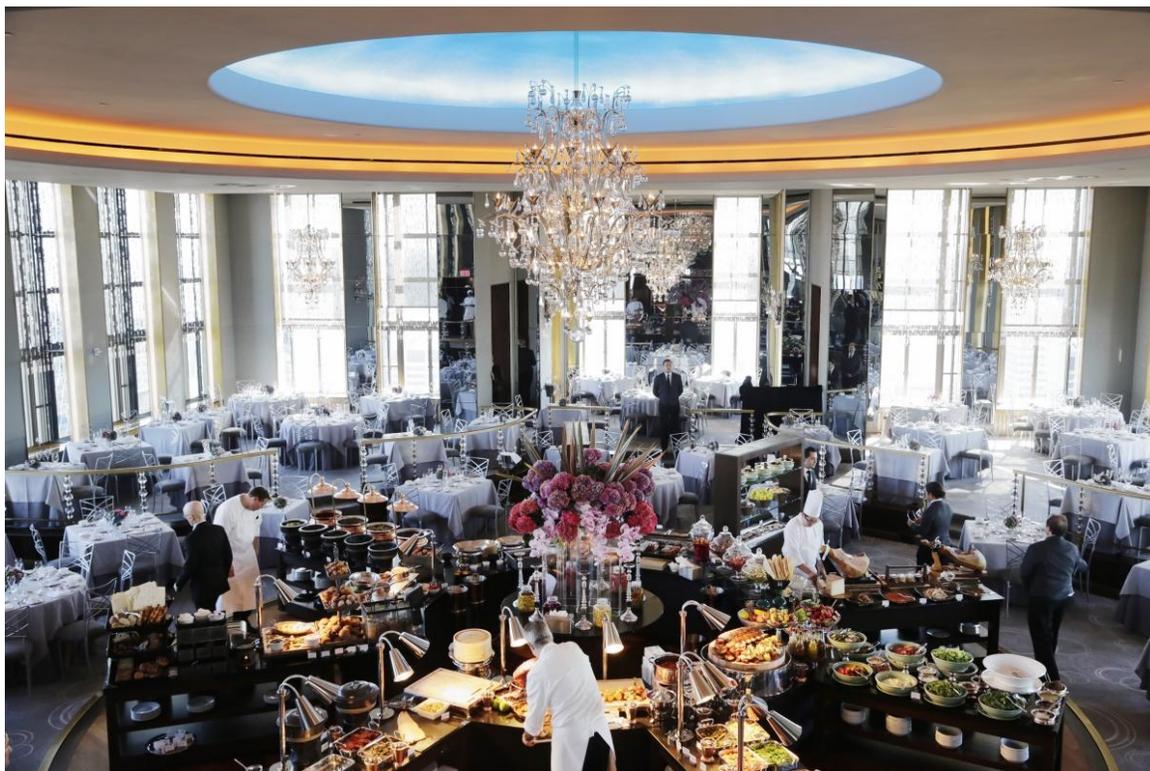

Rainbow Room reopens at top of 30 Rockefeller Plaza

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Chefs prepare a lavish spread of food before lunchtime guests arrive at the Rainbow Room atop 30 Rockefeller Plaza on Sunday.

(MARK LENNIHAN/AP)

The Rainbow Room reopened Sunday in its historic perch atop 30 Rockefeller Plaza after a five-year absence from the New York City skyline.

“It’s breathtaking,” guest Jamie Greenwald, one of more than 200 brunch guests who took in the sweeping views outside and the significant improvements inside the 80-year-old establishment whose floors have been walked across by Cole Porter, Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor, Al Pacino, Barbra Streisand and Muhammad Ali.

Herb roasted Amish chicken, oysters, shrimp, honeybaked Benton ham, Yorkshire pudding and chicken and black truffle pot pies were among dozens of delicacies awaiting the luncheon crowd in a spread created by Executive Chef Jonathan Wright.

“It’s like opening night!” Keith Douglas, a managing director of the real estate company Tishman Speyer — Rockefeller Center’s owner and manager — gushed as dozens of workers rushed about, putting finishing touches on the refurbished venue an hour before guests began arriving.



Friends Matthew Eisentraut (left) and Jamie Greenwald pose for a photograph with a view of the Empire State Building at the Rainbow Room. (MARK LENNIHAN/AP)

The sunny clear blue sky offered no chance for rainbows this day through windows that were enlarged by as much as 25 percent during an extensive renovation designed by Gabellini Sheppard Associates.

The architectural firm also created SixtyFive, a new cocktail lounge adjacent to Rainbow Room that for the first time next year when the weather warms will permit guests to order drinks on a previously vacant outdoor terrace.

Douglas said architect Michael Gabellini made sure to restore aspects of the Rainbow Room including brass railings and crystal bollards that were included in the nightclub’s original design. Montroy Andersen DeMarco was the project’s executive architect.

“Michael really envisions Rockefeller Center being a steamliner that’s kind of charging through New York City and this is the very top of the ship,” Douglas said.

The Rainbow Room closed five years ago amid a landlord-tenant dispute. Two years ago, the city granted landmark status to the iconic venue on the building’s 65th floor.

Douglas said the famous rotating dance floor was refurbished by the grandson of the man who installed it in 1934. He said he replaced outdated metal technology with new rubber wheels that are “quiet as can be.”



Band leader Michael Arenella gets ready to play for the arriving crowd at the Rainbow Room. (MARK LENNIHAN/AP)

Douglas said they found confetti from the 1940s when they lifted the dance floor.

“It was amazing,” he said.

As the restaurant prepared to open, Michael Arenella And His Dreamland Orchestra tested the microphones at a place that over the decades has featured music greats Tommy Dorsey, Guy Lombardo, Louis Armstrong and Tony Bennett, among many others.



Pianist Jesse Gelber was leaving, though, before the crowds arrived.

“I was told there’s a piano,” he said. “There’s no piano.”

He was not discouraged, though, saying he looks forward to returning to join the band there in the future, as he did a week ago during a trial-run performance when he said a Steinway piano awaited him.

“It’s a pretty storied room,” Gelber said. “Playing in a room where some of my heroes used to play is pretty cool.”



One World Trade Center and the lower Manhattan skyline are seen from the recently enlarged windows of the Rainbow Room. (MARK LENNIHAN/AP)