

UPPER MERIDEN LIFESTYLE™

***BROADWAY PERFORMER
SARRAH STRIMEL-BENTLEY***

ON SURVIVORSHIP, ADVOCACY
AND FINDING JOY AFTER
BREAST CANCER



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CITYLIFESTYLE.COM

THE LUXURY LUNCH

Is Back

Why the best seat in town is at 12:30pm



ARTICLE BY DANA CIFONE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY INGA SKURATOVSKY

Years ago, if you wanted to make something happen, you scheduled lunch.

Deals were negotiated over Cobb salads. Partnerships were born over espresso. Friends carved out two hours in the middle of the day because everyone understood lunch wasn't simply about eating, it was where business and life naturally intersected. Then our calendars got louder.

Lunch became a protein bar between meetings. Success was measured by how packed your calendar was, how many emails you answered before sunrise, and whether you were still networking at ten o'clock at night.

After more than twenty years in hospitality, I've watched dining habits evolve. One of the biggest shifts I've seen isn't happening over dinner. It's happening at lunch. And no, I'm not talking about white tablecloths and three martinis. I'm talking about something much harder to come by. Time.

Today, luxury looks different. It's meeting a client over lunch instead of another video call. Lingering over a second espresso because the conversation is too good to end. Getting home before nine and still having time to enjoy your evening. For years we chased busy. Now we're chasing balance.

Restaurants are seeing midday become an occasion again. Business meetings have moved from dinner to daylight. Restaurant patios have become boardrooms, and somehow the conversations feel less rushed, less performative, and a whole lot more productive.

But I think there's another reason this midday ritual is making a comeback. We're craving each other again. After years of living through emails, texts, and video calls, people want something we've been missing, real conversation. Eye contact instead of emojis. Conversation instead of notifications. We've become incredibly efficient at communicating, but not always great at connecting.

There's something refreshing about putting your phone face down and giving the person across the table your full attention. That, in itself, feels luxurious.

The afternoons we remember aren't defined by what we ordered. They're remembered because someone stayed an extra thirty minutes. Because an idea turned into a business. Because a client became a friend. Because, for a little while, the rest of the world could wait.



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One thing I've noticed from spending so much of my life in restaurants is that people simply aren't rushing anymore. They're sharing appetizers, staying for another coffee, and actually talking. The best ideas rarely come when everyone's staring at a phone, they happen when conversation has room to wander.

One of the things I've always loved about lunch is that it brings everyone together. You'll find someone closing a real estate deal sitting next to two friends celebrating a birthday. A couple enjoying a leisurely afternoon beside someone dining solo with a glass of wine simply because they felt like treating themselves.

For a couple of hours, titles, schedules, and to-do lists fade into the background. Maybe that's the point. Success isn't staying out the latest anymore. It's building a life you actually enjoy living. One with room for ambition, meaningful conversations, and getting home before nine feeling fulfilled instead of depleted.

So here's your permission slip. Make the reservation. Order the appetizer. Leave your phone facedown. Have the second espresso. Take the longer conversation. Your inbox will still be there. That's the kind of return on investment you won't find on a spreadsheet.

To me, that's the new luxury. And I'll raise an afternoon espresso to that.



We've become incredibly efficient at communicating, but not always great at connecting. Maybe that's why the luxury lunch is back. It's not just about what's on the table, it's about putting your phone away, slowing down, and making time for the people sitting across from you.