



Across town at 62nd and First, filling the void left years ago by Pancho Vilas, is *Merchants*, newest and largest of the three *Merchants* restaurants in New York. Expensively wrought and scenoconducive Larry Bagdanow low-light decor and extensive reasonably priced bar has already lured swarms of Upper East Side singles every night of the week. Parties are possible (if they don't interfere too much with the regular business—i.e. not Thursday through Saturday evenings) in several areas: the raised portion of the dining room at the opposite end of the room from the bar, the cozy lounge-like Living Room (for about 50), which has a fireplace and an adjacent wonderful little space called the Rotunda for about 12), and downstairs in the Cigar Room. Outdoor patio seating also will be available this summer.

Chef John compiles an extensive hors d'oeuvre menu, drawing on many different ethnic cuisines for private functions. Food isn't the focus here though, and it's best to go with a cocktail party and hors d'oeuvre as opposed to a sit-down meal. That way guests can take full advantage of the mood, which is conducive to mingling, and indulge in the large beverage selection, including the exquisitely presented martinis. (Try the James Bond special for starters.) For private party bookings contact TC Fromme in the main office, at 243-5131.