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3 Perfect Family-Friendly Dinner and Theater Pairings in New York City



Where to eat with kids before seeing 'Wicked,' 'STOMP,' and 'The Nutcracker.'

By [Judy Koutsky](#) January 14, 2019

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Taking kids to the theater—whether a Broadway or an off-Broadway show—is a quintessential New York City experience. But knowing what to see (there are a lot of performances out there, and not all are suitable for kids) and where to eat beforehand is half the battle. So we've done the work for you. We paired three family-friendly iconic performances with restaurants that kids—and adults—will enjoy.

Wicked and David Burke Tavern

This popular musical—it's been on Broadway for 15 years—has a packed audience at many performances. Appealing to both kids and adults, [*Wicked*](#) takes a look at *The Wizard of Oz* from a completely different angle. What if the wicked witch really wasn't wicked, but simply misunderstood? And just how good *is* the good witch? This musical brings a whole new light to the way we think of this classic story. It's funny, smart and thought-provoking—all good things in a Broadway play.



Wicked tells the story of *the Wizard of Oz* from the perspective of the Wicked Witch of the West. Photo by Joan Marcus.

Taking kids to a fancy restaurant can really go either way, but my thinking is they will never learn how to properly act if they never experience it. I took my two boys to celebrity chef David Burke's restaurant, located on the Upper East Side. What makes [David Burke Tavern](#) so enjoyable for families is the service. While there is no "children's menu" per se, the server was able to suggest a few items from the regular menu that could be tweaked to make it less fancy. So plain French fries (minus the shishito

and parmesan) and plain steak (without any sauce). My kids loved their meals—the server had great suggestions—and I really enjoyed the Branzino and Brussel sprouts. The restaurant is known for its Livid Lobster Dumplings with spicy tomato, BBQ Bison Short Ribs, and Burke’s famous “Clothesline” Candied Bacon—all worth a try. The big winner for us was the dessert—a warm chocolate brownie with ice cream, hot fudge, whipped cream, and nuts. While we went for dinner, the restaurant is also opened for lunch and weekend brunch.

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STOMP and Brother Jimmy’s

A high-energy off-Broadway show, [STOMP](#) is a music and dance medley played entirely on unconventional instruments—think kitchen sinks, trash cans, saw dust, paper bags, matchboxes, wooden poles, zippo lighters, and more. There were plenty of kids in the audience and everyone—kids and adults—got into the energetic vibe. While there isn’t a story line, per se, it’s more of a musical journey played out by the extremely talented eight-member cast.

For a casual, fun restaurant, [Brother Jimmy’s](#) is a good bet. What’s nice is that kids eat for free with a purchase of an adult entrée. We saw lots of families there taking advantage of this promotion. The kid’s menu includes burgers, hot dogs, mac and cheese and chicken fingers, and the actual menu doubles as a drawing board—a selection of crayons appear in a wooden crayon holder shaped like a pig, which pays homage to the southern comfort food that’s served at the restaurant. For kids with short attention spans, there are some fun video and arcade games to play while waiting for the food. One of the most favorites is the Pac-Man machine, a floor-to-ceiling digital unit that was recently recognized as New York City’s largest. The restaurant also has Foosball, Golden Tee Golf, Pinball, Pop-A-Shot Basketball, Shuffleboard, and Skee-ball.

Nutcracker and SOUTHGATE

One of the most beloved performances—and one where it’s always best to purchase tickets far in advance—is [George Balanchine's The Nutcracker](#) performed at the New York City Ballet each year during the holidays. The ballet is a favorite for both kids and adults and enjoying dinner and the Nutcracker is a holiday tradition for many families. The performance features 90 dancers, 62 musicians, 40 stagehands, and more than 125 children, in two alternating casts. It’s the music, the dancing, the story, and the energy that makes this a hit year after year.

A good place to have dinner prior to the show is the [SOUTHGATE Bar & Restaurant](#), located on Central Park South, a short walk to Lincoln Center. This restaurant, inside the the JW Marriott Essex House New York, has a roaring fire in the back area and

great people viewing in the front (it looks out onto Central Park South). The menu has a nice variety of fancy and comfort food selections: salmon, NY strip steak, shrimp primavera, salads, burgers, ribs, flat bread, wings, and a variety of desserts. The service is really top-notch, the food is excellent, and the location can't be beat.

Main image: STOMP is a high-energy off-Broadway show with music played on unconventional instruments.

Photo by Steve McNicholas

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Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in over 30 publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, Scholastic, and Prevention. She writes often about travel, parenting, health, and lifestyle. Follow her @JudyKoutsky or visit her website JudyKoutsky.com.

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