



14th Annual Best of the Best

SO MANY NEW AND NOTABLE ADDITIONS to an already enviable local dining scene!

Two area favorites got 4-bells from Philly food critic Craig LaBan, while Eagleview developed into a restaurant row and KOP saw a dining bonanza (we highlight some favorites).

Once again we lifted a pint to local craft beer, bottle shops, “green” beer, new spirits, whisky bibles and the best places for drinks—after work, with BFFs or with a view.

Best picks for every meal spanned best breakfasts anytime, lovely lunches and Italian Sunday suppers. We found pop-ups and pies of the month, plus top spots for tailgates and tea with history.

Check out the ethnic delights from dim sum, fish & chips, soul of the south and old school French. And enjoy game-day wings and veggie options.

We also made a big heart award, along with a special wish for 2018.

Read these pages to find out more. But most important: dine local and often this year.

Check our website for more on restaurants, food news, recipes, beer, wine and more. CountyLinesMagazine.com.



Birchrunville Store Cafe



Talula's Table



DanDan



Founding Farmers

LOCAL 4-BELL STARS

THE BIRCHRUNVILLE STORE CAFE

1403 Hollow Rd., Birchrunville
610-827-9002 / BirchrunvilleStoreCafe.com

Clearly, Chef Francis Pascal's new life is going well. Though tucked away off-the-beaten-path, the Birchrunville Store Cafe offered for many years the best, most inspired, 4-LaBan-bell, French-Italian cuisine in Chester County. A few years ago, U.S. citizenship, a name change (Trzeciak to Pascal) and marriage (to Nui Kullana of Thai L'Elephant) made life for the owner-chef even better. Asian influences appeared—rice vinegar, fish sauce, rice paper rolls—though the menu remains solidly Continental. Another change: Butterscotch, a pastry shop, opened across the street, with creations by cafe's pastry chef Jane Urban. An intersection in culinary heaven!

TALULA'S TABLE

102 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-8255 / TalulasTable.com

Over 10 years ago, Aimee Olexy opened a cozy gourmet grocery and cafe in Kennett Square, serving a sumptuous farmhouse table after hours. Soon after *Inquirer* food critic Craig LaBan's 4-bell review (the only other area eatery so honored), business boomed and Olexy's fame begat the famous one-year waiting list for reservations. And it held. That's right: it still takes a year to sit down at the BYOB farmtable (there's a smaller kitchen table with a shorter wait). The menu, about 10 courses, is seasonal, local, constantly changing yet without repeats of menus. Rest assured it will be special and superb. Call now! It will truly be a meal to remember ... and well worth the anticipation!

PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

DANDAN

214 Sugartown Rd., Wayne
484-580-8558 / DanDanRestaurant.com

DanDan is yum yum, wrote a wag on a food blog, and the consensus supports that review. Replacing Ella's Bistro, this branch of the Center City Sichuan and Taiwanese eatery is larger but still hip/zen, if you get our oxymoron. Kevin and Catherine Huang (she of the Han Dynasty family) serve up authentic, spicy variety—watch the number of circles on the menu. Crisp spicy cucumbers, scallion pancakes and soup dumplings get thumbs up as starters. Then try a hot pot dish (choice of protein) served in a sizzling mini-wok, or the crowd-pleasing cumin lamb or cumin tofu. Add flavorful green beans and, of course, signature Dan Dan noodles. Three yums.

FOUNDING FARMERS

255 Main St., King of Prussia
484-808-4008 / WeAreFoundingFarmers.com

Fans of the DC-area chain rejoiced when Founding Farmers put down stakes in KOP. The restaurant cap-

tures all that's good in the foodie zeitgeist: it's majority farmer-owned, devoted to scratch cooking and boasts a menu and vibe we'll call hipster comfort. Translation: you can eat your deviled eggs and pierogies while sipping a local brew or Manhattan flavored with chai-infused vermouth. Upstairs, find an eclectic menu from soups and salads to steaks, seafood, burgers and pizza. Every FF location pays homage to local ingredients, so there's PA mushroom pizza and to-die-for Bell & Evans fried chicken (with glazed donut on the side!). Downstairs, the First Bake Café & Creamery serves up breads, donuts, breakfast sandwiches and hand-churned ice cream.

HEARTH KITCHEN

859 E. Baltimore Pk., Kennett Square
484-732-8320 / HearthKennettSquare.com

Viva Bryan Sikora's return to Chester County! About ten years ago Sikora opened Talula's Table with then-wife Aimee Olexy, before splitting and launching La Fia, Cocina Lolo and Merchant Bar in Wilmington. He's back with a new venture (and new spouse). The classy, casual spot is named Hearth Kitchen, with, of course, a wood-burning stove turning out wonders like pizzas of fig and bacon or prosciutto and pear. The small, medium and large plates menus are drool-worthy. For smalls, consider truffled foie gras toast, wood-oven-fired tomato fondue. Handmade pastas include mafalde, bucatini, papardelle and pork cheek ravioli. Osso buco, branzino, crispy fried lobster stuffed zucchini flowers in summer. Plus Merchant-Bar-worthy cocktails.



Hearth Kitchen

MISTRAL

160 N. Gulph Rd., King of Prussia
610-768-1630 / MistralKOP.com

Like the strong Mediterranean wind for which it's named, Mistral is breathing fresh air into the local culinary scene. Executive Chef Scott Anderson's "interpretative American" seasonal shared plates have everyone talking, from *Food and Wine's* Regan Stephens to Craig LaBan to the man at the mall. And here's what they're saying: they *like* the bright, open dining space and upscale, casual vibe. They *love* sipping craft cocktails at the tiled bar and sitting at the small counter with its view into the kitchen. But they *adore* the food: pork belly ramen, burger with bacon jam, scallop crudo, chicken thigh satays, grilled ricotta toast with figs, honey and sea salt.

BUZZWORTHY

AT THE TABLE (BYOB)

11 Louella Ct., Wayne
610-964-9700 / AtTheTableBYOB.com

Just 24 seats. Yet 25 ingredients are in the signature garden salad, described as meriting a spot in MoMA as still life with beets—tweezers are involved in arranging micro-greens. So it's no surprise that At the Table's cooking garners adjectives like creative, ambitious, daring. Chef Alex Hardy (schooled by Perrier, Gilmore, the Feury brothers) admits he aspires to Michelin stars. This intimate, elegant BYOB seeks to elevate Main Line dining with its changing tasting menus and a la carte options befitting a special date night—



Mistral

think Wagu beef, Tasmanian sea trout, deconstructed desserts. Mushroom toast, foie gras apps and sous vide entrees get raves, as do the amuse buces. Why *not* aim for the stars?

COTTAGE CAFÉ AT VALLEY FORGE FLOWERS

503 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-687-5566 / ValleyForgeFlowers.com

There's yet another reason to stop and smell the roses at Valley Forge Flowers. Mid-2017 saw the opening of the Cottage Café, a cozy spot offering tastes from some favorite local cooks: Good Spoon soups, Bakery House quiches, Tredici salads, Dia Doce cupcakes. Did we mention La Colombe coffee on tap? Here's our recipe for an ideal Cottage afternoon: 1. Browse European antiques and home décor items in the inviting room off the Café. 2. Order a draft latte, mushroom veloute (served in a china cup), wedge of quiche Lorraine. 3. Find a table with a view of the atrium and watch the light play on the patterned brick floor. 4. Pretend it's your home.

