the east concourse, T5's oasis-like lounge area is outfitted by Moroso, the Italian furniture maestros known for maximally comfortable, soothingly organic shapes. Moroso designs will be on view at New York's MoMA next spring, following an exhibition at Paris's Centre Pompidou.

Free Wi-Fi and ample electrical outlets complete JetBlue's "people-port" concept, along with an innovative twist on the old Automat restaurants: numerous touch-screen stands located throughout the terminal, where you can order snacks (prosciutto with figs and artisanal cheese, anyone?) and have them delivered to your gate.

JET FUEL

A foodie heaven, T5 is packed with inventive menus designed by chefs from some of New York's most popular eateries.

There's more quality cuisine to sample in the Marketplace than most visitors could eat during a whole weekend in Manhattan. The prices are not out of line with those encountered at most airports (read: slightly inflated). T5 also stocks more than 200 wines available by the glass and 400 available by the bottle.

AeroNuova

Mark Ladner, chef and partner at Lupa Osteria, emphasizes the veggies in fine Italian dining by adding local produce to AeroNuova's menu. For lengthy savoring try the penne with sweet fennel sausage and broccoli ragu or the equally scrumptious beef ravioli with Gorgonzola fondue and parsley puree. Light snackers on the run can't go wrong with a tramezzini sandwich.

Deep Blue

Radiating SoHo chic, Deep Blue has as chef Michael Schulson, star of the Style Network's Pantry Raid and famous for the deceptively simple Asian-fusion dishes he perfected as executive chef for Buddakan. There's jalapeño spicy tuna sushi for the adventurous, a sesame and Swiss teriyaki burger for the famished, and more Kobe beef than any airport food court has ever seen.

Revolución

Credited with introducing Americans to high-end Mexican cuisine as the former culinary director of Rosa Mexicano, Roberto Santibañez strives for authenticity over showy flavors. Guacamole is prepared fresh tableside.

La Vie

Convincingly Parisian, with striped yellow walls and classic bistro menu, La Vie manages both cheerful unpretentiousness and tasty refinement, the same recipe for success that Riad Nasr and Lee Hanson create daily as executive chefs at Balthazar. The croque monsieur sandwich, brioche French toast, and moules frites -- mussels with fries with an anise-flavored herbal liquor and fennel saffron cream -- are sure to become favorites.

Piquillo

Formerly the chef at Tía Pol, a tapas sensation for the well-heeled in Manhattan's hip Chelsea neighborhood, Alexandra Rajj creates Spanish treats that include varied seafood, inventive aioli sauces, and more than a few upscale imports. Look for her new Basque-influenced Chelsea restaurant, Txkito, which opened in late 2008.