



Why I Love ... Brooklyn

Academy Award-nominated actress **Rosie Perez** knew her beloved borough was cool long before the hipsters arrived

Rosie Perez didn't become a household name quietly. It was in *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee's acclaimed 1989 film on racial tension, that the unknown actress/choreographer burst onto the big screen, fists clenched in a pair of red boxing gloves, as she punched and shimmied through the opening credits to Public Enemy's *Fight the Power*. Fittingly, her debut movie was set in Brooklyn, where Perez has lived for most of her life.

It was the beginning of a storied acting career for Perez. Memorable roles have ranged from her Oscar-nominated turn as a bereaved mother in 1993's *Fearless* to a zany cop on the take in the more recent

Pineapple Express. Nowadays, she divides acting assignments between New York theater stages and Hollywood film sets. This year, Perez plays Persephone alongside Sharon Stone and Christopher Walken in *Gods Behaving Badly*. In November, she'll be part of an all-star ensemble in Ridley Scott's *The Counselor*, a thriller described as *No Country for Old Men* on steroids.

When it comes to downtime, however, the actress makes no bones about spending as much of it as possible in her beloved home borough. "The old perception of Brooklyn is that it's dangerous. But the hipsters are finding out that there are really a lot of beautiful places to live here. I tried living in Manhattan; it lasted eight months. It was way too intense," Perez says. "When I go outside, I'm surrounded by neighbors, and there are a lot more trees here."

But even in the hometown atmosphere of her Fort Greene neighborhood, Perez is sometimes recognized, an occurrence she greets with appreciation rather than annoyance. "When someone tells me they like my work, it touches my heart," she says. "It makes me smile—I can't help it."

—STACEY MORRIS

The best places to ...

EAT PIZZA, BROOKLYN-STYLE

Gino's Restaurant
7414 Fifth Ave., Bay Ridge; 718-748-1698; ainosbar-ridae.com • "Their pizza is very cheesy with lots of mozzarella and homemade sauce," Perez says. "It's the Tony-walking-down-the-street-from-Saturday-Night-Fever kind of pizza."

GET SOME CULTURE

The Brooklyn Museum
200 Eastern Parkway; 718-638-5000; brooklynmuseum.org • "I love spending the day there and taking a stroll on the grounds," Perez says. "I'm on the Walk of Fame next to Neil Sedaka—thank you, God!"

ENJOY BORSCHT AND ENTERTAINMENT

Tatiana Restaurant
3152 Brighton Sixth St., Brighton Beach; 718-891-5151; tatianarestaurant.com • "It's an over-the-top fantasy Russian supper club with great Russian food—expensive, but well worth it."

TASTE CARIBBEAN HOME COOKING

El Gran Castillo de Jagua
345 Flatbush Ave., Park Slope; 718-622-8700; elgrancastillo.com • "I love the mofongo. It's so good but so fattening," says Perez of the plantain and chicken dish that's a Puerto Rican favorite.