DE LA COEUR CAFÉ

1836 Lovering Ave., Wilmington
3629 Silverside Rd., Talleyville Shopping Center
302-660-7178 / DeLaCoeurCafe.com

Un is good, but deux is better especially when it comes *de la coeur* (from the heart)! In fall 2017, husband-and-wife team Alex and Gretchen Sianni opened a second location of their French-inspired café in the North Wilmington space Bon Appetit had called home. The new location's menu is more extensive than the



At The Table



Eatnic Urban Farmhouse



Eagleview Restaurant Row



original's and offers quiches, sandwiches, salads, soups and La Colombe coffees. Breads and pastries—baguettes, croissants, donuts—for both cafés are baked here. With its friendly counter service, Parisian café music, inviting seating—settle on the sofa inside the front door—De La Coeur is fast becoming a De La Ware favorite.

EATNIC URBAN FARMHOUSE EATERY & BYOB

231 W. Lancaster Ave., Paoli
484-320-8155 / EatNic.com

The full name is a good summary for EatNic, a new-ish farm-to-fork spot in a shabby-chic, vintage-decorated space, where you can use crystal glasses for an upscale BYOB experience. An all-scratch kitchen serves a changing menu from the bounty of local farms—the soup du jour claims it's “created everyday from the morning's farm deliveries” and the Urban Farmhouse Breakfast cites four farms sourced for the dish. Order anything on the menu any time—lobster risotto for breakfast?—or stick with yummy breakfast fare (omelets, Benedicts, pastries), salads (roasted beet, roasted pear), sandwiches (signature burgers to Cubans), six pizzas or about eight entrees (pasta, Korean BBQ, pork chop, king Salmon, and specials).

PLACES TO WATCH

AGAVE

1620 Baltimore Pk., Chadds Ford
484-770-8345 / AgaveBYO.com

Holy guacamole! If the test of a Mexican restaurant is the quality of its tacos and guac, then Agave is a welcomed addition to an area already rich in that cuisine. The guac gets raves, as does the taco sampler—ranging from surprising cauliflower to the popular fish. And despite its two Italian connections—ownership by Media's Spasso

Italian Grill and its location in the former Fellini spot—Agave brings an upscale Mexican option to Chadds Ford dining. This casual, rustic chic BYOB—or BYOT for the pitchers of various flavors of margarita mix—offers authentic, freshly prepared traditional dishes like Camarones a la Diabla, Chile Relleno and Pollo con Mole.

TERRAIN CAFE & AMIS TRATTORIA

Devon Yards, Lancaster Ave., Devon

Devon Yards, the lifestyle development and controversy-magnet in the former Waterloo Gardens location, promises notable additions in 2018. The Pinterest-perfect wedding venue, Terrain Gardens, got early buzz with catering by James Beard-award-winner Jeff Michaud. But beyond the garden shop and Anthropologie store, will be a Terrain Garden Cafe and Amis Trattoria to tempt diners (Pizzeria Vetri was nixed). Expect the same charm for this cafe as the Glen Mills location (bread in flower pots with lavender honey butter?). Arrival of a new Amis Trattoria (Center City, Navy Yard), part of URBN's acquisition from the Vetri group, will bring simple food, family recipes and Vetri verve—“house-made pastas that boast inventiveness while paying homage to tradition.”

RESTAURANT ROW

EAGLEVIEW RESTAURANT ROW

Bluefin Eagleview,
610-458-3234 / BluefinEagleview.com
Al Pastor, 484-341-8886 / EatAlPastor.com
Bella Vista, 484-341-8621 / EatBellaVista.com
Brickside Grille Seafood & Oyster Bar,
610-321-1600 / BricksideGrille.com
Nudy's Cafe, 610-458-7667 / NudysCafes.com
Suburban Restaurant and Beer Garden,
610-458-2337 / SuburbanBG.com
Wellington Square, Exton

We love restaurant rows. Clusters of restaurants—often in dining meccas like West Chester, Media, North Wayne Ave.—where you go when you know you want to eat out but not what you want to eat. So when a sixth restaurant opened in Eagleview Town Center, it was time to deem that a restaurant row. Choose from the latest addition, sushi BYOB Bluefin Eagleview, to trendy Suburban Restaurant and Beer Garden under Chef Eric Yost, to the conjoined Al Pastor and Bella Vista offering approachable Mexican and Italian-American options, respectively, or veterans Brickside Grille's American fare and Nudy's Cafe for breakfast and lunch. Oodles of options on the row!

DINING BONANZA

KING OF PRUSSIA TOWN CENTER AND KING OF PRUSSIA MALL

Last year we recognized some of the serious restaurants establishing a critical mass at KOP Town Center: Davio's, Fogo de Chão, Paladar Latin Kitchen. That was followed by smaller chains and more casual eateries like City Works, Founding Farmers, b. good, Choolaah Indian BBQ, Mission BBQ, Duck Donuts, Habit Burger Grill, Honeygrow, Naf Naf Grill, True Food Kitchen and MidCi. Not to mention even more dining options opening in the KOP Mall (Yard House, Mistral, is a standout), and elsewhere in the area (Tiffin at Valley Forge Plaza). Over 4,000 new seats for diners in the past 18 months, with more to come. Wowza!

CHEERS FOR CRAFT BEERS & BREWPUBS

Each year there are more great breweries and brewpubs to celebrate. Those with substantial food offerings are recognized in our article “Brews & Foods.” Other favorites focus on serving up great craft beer.

CROWDED CASTLE BREWING COMPANY

242 Bridge St., Phoenixville
484-252-0077 / CrowdedCastle.com

Phoenixville's strong bar scene is boosted to another level by recent additions. Crowded Castle has a stylish bar and seating area—comfy seats by the window on busy Bridge Street—and serves beers that the founding homebrewers and extended family—now owners and staff—decided were “too good not to share.” Enjoy great beer names—Mailbock is Killing Me, Talk Like a Pirate Stout—and their IPAs, ales, porters and stouts. Some faves: Tangerine porter and dark and fancy Tuxedo stout on nitro. Bar bites are available, but in Phoenixville, BYOF makes sense. Local wines and ciders are on the menu—Paradoxx, Grace Wineries, Stone Barn Cellars—making drinking local easy.

ROOT DOWN BREWING COMPANY

1 N. Main St., Phoenixville
484-393-2337 / RootDownBrewing.com

Comfortably filling the large industrial space (a former root beer brewery) just off Bridge Street, Root Down's vibe is reminiscent of Tired Hands' Fermentaria in the old Ardmore trolley shop. The l-o-n-g bar allows a view of the brewery at one end with food-ordering station at the other. Choose from a one-page menu of small plates, smokehouse specialties, sandwiches (brats to veggie wraps), tacos and sweets, but know you're there for the beers and atmosphere. Saison, German pils, plus plenty of ales—unfiltered pale ale, all PA APA, hoppy golden ale, double IPA, honey cream ale—and our favorites, Bine, an American IPA, and Mic Check, an imperial oatmeal stout.

