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Dining In

'Steak and Shake' Takes On A Whole New Meaning

By ALEX WITCHEL

ADAM PERRY LANG looked distinctly uneasy sitting in the cocktail lounge, and who could blame him? It's tough trying to conduct an interview while at the next table a voluptuous woman in spangles has dropped her top and is treating one happy executive to a lap dance. It was even tougher, I soon discovered, trying to eat a steak dinner while another enterprising gal gyrated her bare buttocks just inches from the entree. But as they say here at the Penthouse Executive Club, that's entertainment.

The story of how Mr. Lang, a very nice Jewish boy from Roslyn, Long Island, who worked for years at Le Cirque and Daniel, found himself serving steaks at a strip joint and pulling pork at Daisy May's BBQ USA next door, on this formerly nondescript block of 11th Avenue between 45th and 46th Streets, is quite a saga. It reaches from Madison, Wis., to New York City, on to Paris and around the world — with a significant stop at a working ranch outside Santa Fe, N.M. — before Mr. Lang ended up back home, in business with Richard Gans, his best friend of 25 years, and Richard's father, Robert.



Christopher Smith for The New York Times

IT CAME TO THIS After traveling the world, Adam Perry Lang is now happy cooking barbecue.

The elder Mr. Gans, a real estate investor, opened the Penthouse Executive Club, a licensee of General Media, at 603 West 45th Street last June. It is a 10,000-square-foot complex that can accommodate up to 400 guests, and Mr. Gans wanted it to house a restaurant as well. At the same time, Mr. Lang, 34, fresh from a four-year stint as the personal chef to a billionaire whose identity he will not reveal, was intent on opening his own barbecue place — takeout only — and so a deal was born. Mr. Lang became the executive chef at Robert's Steakhouse at the club, with permission to build his very own dry-aging room in the base-

ment, while he and Richard Gans also became co-owners of Daisy May's, which opened in late August.

"I told Bob Gans a steakhouse was the only thing to do," Mr. Lang said. "It's testosterone food." As he spoke, he led the way through the club's basement, unlocking his dry-aging room with the excitement of the kid who owns the neighborhood treehouse. "I have ultimate control," he