



# The NoMad Cookbook

By Daniel Humm, Will Guidara, Leo Robitschek

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**From the authors of the acclaimed cookbooks *Eleven Madison Park* and *I Love New York* comes this uniquely packaged cookbook, featuring recipes from the wildly popular restaurant and, as an added surprise, a hidden back panel that opens to reveal a separate cocktail book.**

Chef Daniel Humm and his business partner Will Guidara are the proprietors of two of New York's most beloved and pioneering restaurants: Eleven Madison Park and The NoMad. Their team is known not only for its perfectly executed, innovative cooking, but also for creating extraordinary, genre-defying dining experiences. *The NoMad Cookbook* translates the unparalleled and often surprising food and drink of the restaurant into book form. What appears to be a traditional cookbook is in fact two books in one: upon opening, readers discover that the back half contains false pages in which a smaller cocktail recipe book is hidden. The result is a wonderfully unexpected collection of both sweet and savory food recipes *and* cocktail recipes, with the lush photography by Francesco Tonelli and impeccable style for which the authors are known. *The NoMad Cookbook* promises to be a reading experience like no other, and will be the holiday gift of the year for the foodie who has everything.

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## **Editorial Review**

### About the Author

DANIEL HUMM and WILL GUIDARA are the proprietors of the three-Michelin starred Eleven Madison Park and operate the restaurant at the NoMad Hotel in Manhattan. LEO ROBITSCHKEK is an award-winning mixologist and bar director at the NoMad, which won the James Beard award for Outstanding Bar Program in 2014.

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**WELCOME**, dear reader, to The NoMad, or rather to its cookbook.

In the following pages we will welcome you as fully as we possibly can into our little world. We are going to tell you about our food, our cocktails, the wonderful people on our team, and some of the bumps in the road we encountered as we opened our hotel on the corner of Twenty-Eighth and Broadway.

It all started in early 2011, when Daniel and I were at DBGB debating whether or not we would order a second burger, and out of nowhere he said: “I think it should be the Rolling Stones.” Sorry, I need to back up a bit.

This all *really* started the first time we heard that Eleven Madison Park needed “a little more Miles Davis.” If you’ve read anything about our restaurants, you’ve probably heard this story before, but it’s important to tell it here again as it has had everything to do with everything that’s happened since.

A few years earlier, in 2006, we were taking our first steps to evolve Eleven Madison Park (EMP) into the fine dining restaurant it is today. The “Miles” line came in our first review, during a very formative time—we were trying to find exactly what our new identity would be, craving language to help articulate the direction which we wanted to go. With this one line, a reviewer telling us she wished we had a little more Miles—we were given a gift.

In the months that followed, we researched Miles obsessively and drafted a list of eleven words that were most commonly used to describe him, among them “fresh,” “cool,” “collaborative,” and “endless reinvention.” These became our mission statement, and guided us as we made the hundreds of changes over the course of our restaurant’s continuing evolution.

See, some of our favorite restaurants are those that, once opened, are fully realized and will live forever without change. But EMP is not like that. It’s a project that we will never be done with, a concept that is always in motion. Still, in 2010, after four years of *very* focused attention, we realized it was time for us to begin the process of building our second restaurant.

The prospect of another restaurant is so exciting, but scary as hell. Your second act can determine if you’re the next Rolling Stones or the next Vanilla Ice. We knew we wanted the new place to be more casual than EMP—its louder and looser sibling—but that was really all.

So we started looking for a space, figuring where we decided to build it would help identify what it was going to be. We looked all over the island of Manhattan, from Battery Park City to the Upper East Side. But nothing felt right, and everywhere we went, EMP felt so far away. We knew that we needed to maintain a

significant presence at EMP, so our next restaurant needed to be close enough to allow for that.

The last project we looked at before we discovered The NoMad was another hotel on Madison Avenue, and of everything we'd seen or considered, it was the one we were most excited about. We'd met with the ownership, we'd started to design the space, and we'd even spent quite a bit of time with a kitchen designer figuring out how we could tweak the existing kitchen to fulfill Daniel's needs as a chef. But as it we came closer and closer to finalizing the deal, we realized that something just didn't feel right—even today I can't articulate what it was. So at the eleventh hour we walked away. It was a hard decision, though we felt confident it was the right one. Still, frustrating to be back at the drawing board.

Thankfully, that frustration was short-lived. The next day, the kitchen designer we had been working with let us know that there was a project in the works practically around the corner from EMP. He asked if we would like to schedule a meeting with the owners to check it out.

So, a week and a half later, Daniel and I did something we had never done before: we walked out of EMP and we headed north. We walked across Madison Square Park, took a left on Twenty-Sixth Street and a right on Broadway, and walked to the corner of Twenty-Eighth Street.

New York City is an amazing place; within one block or two, your surroundings can completely change. Here we were, after a five-minute stroll from where we had spent nearly every waking hour of our lives for the past few years, and we were someplace we had never been. Here, there were no more fountains and art installations and majestic trees. The mothers and their strollers were gone, as were the bankers on benches eating Shake Shack. The world had shifted to hawkers selling fake designer bags and imposter perfumes, endless rows of wig shops, and the ever-present smell of weed (something that continues to be a distraction every day as we walk back and forth between the two restaurants).