LOCUST LANE CRAFT BREWERY

50 Three Tun Rd., Malvern
484-324-4141 / LocustLaneCraftBrewery.com

Simply crafted is the motto of Malvern's only craft brewery (at press time), opened in April

by a trio of friends with a beer-loving history. The focus is on a few classic, fresh beers with simple names: Pale Ale, Saison, ESB, Coffee Porter, (OK, there's Experimental IPA #4: Cascade & Lemon-drop). The small family-friendly, 10-tap taproom in an industrial space is anchored by a 35-foot live-edge bar with a view of the brewhouse, for which the owners will happily give tours. Indoor and outdoor seating allow patrons to enjoy food from the rotating cast of food trucks (Saloon 151, Baby Blues BBQ). Sometimes it is the gift to be simple.

EAST BRANCH BREWING CO.

202 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
484-593-0815 / EastBranchBrewing.com

Two buddies dreamed of starting a brewery in Downingtown. No, not the Victory Brewing guys, but Dylan Meanix and Kevin McGovern of East Branch, the newest brewery, this one in the old fire station/Molly Maguire's space. Taking its name from the source of the water for its beer, East Branch opened in September with big plans. Though now relying on the fleet of food trucks and BYOF to feed clients, they're thinking of a restaurant and rooftop bar. You'll find plenty of IPAs (American, West Coast, double, oat), some pilsners, saison, porter and a spelt beer, among others. There's cider and wine, too.

STICKMAN BREWS

326 N. Lewis Rd. #240, Royersford
484-938-5900 / StickmanBrews.com

For brewing in the sticks (a Philly writer wrote that first), try Stickman Brews in Royersford, where they brew small batches with an American twist on Belgian-inspired beers in their bare-bones brewpub in a strip mall. Theirs is a particular take on sipping beer: no TVs (they prefer you talk, play Jenga or Cards Against Humanity), no food (other than food trucks), no growlers (though they'll fill yours if you BYOG), and no elaborate labels (hence the stick figures). Proud of their

house culture and wild yeasts, they offer about a dozen choices on tap with cans to go. Faves include a farmhouse ale, First World Problems, and a solid Baltic porter, The Nuclear Option.

TUNED UP BREWING COMPANY

135 N. Main St., Spring City – on Facebook

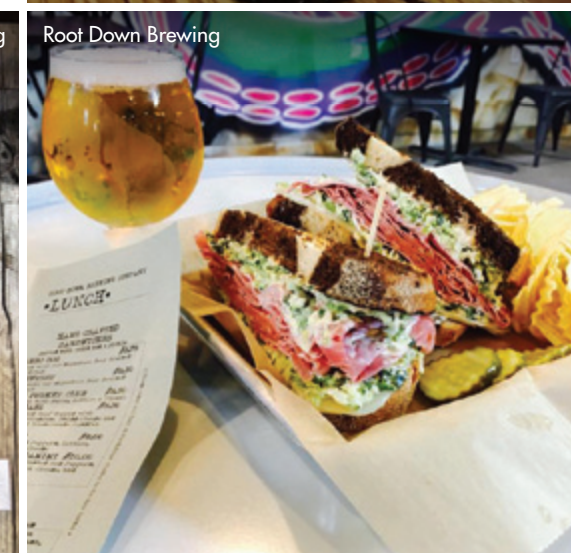
Across the river from Stickman is Spring City's Tuned Up Brewing, another no-frills spot with no TVs or kitchen (yes, conversation and food trucks) but a glowing fireplace, regular live music and cheeky messages on its outdoor chalkboard (Hoppy Thanksgiving). We'd read their peanut butter brown ale was better than Duclaw's Sweet Baby Jesus (chocolate, peanut butter porter), but alas, this crowd-pleaser disappeared before Thanksgiving, returning early March. The solid beer menu featured Little Booty Stout, Baltic Porter, Scorned Woman (American IPA), and more. We'd go back for the brown ales and bourbon-barrel porter. The brewers' music background—their band was called The Fermentors—inspired the name.



The Foodery



Crowded Castle Brewing



Root Down Brewing

NEW BEER GARDEN

LEVANTE AT THE STABLES

160 Park Rd., Chester Springs
484-302-5118 / LevanteBrewing.com

Got to love beer gardens! And so we raised a pint last summer when Levante at the Stables joined the growing list of family-friendly outdoor spaces with communal tables, games, fire pits, live music in the gazebo and good times everywhere. Set on over two acres in Chester Springs at an 1840s farmhouse and stable, it's a new fave spot to enjoy beer (mostly Levante, but guest taps, too), PA wines and craft cocktails from the 32-tap bar. Food options include the ubiquitous food trucks or BYOF. This joint venture of West Chester-based Levante Brewing and Split Rail Tavern had a stellar season (they even ran shuttles from West Chester) and reopens Memorial Day weekend. Can't wait!

BOTTLE SHOP

BOTTLE ROOM

209 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
484-593-2972 / BottleRoomDTown.com

So many beer choices, so little time. Luckily beer-mecca Station Taproom created the adjacent Bottle Room to offer guidance. Exposed brick and wood shelving showcase the well-curated collection of bottles, as the Bottle Room combines the best of local breweries—Tired Hands, Evil Genius, Free Will—with enough surprises to keep beer geeks returning. Nosh from the light menu (small plates, charcuterie, plus nachos, tacos and more) and sample 16 rotating taps or savor your growlers/crowlers to go. But what makes this place special is the depths of knowledge that manager Kerry Watson and staff bring to each customer's desires. Let them be your beer guru.

PLACE TO BUY BEER

THE FOODERY



Bottle Room

325 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-933-1150 / FooderyBeer.com

You can get any beer you want at ... Phoenixville's Foodery. Don't let the name fool you. Yes, there are sandwiches ordered from touchscreens—hoagies, paninis, wraps—but the main attraction at this fourth branch of the Philly chain is beer (call it the Beerery?). This addition to Phoenixville's beer scene sports 17 taps for beer, 2 for wine, even 1 for kombucha, and nitro taps for beer and for coffee. Plus 29 refrigerated doors along the right wall showcasing beer from around the country and the world. That's the kind of wall we like to see built! Buy a single bottle, a mixed six-pack, or \$9.99 six-pack from the brewery of the month.

BEST "GREEN" BEER

VICTORY BREWING COMPANY

420 Acorn Ln., Downingtown
610-873-0881 / VictoryBeer.com

When Bill Covalleski and Ron Barchet chose Downingtown for Victory's first brewery, the pristine waters of the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek were its source and flavor. Since then, their Parkesburg plant was added, also drawing from the East Branch. Five years ago, Victory celebrated—and sought to protect—those waters by establishing a monitoring program, building riparian buffers with tree plantings, setting up scholarships to study the watershed, and dedicating a portion of the revenue from Headwaters Pale Ale to the fund. A worthy cause, and also, it tastes great, especially for a different kind of green beer.

