



Things To Do ▾ Food & Drink ▾ Arts & Culture ▾ Film Music & Nightlife ▾ Shopping & Style ▾ City Guide ▾ Tickets & Offers

Sweet tooth walk

Halvah, doughnuts and ice wine await on the Lower East Side.

By Jeanne Hodesh

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Start: 179 E Houston St between Allen and Orchard Sts

End: 95 Orchard St between Broome and Delancey Sts

Time: 2 hours

Distance: 1.4 miles

1 Grab a pal and start at **Russ and Daughters** (179 E Houston St between Allen and Orchard Sts; 212-475-4880, russanddaughters.com) for chewy raspberry jelly rings (\$7.49 per pound) or the chocolate-covered seven-layer halvah (\$7.99 per pound). Snag some chocolate-covered matzo, which features a layer of toffee hidden beneath a paper-thin coating of dark chocolate and a sprinkling of sea salt (\$3, four pieces \$11).

2 Head east on Houston Street, admiring (or lamenting) how the 'hood has evolved. Peek into the windows at the new location of **Il Laboratorio Del Gelato** (188 Ludlow St at E Houston St; 212-343-9922, laboratoriodelgelato.com) to see how their sweet treats are produced before picking out a 20-ounce container of lemon-basil sorbet or olive-oil gelato (\$9.25).

3 Head down Ludlow Street, make a right onto Stanton Street, and pop into **September Wines & Spirits** (100 Stanton St at Ludlow St; 212-388-0770, septemberwines.com) to pick up a bottle of Mission Hill ice wine (\$21.99), made from grapes that were handpicked and pressed after the frost, preserving maximum sweetness and resulting in a more concentrated (and alcoholic) product.

4 Hang a left at the end of the block and duck into **Bluestockings** (172 Allen St between Rivington and Stanton Sts; 212-777-6028, bluestockings.com) to peruse eater reads like Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* and Jay Weinstein's *The Ethical Gourmet*, while nibbling on a vegan cookie (\$2).

5 Travel south one block, turn left and visit the righteously old-school **Economy Candy** (108 Rivington St between Essex and Ludlow Sts; 212-254-1531, economycandy.com), whose walls are lined floor to ceiling with a rainbow of old and new favorites, including Razzles, Wonka Bars and Fruit Stripe gum. Make off with a giant jawbreaker for \$1.99.

6 Wind your way back to Ludlow and stop by **Babycakes NYC** (248 Broome St at Ludlow St; 212-677-5047, babycakesnyc.com). The eco-friendly bakers will tell you that eating agave, a natural sweetener derived from cactus, is like eating your veggies. On that note, pick up a gluten-free chocolate-chip cookie (\$1.50 each), or a red-velvet cupcake (gluten free \$4.50; made with spelt \$3.95) and keep soldiering on.

7 Stroll down Orchard Street and take a left on Grand Street. Inside dusty **Tai Cheung Kitchen Supply** (349 Grand St between Essex and Ludlow Sts, 212-219-8898), you will find no fewer than six models of the ice-cream scoop. A stainless steel *boule de crme glace* will set you back \$7.95 and keep you in perfect, home-pulled scoops all summer long.

8 At the **Doughnut Plant** (379 Grand St between Essex and Norfolk Sts; 212-505-3700, doughnutplant.com), homemade jelly (\$3), torched crme brle (\$3), and traditional cake and yeast doughnuts (\$2.50--\$2.75) will leave you licking your fingers. Flavors change monthly and are inspired by the season.

9 Power up for the final leg of your journey at **Roots and Vines** (409 Grand St at Clinton St, 212-260-2363), home of the Counter Culture espresso (\$2.25). Attuned palates will note chocolate, caramel and nut in the Espresso Toscano blend.

10 Retrace your steps west to Ludlow, then walk south to Hester Street for pretzels (50--\$1.35) and marshmallows (75--\$1.50), hand-dipped in Belgian chocolate, at **The Sweet Life** (63 Hester St at Ludlow St; 212-598-0092, sweetlifeny.com). Don't spoil your appetite before sampling the licorice collection, which includes Dutch Salty, Dutch Honey and Kookaburra mango varieties.

11 Finish your jaunt on the slightly healthy side at **Organic Avenue** (116 Suffolk St at between Rivington and Delancey Sts; 212-334-4593, organicavenue.com) with a cup of its naturally sweet-tart house-made lemonade (\$6), an elixir of lemon juice, lime juice, ginger, agave and Himalayan salt. It has fruit juice, therefore it is good for you. Trust us.

12 Brush teeth. Twice.