Daniel looked at me, confused, and asked, "Will, what are we doing here?" I wasn't so sure myself. Already we were both regretting having scheduled the meeting, thinking our next few hours would be a waste of time.

Then we looked up.

They say you only become a real New Yorker once you stop looking up, and I can say with confidence that we both, a long time ago, became hardened New Yorkers. So, I'm not sure why we broke character, but once we did, it was as if the neighborhood had transitioned from black and white into color.

We could see beyond the gated storefronts and gum-littered sidewalks to the grand neighborhood this had once been. Our pessimism dissolved, and we walked into the building that would become The NoMad Hotel to meet with the guy who would be our partner in the venture, Andrew Zabler.

Andrew was behind the Ace Hotel a block north of here, and he is definitely the person we credit with having had the vision to realize what this bizarre little tangle of streets north of Madison Square Park could become. We made our way through the debris-strewn construction site of what would one day be the dining room, and met Andrew standing where table 53 would one day be.

We stood together for hours, intensely discussing everything from the building and the history of the neighborhood to our collective ideas about what we wanted to build here. Literally thousands of details needed to be worked on, but by the time we parted ways, a shared vision had come into focus. This wasn't about creating something new, but about reinventing something that once was. At EMP, the goal had been to create the four-star restaurant for the next generation—*our* generation. At The NoMad, we'd try to do the same—this time, for the grand hotel.

You see, back in the day, the grand hotels were the center of all things social in New York City. People would flock to The Waldorf, The Plaza, The Palace, or The Carlyle when they sought a place to sleep, to dine, to drink, to commiserate. They were places where native New Yorkers and travelers alike would come to form community. When you were at The Waldorf Astoria, it didn't matter if you were lounging about enjoying a feast or a cognac—or if you were even conscious—you were doing it at The Waldorf.

But at some point, it stopped being cool to hang out at hotels. Even restaurants in hotels fought fiercely for their brand independence, coming up with their own names and often adding separate entrances. New York City's great halls of community faded from local popularity, becoming places for tourists to visit. We wanted The NoMad to change that—to be beautiful, rich, and luxurious, but fun, cool, and accessible. We wanted it to be a place where the people who greet you at the front door and check you into your room are the same as those who take your order at lunch, or serve you a cocktail at 1 a.m.

With that as the goal, it felt like there was no better neighborhood in which to do it than here, arguably the center of Manhattan. Ours is truly a city that is constantly changing, sometimes for better and sometimes for worse, and this neighborhood had definitely fallen on hard times. The idea that we could have an opportunity to play a role in reviving it was exhilarating.

These streets were once home to Tin Pan Alley, the original “Broadway” theater district, and to Jerry Thomas's bar. New York's elite once strolled its streets. But the city grew and people's attention turned elsewhere, as it tends to, and the beautiful Beaux Arts buildings were left to wither. Gorgeous building lobbies were cut up into stalls and populated by vendors of cheap goods; beautiful hotels were degraded into boarding houses.

It, sadly, devolved from a neighborhood people dreamed of being part of to one they crossed at night quickly and with trepidation. It was time for its renaissance.

Both of these lofty ideas—reinventing the grand hotel and playing a role in rebuilding a neighborhood—were wonderful, but they were chiefly about looking back into the past. As our second restaurant, this new venture needed a unique voice, its own point of view; it couldn't be derivative of what we had already done. Like EMP years earlier, it needed language—an identity, a voice—to help guide it. It needed its muse.

So, yes, back to that second burger at DBGB, and Daniel's suggestion that we should look to the Rolling Stones. I laughed at first because the Stones are Daniel's favorite band, so it seemed like a pretty lazy suggestion. But he seemed convicted in it. Apparently he had been reading a lot about them recently and encouraged me to do the same. While I have always loved their music, reading about them taught me to understand and appreciate them on a whole different level.

When the Stones were really young, living in the UK, just establishing themselves as musicians, they bought every blues album that came out of the Southern United States. They studied that music exhaustively, learning every song note for note. They immersed themselves in American blues and R&B, and then they imbued it with their own style, creating their unique approach to rock-and-roll.

In that sense, they were as deliberate and focused as any organization we had ever learned about. But they were also the crazy, out-of-control, drug-addled madmen we've all heard the stories about. It was in their ability to find and keep a balance between these two extremes that allowed them to change music as we know it. Nothing they did was unintentional. Everything was well conceived, carefully planned, and perfectly executed.

Of course it was—innovation like that doesn't happen by accident.

And so we did what we had done at EMP years before and put together a list of eleven words: Loose, Alive, Universal, Enduring, Deliberate, Glamorous, Original, Genuine, Eclectic, Thoughtful, and Satisfaction. It was inspiring to us—the idea that something could be vibrantly energetic and chaotic while also being purposeful and refined. It was exactly what we wanted for The NoMad. EMP was attempting to be fine dining that was less stuffy. The NoMad would be a casual restaurant that was more composed. We envisioned a room with trappings as luxurious as any, where a guest, whether dressed in a designer suit or a pair of jeans, could peruse an extensive wine list and thoughtfully conceived menu and experience refined service in an unpretentious environment.