NEW SPIRITS

LIQUID ALCHEMY BEVERAGES

28 Brookside Dr., Wilmington
302-438-0252 / LiquidAlchemyBeverages.com

When you feel a need for mead (sorry, Maverrick), Liquid Alchemy should be your destination for this historic drink with a modern twist. Delaware's first meadery and cidery after a

Liquid Alchemy



130-year hiatus offers tastings and tours and several award winners in the honey wine category from the Mead Free or Die competition. Made with locally sourced whole fruit and spice, this gluten-free drink was enjoyed by Queen Elizabeth I, King Tut and ... you? Red Cowabunga, Overly Hoptimistic, O4 Orange Mead are choices served separately and in flights in the converted industrial space. Small batch limited releases and barrel-aged options, too.

CHEESE & WINE PARTY

GRACE WINERY

50 Sweetwater Rd., Glen Mills
610-459-4711 / GraceWinery.com

Think of the best wine and cheese party you've ever attended. Now invite writer and cheese maven Tenaya Darlington (aka Madame Fromage). Then, make the setting the historic Inn at Grace Winery. Finally, pair award-winning Birchrun and Doe Run cheeses with Grace's vintages. This magical scenario came to life last summer when Anna Juhl, founder of Cheese Journeys, partnered with Madame F. to lead guests on a four-day local cheese tour. Other highlights: dinner in Grace's vineyard and three-night stay at the Inn, dinner at Talula's Table, visits to local cheesemakers and West Chester's Artisan Exchange, and an after-hours party at DiBruno's in the Italian Market. This year's July tour promises to be equally spectacular.

FUN COCKTAIL MENU

BLACK POWDER TAVERN

1164 Valley Forge Rd., Wayne
610-293-9333 / BlackPowderTavern.com

We like cocktails with a hint of whimsy and twist of history. Black Powder Tavern delivers both. During the Revolutionary War, the Tavern was designated a secret black powder munitions stash by Baron Von Steuben, who transformed ragtag Valley Forge soldiers into a profes-



Autograph Brasserie

sional army. A bourbon, maple syrup and apple cider concoction bears his name. Other patriot-inspired drinks—General Varnum Midnight Manhattan, Philip Mazzei Bellini—belly up to the bar next to decidedly modern libations. Check out the Jalapeño Margarita, Flirtini and Pottsgrove Sling, made with local Bluecoat gin and pineapple juice. We know it's not politic to mention religion, but The Pied Presbyterian (Dewars, club soda, ginger beer) strikes our fancy.

FERMENTATION

A CULTURE FACTORY

333 Morgan St., Phoenixville
267-738-1973 / ACultureFactory.com

If there ever was a fermentation evangelist, Olga Sorzano is it. Since 2015, she's been bottling her Baba's Brew kombucha, a sparkling probiotic tonic made from sweet tea and a bacteria-yeast culture. Happily 2017 debuted A Culture Factory, a community gathering space where "culture meets culture." It houses a nano-brewery where Sorzano develops new and seasonally inspired kombucha flavors like turmeric-laced Golden Glow, Rosy Apple and Asian Pear Ginger. On Saturdays and First Fridays, she offers kombucha and other fermented food samples—kimchi, kraut, miso, chocolate. DIYers enjoy yogurt- and kombucha-making classes and then head to the health and wellness room for yoga, hula hooping and aerial fitness.

PATIO BAR

TAVOLA

400 W. Sproul Rd., Springfield
610-543-2100 / Tavolas.com

Our dream patio bar would have tables with sun umbrellas, comfy seating areas, fire pits, palm trees, spritzing to cool off and heat lamps to warm up. Add live music, a golf course view and a secluded rattan cocoon "love nest" and that's



Grace Winery

Tavola's outdoor bar area. Happy hours include plenty of drink specials plus fun bar snack specials—short rib quesadilla, burgers, wings. For sipping try the award-winning People's Choice Bloody Mary, build your own Bloody Mary, or the Prickly Mango Daiquiri we featured in our June issue, as yummy as it is pretty!

WHISKEY MENU

SALOON 151

151 W. Gay St., West Chester
610-701-8489 / Saloon151.com

You may know folks who care about the differences between Tennessee whiskey, Canadian whisky, Irish whiskey, Scotch whisky, rye whiskey and bourbon whiskey. Sure, it's all whiskey (with or without the e), but who cares? One place that does, a true saloon—in fact, called Saloon 151—takes all varieties of whiskey seriously. Don't ignore the food menu, including 11 types of whiskey bar wings, as well as an assortment of starters, burgers, flatbreads, sandwiches, salads, soups, fries. But, belly up to the bar, and order a glass of 12-year Tullamore D.E.W. or Whistle Pig and see if you care about the e.

WINE SLUSHIE

CHADDSFORD WINERY

632 Baltimore Pk., Chadds Ford
610-388-6221 / ChaddsFord.com

The perfect summer drink may be a wine slushie—a cool adult beverage that brings out your inner kid. And it stays cold longer than that chilled glass of pinot grigio. When you need a refreshing twist on frosé or red wine coolers, dream about Chaddsford Winery's summer Wine Slushie weekends. Last year featured specialty concoctions with fresh seasonal fruits and the vineyard's wine to sip or order in flights. Do sangria daiquiri, peach bellini, mojito mint freeze, cider shandy and raspberry blast sound good? We thought so.

DRINKS WITH FRIENDS

AUTOGRAPH BRASSERIE

503 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-964-2588 / AutographBrasserie.com

Whatever you're toasting, Autograph's wood-paneled bar is the place to raise a glass with your BFFs. If there's a lull in the conversation (ha, ha) cast your eyes upward to the brass horn chandelier or toward the album-cover-lined walls and you'll be talking music like a Rolling Stone stringer. Weekday happy hours feature libations including signature cocktails—sip Don't Quit Me Baby or It's Cool Honey Bunny, depending on your mood. Wines by the glass and bottle hail mainly California, Italy, France and Spain. Happy hour menus offers snacks and small plates: deviled eggs, tuna tartare and a prime steak burger that earned Craig LaBan's praise. Wednesdays are Girls Nights Out, if you need a reason.

DRINKS AFTER WORK

FIREPOINT GRILL

3739 West Chester Pk., Newtown Square
484-428-3093 / FirepointGrill.com

It's hard to ignore: one of the big, new modern buildings in Ellis Preserve at the intersection of Route 252 and West Chester Pike. Firepoint Grill arrived in late 2016, with a center bar that's broad and deep. Order a drink and last week will dissolve, as next week gets put on hold. The drinks—a long list of craft beers, plus a full complement of whiskey, scotch, bourbon, rum, gin, vodka. The chic surroundings—inside relaxing in the low lighting, or outside on the heated patio—invite colleagues to brag, complain, argue and laugh, all without disturbing anyone else. Or assume you'll stay awhile and choose a booth.



Dilworthtown Crush Cancer



Kennett Brewfest



Majolica



Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant

DRINKS WITH A VIEW

HARRY'S SEAFOOD GRILL

101 S. Market St., Wilmington
302-777-1500 / HarrysSeafoodGrill.com

Drinks taste better with a view. So we suggest you enjoy sipping on the patio at Harry's Seafood Grill along Wilmington's Riverwalk. Watch strollers parade along the Christina River, as sculls skim the surface and the River Taxi and pleasure boats cruise by. A strong drinks list and small plates menu add to the pleasure. We're fans of the signature cocktails, particularly the Dark and Stormy (Goslings Rum and ginger beer) and Margarita (Patron Tequila and fresh squeezed lime juice), but there are plenty of wine and beer choices. Sample the tapas menu—heavy on seafood, of course, with raw bar choices—plus delights like mini crabcake sliders, big eye tuna tacos and Maine lobster roll.

