

# SPE Certified: An innovative approach to healthy dining in Manhattan

NYC RESTAURANTS | SEPTEMBER 21, 2012 | BY: KATHERINE REIDER | + [Subscribe](#)



7 1 0 0 0  
[Like](#) [Tweet](#) [+1](#) [Submit](#) [Pin it](#) [email](#)

Get Restaurants alerts!

Email  [Sign up](#)

Some people may think that in order to eat healthy, one must sacrifice taste. Sure, we all want to feel and look better, but at what price? When it comes to eating out, New Yorkers are overwhelmed with enticing options that may not always be the healthiest ones and if they are, they may not be the tastiest. With the recent debut of [SPE® Certified](#), an independent restaurant food certification and culinary nutritional consulting firm, Manhattan restaurants

have the opportunity to make the city a growing mecca not only for savory meals but for food that also optimizes healthy living.

Founded in 2001 by entrepreneur and restaurateur Emmanuel Verstraeten in Brussels, Belgium, SPE Certified aims to take the farm-to-table approach to sourcing local ingredients one step further by applying a specific set of guidelines to preparing healthy meals without compromising taste. Derived from the Latin expression, *sanitas per escam*, SPE Certified focuses on sourcing, preparing, and enhancing the food through the nutritional density and the quality of the meals.

**View slideshow: [SPE® Certified](#)**



An innovative approach to healthy dining in Manhattan

Photo credit:

SPE® Certified

With over ten years of research, these principles have been validated by a committee of experts from research centers including Harvard School of Public Health, the Behavioral Medicine Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, and Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition.

Mr. Verstraeten only had to see the astounding health statistics to be motivated in developing something as innovative as SPE Certified. "I created SPE Certified out of a desire to make a difference during a difficult time," he said. "The United States is facing an obesity epidemic of epic proportions, not only among adults, but also among children. The latest numbers are staggering: in 2030, 42% of the country will be obese and [an] increasing number of people suffer from other diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, all contributing to skyrocketing health care costs."

Indeed, a study presented at this year's Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Weight of the Nation Conference in Washington, DC, confirmed the percentage attributing the

increased rate to variables including Americans' eating and exercise habits, as well as the cost of healthy versus fast foods.

According to Mr. Verstraeten, "SPE is not about uninspired diet food or low calories, but rather providing healthy and sustainable dining options without compromising taste."

Preparing SPE Certified dishes takes into account the availability of seasonal produce to ensure colorful diversity, ingredient portioning to maximize nutrient density, and synergism to ensure that the combination of ingredients are providing the most nutritional outcome.

There are two ingredients that you will not find in a SPE Certified appetizer or entrée: butter and cream. Instead, high-quality nut, vegetable, and seed oils and butters are seen as viable substitutes for common saturated fats used in preparing meals.

To become a SPE Certified partner, a restaurant can choose from one of four levels depending on the percentage of its dishes that adhere to the SPE Certified tenets:

- 10% of the menu = Certified
- 25% of the menu = Silver
- 50% of the menu = Gold
- 75% of the menu = Platinum

Under the guidance of SPE Certified executive chef Anthony Moraes and culinary nutritionist Natalia Hancock, RD, restaurant chefs have the opportunity to create seasonal dishes that preserve the chef's culinary vision.

"I have always been a proponent that healthy dining does not have to compromise taste and I am looking forward to working with many talented chefs to bring this unique concept of dining to restaurants throughout the United States," said Mr. Moraes.

Mr. Verstraeten envisions SPE Certified to be groundbreaking in the food service industry, and believes that diners will appreciate its integration in restaurants around the country.

"When a restaurant offers an SPE Certified dish, it demonstrates that in addition to taste, the chef values health, sustainability, and a commitment to the greater good."

In United States, SPE Certified was first applied to [Rouge Tomate](#), which opened in 2008. Since then, five restaurants have opened and made their mark as SPE Certified partners. In addition to Rouge Tomate, you can also find SPE Certified dishes at [Danji](#) and [Seasonal Restaurant and Weinbar](#).

Along with its culinary certification principles, SPE Certified also offers consulting services targeting specific needs whether you are looking to get more insight on developing healthier recipes and menus for your family or just want more information on sustainability assessment.

With SPE Certified, New Yorkers are no longer subjected to bland food choices simply for the sake of health. SPE Certified provides restaurants with an innovative approach to creating dishes that whet the appetite while enhancing the nutritional composition. “Our goal is to become the most trusted authority in the culinary nutrition ‘space,’ which is certainly the way of the future,” said Mr. Verstraeten.

For more information, visit [www.SPEcertified.com](http://www.SPEcertified.com).

Rouge Tomate

10 East 60th Street

New York, New York 10022

646-237-8977

<http://www.rougetomatenyc.com>

Danji

346 West 52nd Street

New York, New York 10019

212-586-2880

<http://www.danjiny.com>

Seäsonal Restaurant and Weinbar

132 West 58th Street

New York, New York 10019

212-957-5550

[www.seasonalnyc.com](http://www.seasonalnyc.com)