We pictured a restaurant where you could have a three-hour meal or a few too many cocktails and some tasty snacks; a place where you could eat fried chicken and drink champagne or feast on foie gras and savor Sauternes.

All this while listening to the Rolling Stones and remembering that the whole point of this dining out thing is to connect with other human beings around a table, sharing good food, good drink, and good conversation.

Any grand project needs a grand designer, and ours was the famed Parisian, Jacques Garcia. I felt so cool when I called my father and told him, “Dad, I’m going to Paris to work on the design of our new hotel.” Meeting Jacques quickly reminded me that I was indeed *not* cool. At one point, we were discussing the back bar—grand and tall, awash in mahogany. There was something strange in the plans: five wooden elephants, each six feet tall, among the bottles of wine and booze. The pragmatist in me recognized the elephants as being completely nonfunctional. Not to mention that they were utterly ridiculous.

“I love the design,” I said, “but let’s get rid of all of the elephants.” Jacques stared at me, his expression very clearly saying, “You stupid American. *Je suis Jacques Garcia*.” But, being a classy sort of guy, he simply said, “The elephants will stay.” Three hours of elephant-focused debate ensued and, with both parties exhausted, we were able to settle on two elephants only. It was a good thing Jacques didn’t fully relent, because he was seeing what we couldn’t. Those giant wooden elephants have become a prominent feature of the hotel, and that bar is now lovingly referred to as “the Elephant Bar.”

Once the design was complete, it was time to put our team together—arguably the most challenging part of the entire opening process.

In our company, Daniel and I look at welcoming someone onto our team like welcoming them into our family. At EMP, we would agonize over each hire, observing candidates for days before deciding one way or the other. In opening The NoMad, we would have no such luxury: we needed to hire 150 people, most of whom we had never met; train them as best we could; and put them in a position to represent us to the world—all this at a time when the dining public would be watching our every move more than ever. It was intense, to say the least. We made a few mistakes, some of which had us scrambling weeks before our opening. But we made many more good choices, and through luck or fate, some of the best people in the industry chose to join our team. It also helped quite a bit that some of our key people who had already spent years working alongside us at EMP came north to help in the endeavor.

Some grand ideas worked out beautifully, such as the last-minute addition of a giant hearth oven on the ground floor: the weight of which required us to reinforce the entire building’s foundation, but without it our now-famous roast chicken would be impossible. Others were less successful: our idea for a family-style

tasting menu that featured a two-compartment lazy Susan that housed a hidden course, and cured meats served tableside as if from the delicatessen. We served this menu until we realized that serving a tasting menu alongside our à la carte menu showed both a lack of confidence and an inability to cut the cord from EMP.

In the world of beverage, there were highs and lows as well. Our good friend Garrett Oliver, brewmaster of Brooklyn Brewery, crafted a beer, “Le Poulet,” to accompany our roast chicken. It was, in a word, a triumph—together they taste unbelievable. But the specially designed carts that we had built for our “modern take on luxury bottle service” in The Library were a complete and utter flop. To this day, we still believe there could be something cool there, but it may be the case that Leo, Daniel, and I are the only ones who do.

You see, by virtue of being in this business, you have decided that your goal in life is to make people happy, but you’ve accepted the fact that those same people will be forever judging your work.

Building something like this from the ground up—a first for most of us on the opening team—proved to be an immensely emotional experience. This place was a reflection of all of us. We were putting everything we had into it, hoping that on the first day, the people who walked through our doors would connect with it in some small way.

One night, two months after our opening, our general manager, Jeffrey, and I were standing together in the dining room, comparing notes on the evening’s service. Suddenly, a feeling of satisfaction and pride washed over me. So many of the things we had imagined, planned, and dreamed were materializing around us.

Surveying the room, I saw we *were* in the grand hotel that we had envisioned. The neighborhood *was* changing around us, and quickly. And here we were, standing inside this place that, in some way, helped bring about the change.

Uptown and downtown were colliding here, as we had hoped they would. The cool kids from downtown and Brooklyn were sitting next to the Upper East Siders and the bankers. Famous chefs guzzled cocktails and movie stars grazed salads. Gastronomes constructed multicourse dinners while jet-setters had a snack and a glass of wine.

Incredibly, The NoMad had come to be what we had discussed that afternoon in the debris-strewn construction site.

It’s a few years later as I sit here writing these last lines. Dinner service is in full swing downstairs. And I’m happy to report that a great majority of the team that was here on that opening day is still here, albeit a little older and a little wiser. Funny how, as I write this, and as the team works on getting this cookbook in order, we find ourselves feeling all the same things we did on that first day we opened our doors to the world. We’re proud. We’re nervous. Mostly, as always, we’re excited to share this with you.

We hope you enjoy.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Alyssa Lewis:**

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