SIPPING WITH A PURPOSE

DILWORTHTOWN INN WINE FESTIVAL CRUSH CANCER EVENT

1390 Old Wilmington Pk., West Chester

Drinking red wine is linked to good health, so a wine tasting to help put a cork in cancer must be doubly good. Last year marked the 26th Crush Cancer fundraiser at the Dilworthtown Inn sponsored by the Brandywine and Greystone branches of Chester County Hospital's Women's Auxiliary.

Those who come to drink for a good cause enjoy sampling over a hundred wines, craft beers and hard ciders, as they shop the Gallery of Artisans, bid in the silent auction, cruise the Performance Car Show, listen to live music and enjoy food from the Inn and food trucks. Designated driver packages are a responsible choice at an event that surpasses our grape expectations.

BREWFEST

KENNETT BREWFEST

600 S. Broad St., Kennett Square
610-444-8188 / KennettBrewfest.com

It all benefits Historic Kennett Square. One Saturday in late September, nearly 120 breweries—too many to list—shared their beers among food trucks for the 20th Brewfest celebration. For a pricier ticket, you got a larger commemorative tasting glass, a selection from 50 top-shelf labels, and food prepared by Talula's Table. Some brewfests at first were cautious, sticking to the familiar and loved, like Guinness Draught. Others stepped up, trying local winners, like Levante or La Cabra. The more adventurous sampled globally, imbibing a St. Barnabus' Abt 12 or Einstock's Icelandic Toasted Porter. Since you can't try them all, mark your calendar for next year. Or February's Winterfest.

BYOB

MAJOLICA

258 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-917-0962 / MajolicaRestaurant.com

Lucky 13 years and counting, the BYOB that put Phoenixville's restaurant scene on the map continues collecting accolades. This past fall, Majolica garnered 3 bells from Craig LaBan and—this just in—Chef Andrew Deery will be *Art Culinaire Magazine's* featured chef for January. When it comes to seasonal, local, inventive, Deery is the real deal and the reason discerning diners return to the quietly sophisticated BYOB for special occasions or stellar food anytime. Highlights include tuna tartare on a housemade potato chip, rabbit ragout on pappardelle pasta, and grilled octopus. For dessert, coffee-cardamom pots de crème with spiced donuts draws raves. Or choose six- and eight-course chef's tasting menus. Aren't we the lucky ones!

FOOD & ART

DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington
302-571-9590 / DelArt.org

Art is Tasty. Yes, that's the name of the First Friday discussions + lunch events at the Delaware Art Museum. For \$12 (\$14 for non-members), elevate your mind and your palate with a 30-minute talk about a work of art and enjoy lunch in the Thronson Café with a view of the Copeland Sculpture Garden and food by Toscana Catering. You missed the October session on Robert Motherwell's "Raw Sienna with Gray," but you can catch the January 5 talk on "Reclining Nude" and the April 6 event with Andrew Wyeth's work. The complete 2018 schedule is on the museum website. Resolve to improve your mind at lunch this year.

BREADS

MALVERN BUTTERY

233 E. King St., Malvern
610-296-2534 / MalvernButtery.com

Malvern Buttery's laid back vibe makes us forget how serious they are about bread. Owners John and Silenia Rhoads and head chef and baker Nicole Petrongolo take pride in sourcing the finest ingredients including whole grains from Bucks County's Castle Valley Mill, which the Buttery mills in house. They lavish such attention on their naturally fermented levains (starters) that you just know their breads are destined to make the world—or at least our area—a better place. Country white and baguettes are made daily with varieties like olive rosemary, cranberry walnut and brioche available on a rotating basis. On the serve-yourself buffet table, the toast bar with housemade jams and butters promises comfort by the slice.



Malvern Buttery

BREAKFAST ANYTIME

THE CLASSIC DINER

16 E. Gay St., West Chester
484-947-0809 / TheClassicDinerPA.com

"I went to a restaurant that serves 'breakfast at any time,' so I ordered French Toast during the Renaissance," quipped comedian Steven Wright. The desire for a great breakfast defies the clock and history. For years our Best Of choice was the stellar breakfasts from The Classic Diner. It's time now for a shout-out for the catering arm with a morning menu that's "available all day"! Salivate over pastries for the Continental option (including Stickiest Buns), egg dishes like garden frittata and 3-meat strata, brioche French toast, pancakes, waffles, all with hardy options for sides. Plus Sammys (breakfast sandwiches) and Bennys (variations on eggs Benedict), EGG-Cellent burritos, bagels with salmon. Worth getting out of bed for.

BURGERS

IRON HILL BREWERY & RESTAURANT

3 W. Gay St., West Chester, 610-738-9600
Over a dozen locations / IronHillBrewery.com

A burger and a beer is a singular dining pleasure. So when Iron Hill celebrates National Burger Month each May with 31 different burgers, paired with beers, we should take notice. And partake. Last year's list started with the Fickle Burger (fried pickles, plus more), featured other imaginative combinations, like the Asian Elvis (yes, peanut butter was involved), Kentucky Derby (bourbon BBQ glaze), ending with the Drunk Monk (Abbey Dubbel-braised onions). The line-up differs each year, though some favorites return—Armed Forces Tribute. Mark your calendar for juicy flavored fun.

Pour Richard's Coffee Co.



ALT-BURGER

BITTERSWEET KITCHEN

18 S. Orange St., Media
610-566-1660 / EatAtBittersweet.com

We've come to accept that not everyone craves a red-meat burger. Okay. But how often do alt-burgers engender the same visceral response as the originals? Interestingly, fans of Media's Bittersweet Kitchen, a popular creative comfort food spot serving breakfast and lunch, rave about the turkey burger served on a brioche roll with a slab of cheddar, even calling it flavorful, moist, tender and the best they've ever had! No less than Craig LaBan sang the praises of both the turkey and black bean version in his dining guide to the 'burbs.

COFFEE CULTURE

GRYPHON COFFEE CO.

105 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-688-1988 / GryphonCoffee.com

POUR RICHARD'S COFFEE CO.

36 Berkley Rd., Devon
484-857-9406 / PourRichardsCoffee.com

THE FARMHOUSE

COFFEE & ESPRESSO BAR

115 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
610-269-1400 / FarmhouseCoffee.com

HORN AND HARDART COFFEE

24 Veterans Sq., Media
610-744-2501 / HornAndHardartCoffee.com

Behind every great town is a great coffee shop. Wayne and Rosemont have Gryphon cafes with a down-to-earth vibe, rotating art exhibits and house-roasted coffee. Try the Louella blend with notes of caramel and almond or kombucha and

... Continued on page 70

nitro on tap to accompany your Sugartown Smokehouse salmon bagel, chocolate croissant and hummus sandwich. In Devon since 2012, Pour Richard's Coffee offers small batch craft coffees roasted in house as well as pastries, sandwiches and soups from local soup maker, Good Spoon. Go on Sundays at 2 p.m. for free cuppings (like wine tastings, but with coffee). Newcomer Farmhouse Coffee and Espresso Bar in Downingtown feels like, well, a well-lit farmhouse. With coffee from Lancaster-based Square One Coffee Roasters, its own in-house bakery, a drive-thru window, and state-of-the-art meeting room, Farmhouse is a welcome addition to the local coffee scene. Other good news: If you've been feeling nostalgic for Horn and Hardart coffee, it's now based in Media and can be ordered online. No matter which spot you choose, remember—it's not just about the caféine, it's about the community.

