



Sugar East

Tucked away on an aggressively average block in the doorman-less part of the Upper East Side, a set of red-velvet ropes leads to a heavy black door. Push past it and descend a narrow, dimly lit staircase that stops at a full-length mirror right before the entrance. The underground speakeasy seems like a seductive bachelor pad from the 1960s: The faint smell of cigarettes wafts through the space (more on that later), which is adorned with dark leather banquettes, wood-paneled walls and working fireplaces. The attentive staff serves gussied-up drinks for the parties of overlapping limbs and fused-together faces. So bargoers should take a little extra time at that entryway mirror—it's probably a night you'll be giving some sugar.

ORDER THIS: The cocktail menu by Jeremy Strawn (Mulberry Project) lists each drink by its foremost ingredient. The Coconut (\$18) is served in the hollowed fruit with a smoking cinnamon stick jutting out, allowing the imbiber to inhale the earthy smoke while sipping a sweet mix of rum, absinthe and coconut juice. Celery (\$16) has a simpler presentation but just as memorable a taste, with Hayman's Old Tom gin and fresh celery juice forming a crisp, satisfying elixir that goes down like a healthy juice. Other standouts include the vodka-based Pistachio (\$16), which is creamy with matcha tea, almond milk and nutmeg, and the heady Smoke (\$17), which curbs its whiskey and mescal combo with ashy charcoal.

GOOD FOR: A lusty date. Maybe it's time to seal the deal after a monthlong fling, or maybe it's a Tinder one-nighter, but the potent cocktails, flattering lighting and plush seating in dark corners solidifies the bar as the place to begin a "Your place, or mine?" end to the night.

THE CLINCHER: The barroom acquired a grandfathered cigar license from the space's former resident, Merchants NY Cigar Bar, making it a rare destination for legal indoor cigarette smoking. So yes, the vibe is more Don Draper than Austin Powers, but that doesn't mean by the end of the night you won't be asking, "Do I make you horny, baby?"