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[MarianaL](#) in [New York](#) - [10036](#), 3 days 3 hours ago  2

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 [Casellula, My Love...](#) \$\$  
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**Address:** 401 West 52nd Street (Between 9th and 10th avenue), 10036, New York



This is my new favorite in Hell's Kitchen. It is a cozy spot on the side street between 9th and 10th avenue serving up a nice selection of artisanal cheeses and wines. Tasting what would seem like a high end product found in much stuffier and expensive restaurants, the team provides a casual, unpretentious environment for you to enjoy. Don't sleep on this group though; they all have some serious foodie pedigrees from the top restaurants around the city. They are friendly, and seem happy to share their knowledge with you.

The cheese selection consists of many things that I was surprised to find I have not tried before. There were many specialty artisanal fromages from independent and smaller producers with very unique qualities. My partner expressed a desire for something light, with cranberries, (yes, I know, an odd choice) but the server brought the Pave Sauvage, a fresh goat cheese from France with distinctive herbal that was plated with cranberries and it surpassed his expectations.

From the food menu, I tried the Rogue Creamery Smokey Blue Flatbread which was topped with applewood smoked bacon and hard cider apples. On top of that were dressed greens and fresh apples as well. While most pates and tastings at this establishment were indeed sized that way, this plate was surprisingly substantial and sufficient for a small meal. Each ingredient was very flavorful and went together beautifully.

The sense of the humor of the proprietors comes out in the names of the dishes, like "Pig's Ass Sandwich" and "Happy Waitress". This reinforces the fact that, outside the food, they don't take themselves too seriously.

Desserts? At first glance, the small selection seems deceptively simple. The French Toast Pudding with maple syrup, a chocolate cake with Meadow Brook Farm Cream. The surprise is the quality of each flavor and ingredient of the sweets. The Lemon Tart recommended by the server had one of the most intense lemon curd fillings I have ever tasted, offset by the roasted pistachios beneath, and wonderfully textured crust below. The accompanying goat cheese ice cream was unexpected. At first, it seems like an easy, creamy foil for the tartness of the lemon, but as it melts in your mouth, you really taste the distinctive goat milk attributes that pair perfectly with the rest of the dessert.

My partner had the "Sweet Action" Sundae, as I would expect any male would head straight for. This was another very happy find. Again, what seemed like a straightforward dessert wowed with stronger flavors than anticipated. While you would think they were merely toppings, one could actually savor the intense orange tastes of the whipped cream and unique taste of the locally brewed beer in the caramel.

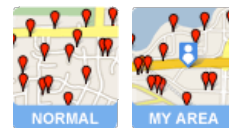
This was the perfect find after a leaving the theater. I was so grateful this café was open late on a Monday evening when mostly everything was closed or about to close.

Casellula, you have my heart.

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