CAFÉ IDEA

TREETOPS KITTY CAFÉ

305 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-925-2908 / TreetopsKittyCafe.com
If you thought your only exposure to a cat café would be through Shoshanna, of *Girls* fame, when she was assistant manager in Tokyo, fear not. Kennett Square has its own Treetops Kitty Café, the state's fourth happy, cage-free environment to interact with cats needing forever homes. A small donation lets you sit with adoptable cats as you sip, snack (or bring your own) and shop for pet products. Use the WiFi, read a book, play a game and feel the serenity that comes from watching kitties at play (hearts beat more slowly). There's a reason the Internet is full of cat videos! Even better IRL.

DIM SUM

TOM'S DIM SUM

13 E. State St., Media
610-566-6688 / TomsDimSum.com
Tom's Dim Sum is smallish, lively and almost always busy. It feels like a piece of Shanghai. Start by ordering the explode-in-your-mouth soup dumplings—must-have amazing! Try the shumai and the scallion pancakes—authentic, beautifully presented. And you'll still be on the dim sum menu, looking at the other appetizers, soup, noodles, rice, entrees ... wondering what to try next. Watch as the waiters exit the kitchen, carrying some dish you wish you ordered. Or go full dim sum. Tom's in Media is the sister spot to Tom's Dim Sum in Philly. And it's all good.

PLACE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

RON'S ORIGINAL BAR & GRILLE

74 E. Uwulchlan Ave., Exton
610-594-9900 / RonsOriginal.com
Contrary to popular wisdom, you can be all things to all people. For nearly 30 years, owner Ron Inverso has created menus to appeal to vegetarians, gluten-free folks, low-carbers and garden variety omnivores. In fact, offerings at his family-friendly place are so extensive the new menu will sport "quick reference" pages. Finding gluten-free chicken fingers, Italian specialties and vegetarian Ovals (pizzas) just got easier! What's not new: Ron's commitment to healthy ingredients free of hormones, preservatives and other bad stuff. Ron's also offers special drawings and deals (BOGO Ovals, anyone?) through ROCK (Ron's Original Customer Klub), so taking the family out to dinner won't ding the college fund.

FARMERS MARKETS

Among the bounty of local farm markets, we single out four—actually at six different locations—for special recognition.

LANCASTER COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

389 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne, 610-688-9856
LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com
First, a Main Line mainstay that sounds like it's from another county—the Lancaster County Farmers Market is an indoor, year-round mix of traditional Amish and upscale stalls in Wayne. A popular source for fresh meat, dairy, produce and baked goods, the market also offers specialty and ethnic options—Chinese, Mediterranean—plus coffee, candy, pasta and more. You'll find a wide variety of fresh and prepared foods (roast chickens, side dishes, sushi), giving you the option to cook at home or buy everything here—from wine to flowers, gourmet desserts and hostess gifts.

WESTTOWN AMISH MARKET

1165 Wilmington Pl., West Chester
610-492-5700 / WestChesterAmishMarket.com
Get a more traditional Amish experience at the newish Westtown Amish Farmers Market, with primarily Amish vendors along with some local purveyors. The Pretzel Log House at the entrance, several Stoltzfus signs, an Amish furniture shop, and a half dozen kinds of whoopie pies set the scene. There's variety, too, with Spot's Pet Corner, Cap'n Chucky's Crab Cake Co., H&L Grill, Paradoxx Winery, Sugartown Smoked Specialties, plus bulk food and flower stands.

PETE'S PRODUCE FARM

1225 E. Street Rd., West Chester
610-399-3711 / PetesProduceFarm.com
For the love of sweet summer corn, Pete's (as locals call it), on 200 acres of the Westtown School property, should be your choice. Their Mirai corn has folks making weekly detours in high season to chat up workers who pick the divine ears daily. April through October, the open-air farm market is full of high quality produce and gourmet delights—a rainbow of heirloom tomatoes, jarred goods (heirloom spaghetti sauce), veggie noodles, DiBruno cheese, grass-fed meat, and My House Cookies, Shady Maple pies and other sweet treats.

GROWING ROOTS PARTNERS GROUP

GrowingRootsPartners.com
Eagleview Farmers Market
Wellington Square, Eagleview Town Ctr., Exton
610-836-1391
Malvern Farmers Market
Burke Park, Roberts Rd. & South Warren Ave.
Malvern, 610-836-1392
Downingtown Farmers Market
Kerr Park, Pennsylvania Ave., Downingtown
610-836-1391

We don't know how they do it, but Growing Roots Partners organizes three regular farmers markets—Malvern, Downingtown, Eagleview—plus corporate markets, pop-ups and special events. Farm markets during the growing season are moved indoors and become less frequent in cold months, but remain the life-blood of community for residents and livelihood for farmers. Visit top-shelf vendors for produce (Down to Earth Harvest), meats and dairy (Canter Hill Farm), bakeries (Nomadic Pies, Malvern Buttery), local products, crafts, services and treats like Whiskey Hollow's Bourbon Barrel Aged PA Maple Syrup.

FISH & CHIPS

STATION TAPROOM

207 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
484-593-0560 / StationTaproom.com
Across from Downingtown's train station, behind a nondescript door, stands a pub. Station Taproom. It's nothing to write home about at first glance, but outstanding if you sit down and order. There's a rotating selection of about 15 beers on tap and another 30 or so in bottles. Plus, about 30 whiskeys and scotches, and an inventive food menu. But, it's the Fish—fried and beer-battered cod—& Chips—hand-cut and crispy—that provide a perfect pairing. Not long ago, the dish was entered in a national contest for best in the nation. It didn't win, but that means more for us!

FLAMBÉ

VICKERS RESTAURANT

192 E. Welsh Pool Rd., Exton
610-363-7998 / VickersRestaurant.com
Oh, the magic of fire—especially when it's tableside. Drama is added to the old-school elegance of Continental cuisine by flambéed dishes on Vickers' menu—steak Diane, bananas Foster, cherries jubilee. The atmosphere is amped up when several diners choose the flaming option, instantly causing a buzz in the room. Fan the flames of refinement with tableside service—classic Caesar salad or personally filleted Dover sole. Both traditions create the special occasion vibe at the historic 1820s farmhouse once owned by renowned potter and abolitionist John Vickers. Add a vintage cocktail and other classic dishes—escargot, shrimp cocktail, lobster Louie. A culinary visit to another time.

OLD SCHOOL FRENCH

LA MAISON

1470 Old Ridge Rd., Coventryville
484-680-1193 / MartinsKitchen.com
When the world is too much, take refuge at La Maison. On the first floor of the 300-year-old stone home where they live, award-winning Chef Martin Gagne and wife Janet conjure classic country French dishes and extend such hospitality diners feel as if they're in the company of old friends. On Fridays and Saturdays, enjoy 8-course prix fixe dinners, while Thursdays offer 4-course soup-centric suppers. Menus change weekly, but no matter what the chef dreams up—filet de veau au truffes, tarte au fromage de chèvre—satisfaction is a given. So is generosity: all dishes at this BYOB are served family-style, often with enough to take home and savor—along with memories.

FROZEN TREATS

LA MICHOCANA ICE CREAM

231 E. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-2996 / MichoacanaGrill.com
TROPICAL HOMEMADE ICE CREAM
125 N. Church St., West Chester
610-696-4027 / on Facebook

We all scream for the exotic ice cream flavors at Kennett's La Michoacana—corn, avocado, and mamey sprinkled with chile powder or cinnamon. That family-run cold spot, with long lines, reasonable prices and 35 flavors, has

been attracting locals, visitors and veeeps (yes, Biden was there July 2016) even before *Philly Mag* gave it a nod in 2009. But did you know a sister location with the same icy delights opened summer 2016 in West Chester? Yep, Tropical Homemade Ice Cream offers Mexican flavors—along with more common options like chocolate, vanilla, strawberry cheesecake—plus tamarind and guanabana water ices. You'll have to wait until March to visit either place.

AT THE GRILL

RESTAURANT ALBA

7 W. King St., Malvern
610-644-4009 / RestaurantAlba.com
No Instagram photo, Facebook post or dining guide blurb can capture Sean Weinberg's way with fire. Most every dish on his rustic Italian-inspired menu has been touched by the oak- and mesquite-fueled grill at the center of Alba's kitchen. We could make an entire meal of the bruschette—ricotta, honey and sea salt, wood roasted mushrooms, burrata and charred green onions. But always calling to us are grilled octopus, trout with hazelnut brown butter and a simple grass-fed ribeye, medium rare. This winter, we're tucking into wood-roasted goat and creamy polenta with toppings ranging from grilled country ham and dates to grilled and braised duck legs. Craig LaBan gave Alba 3 bells, *Wine Spectator* gave their Award of Excellence, we're giving 127 words of pure love.

BIG HEART

WEST CHESTER FOOD COOPERATIVE

No location yet, WCFood.Coop
A special award goes to the Co-op for caring about everyone from farmers to locavores to people suffering from food insecurity. While a brick-and-mortar store remains on their bucket list, they spent 2017 building community and increasing access to healthy, sustainable food. One shining example: partnering with Crawford Organics on a CSA with subscriptions on a "Pay what you can" basis. Unclaimed food and farmer seconds went directly to hunger relief programs. This year sees rebranding, partnering with West Chester Food Cupboard and reminding us that when it comes to strong communities and healthy food, we're all in this together.

HONEY WITH A TWIST

ROOTS CAFE

133 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-455-0100 / RootsCafeWc.com
With rustic Dutch doors set into one wall and an antique marble fireplace on another, Roots' intimate Tuscan yellow dining room evokes both farmhouse and townhouse. Many dishes on its rotating seasonal menu reflect homey with a twist of hip. Breakfast and lunch extend to 3 p.m., letting you start the day with coffee and a smoked duck bacon sandwich or crab ratatouille salad, then return for root vegetable latke bennie and French toast with berries. For dinner (Thurs.-Sat.), try short ribs with gnocchi, pork belly mac and cheese, then pumpkin butter-milk pie or chocolate pots de crème. If choosing among comfort foods is akin to picking a favorite child, go for the chef's tasting.

RUB ELBOWS WITH THE HORSEY SET

THE WHIP TAVERN

1383 N. Chatham Rd., West Marlborough
610-383-0600 / TheWhipTavern.com
If you fancy yourself a horsey type (read that two ways), Chester County's Whip Tavern is comfortable turf. Races air on Wednesday nights during the season. The patio with views of Doe Run Creek opens during warm weather. British pub fare satisfies all year round. Fans consistently bet on shepherd's pie, Welsh rarebit, Scotch egg and fish and chips. For dessert, sticky toffee pudding wins the purse. Weekend specials—anything from roast beef and Yorkshire pudding to haggis—draw comfort food seekers, Anglophile or not. On tap: lagers, ales and For Fox Sake cider, an off-dry cider made exclusively for The Whip. Plus a new chef.

INDIAN CUISINE

BANGLES INDIAN CUISINE

889 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
610-269-9600 / BanglesIndianCuisine.com
Bangles catapults us out of our chicken tikka-and-samosa rut—not that there's anything wrong with that. The upscale, spacious BYOB offers both Northern and Southern Indian dishes, often with a modern twist. From chaats (savory street food snacks) and tandoori entrees to biryanis (rice dishes) and a dizzying variety of dosas (rice and lentil crepes), the menu satisfies every taste. Diner favorites include lamb pepper fry, bhel puri (puffed rice with mangoes, potatoes, onions) and corn and curry leaf soup. The 3-course chef's tasting menu and lunch buffet, served Friday through Sunday, are good options for adventurous palates.

ITALIAN FAMILY RECIPES

TONINO'S PIZZA AND PASTA CO.

235 Lancaster Ave., Malvern
610-240-9566 / ToninosPizzaAndPasta.com

When you name a restaurant after the family patriarch, you better make him proud. Nonno Tony launched the Scotto family in the restaurant biz over 40 years ago. Nowadays, at this welcoming BYOB, son Benny and wife Lucy along with their son Giovanni, honor Nonno's memory with dishes from family recipes. Eggplant Parmesan, pastas made in-house, and Sunday ragu are crowd pleasers. Specials—beef short ribs in red wine sauce over pappardelle and barramundi with capers, olives and spinach—further showcase their range. Homemade focaccia with caramelized onions? A meal in itself. For casual dining, hoagies, cheesesteaks and pizza fit the bill. As for the family's generosity, let's just say you won't go home hungry.

ITALIAN SUNDAY DINNER EVERYDAY

LIMONCELLO RISTORANTE

9 N. Walnut St., West Chester
610-436-6230
499 E. Uwchlan Ave., Chester Springs
610-524-3112 / LimoncelloRestaurant.com

The Mingrino family believes you shouldn't have to wait until Sunday or dinner to experience a feast reminiscent of Grandmom's table. Monday through Friday at both West Chester and Chester Springs locations, they host a lunch buffet complete with a bounty of pastas, pizzas and strombolis, plus meat and fish entrees. On any given day, the lineup might include meatballs, salmon piccata or chicken parm. Salads, fresh fruits, grilled and sautéed seasonal vegetables are plentiful, too. We like that you can do a dine-and-dash with co-workers or enjoy a leisurely lunch with friends and a glass of wine.

OLD SCHOOL ITALIAN

LA VERONA

114 E. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-2244 / LaVeronaPa.com

In restaurant years, La Verona is not old: it celebrated its sixth anniversary in November. But in that time, it's become a go-to for Old School Italian. Regulars return for the triumvirate of Parmesans (chicken, eggplant, veal) and do a happy dance when lobster ravioli topped with crab and scallops is a special. Two appetizers—mushroom soup and

mushroom gratin—make Kennett Square proud. The roasted artichoke appetizer also earns kudos. Snag a window table for people watching on State Street or choose a cozy table by the fire for lingering over tiramisu. On Thursdays through Saturdays, live music adds to the La Verona experience.

LEISURELY LUNCH

THE SILVERSPOON

503 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-688-7646 / SilverspoonWayne.com

It is a truth universally acknowledged that bacon makes everything better, or at least it is a truth acknowledged by those who lunch and brunch at The Silverspoon. Fans rave about the BLT with caramelized pepper bacon, chicken salad studded with crispy bacon and Granny Smith apples, and French toast accompanied by caramelized breakfast bacon. Lest you think bacon is the only reason it's wise to make reservations at this BYOB, let us add to the list: mushroom bisque, truffle fries and seasonally inspired omelets, including a goat cheese and herb version. In warm weather, lunch on the patio.

MEDITERRANEAN

FATTOUSH RESTAURANT

182 Lancaster Ave., Malvern
484-568-4465 / Facebook.com/TheFattoushRestaurant

We've all heard about the wonders of the Mediterranean diet, so it's a wonder squared when we find the cuisine wonderfully prepared. In less than two years at its Malvern location in a strip mall, Fattoush has wowed locals with classics from the region's cuisine. The Lebanese mezze sampler gets raves (hummus, baba ganoush, falafel, kibba) as do the chicken shwarma, lamb gyros, grape leaves and wraps. Though some diners yearn for a broader menu, excellence and consistency may require the kind of concentration and personal attention that Chef/owner Roger Sleiman lavishes on food and guests alike.

MEXICAN EVERYTHING

MÁS MEXICALI CANTINA

102 E. Market St., West Chester
610-918-6280 / MasMexicali.com

When it's warm outside, the rooftop bar is the best place to be in West Chester. Getting cool outside? Try inside. The first and second floors of Más are fanciful and delightful. The san-

gria, margaritas (frozen or up), freshly made guacamole, "bad boy" nachos, homemade salsa and chips are superb—everything you'd expect and more. The tacos—at least nine including blackened mahi—and fajitas—try them with grilled steak or shrimp—are also excellent. When the sun sets over the borough, and the second or third margarita is settling in ... all is well with the world.

OLD SCHOOL BUTCHER SHOP

WESTTOWN MEATS

1030 Old Wilmington Pk., West Chester
610-696-5588 / WesttownMeatMarket.com

After 30 years in business, owners Jerry and Penni Bogda have seen food fashions come and go. But for this husband-and-wife team, high quality meats are always on trend. Westtown's dry aged prime beef inspires patrons to wax poetic with one Facebook fan posting "the bone-in top sirloins tasted like they were carved off the hind quarters of a unicorn and dipped in pure magic." Burgers made with a secret blend of New York strip and short ribs, fresh-made sausages, chicken and lamb keep loyal patrons returning to this off-the-beaten-track shop. What's more, specialty sandwiches—brisket cheese steak, rustic Italian, bacon mac and cheese burger—are as delicious as they sound.

PASTRIES

LA BAGUETTE MAGIQUE

202 W. Market St., West Chester
610-620-4729 / MagicBaguette.com

We're resisting the urge to say "ooh la la" and "c'est magnifique." What we can't resist are the pastries at this authentic French bakery where Old World baking methods rule. Owner Catherine Seisson's pain au chocolate, croissants and brioche have gained a devoted following as have her chausson aux pommes (apple turnover) and pain aux raisins (raisin Danish). It's a good idea to stop in often to peruse the daily offerings and contemplate life from a café table, coffee in one hand, cannele in the other. Coming in early 2018: a daily traditional French dish (think coq au vin) and sweet and savory crepes. Resistance is futile: Ooh la la!

PASTA

VERA PASTA

319 Westtown Rd., Ste. K, West Chester
610-701-5400 / VeraPasta.com

A self-professed "nutritional nerd," Vera Pasta owner Joe D'Andrea introduced his ancient

grain pasta in 2017. Made from organic, non-GMO kamut flour, its texture resembles regular durum wheat pasta, but it packs 25% more vitamins and minerals. If you're gluten-free by choice (not Celiac) and haven't embraced rice-based pasta, Vera's ancient grain fusilli, rigatoni and penne rigate could be your happy compromise. In other good news, Vera now has a retail shop at their production facility, and in spring 2018, will debut Bronze Table in Philadelphia's Bourse Building. The fast casual will offer an extensive ravioli list, Sunday Gravy, Bolognese with homemade pappardelle, and ancient grain pasta with the sauce of your dreams.

PET FRIENDLY

APPETITES ON MAIN

286 Main St., Exton
610-594-2030 / AppetitesOnMain.com

The "doggie menu" at Appetites on Main sends a clear message: we love you and your little/medium/big dog, too. Dishes include beef and chicken steak (add bacon for a happy pooch), grilled chicken breast and—yes—hot dogs. Dogs are welcome on the patio, open April to October, or anytime Fido fancies dining al fresco. On summer Tuesdays, dogs eat free when owners order an entree. And dogs with philanthropic bones in their bodies love Yappy Hours and Halloween costume contests benefitting All for Paws. Coming up in 2018: doggie dessert biscuits on the menu and TV on the patio so owner and pooch can root for the Phillies together.

PIE OF THE MONTH CLUB

NOMADIC PIES

132 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-857-7600 / NomadicPies.com

Here's a subscription we can literally sink our teeth into. Sign up for 3, 6, 9 or 12 months and one sweet pie stuffed with local ingredients will be yours! Bonus: the 9- and 12-month subscriptions come with an artisan crafted pie box. Newly introduced bourbon butterscotch and honey lavender are popular winter choices, while strawberry rhubarb sings of spring. For summer, it's blueberry and sour cherry, and fall is not fall at all without a wedge of caramel apple crumb or seasonal pumpkin pie. Picking up your pie is part of the fun: chat with effervescent founder Molly Johnston, and her little one. By all means, pop a savory pie or quiche into your basket for dinner. You'll be glad you did.

PIZZAS FOR EVERY MOOD

Some pizza lovers don't stray from their favorite style. We believe true pizza passion requires a variety of types to compare, contrast and match to your mood.

BIGA

810 Glenbrook Ave., Bryn Mawr
610-525-4800 / RestaurantBiga.com

While most pizza menus don't excite, ingredients and side dishes at Biga Pizza make many salivate and earned 2 LaBan bells. Last year we raved about wood-oven, blistered crust, Neapolitan-style gems Da Bomb (soppresatta, Calabrian chilis) and Kingdom (bacon, beer braised onions, scamorza) from Chef Sean Weinberg (also of Restaurant Alba). Now we crave the Half-Nelson (pancetta, long hots, olives), The Eazy-E (spinach, rosemary, caper, onion crema), and whatever's the special (speck and fig, lamb sausage with spinach and arugula). Not your average pizza joint. Charred carrots, buttermilk fried cauliflower, faro salad—also far above average. Even without its superlative list of craft beers and new wines and cocktails, Biga owns the artisanal pizza category.

VECCHIA PIZZERIA

249 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-933-1355 / [on Facebook](http://onFacebook)

Another 2-LaBan-bell winner takes a different tack—pure simplicity in the tight menu from Frank Nattle of Vecchia's, now only in Phoenixville (the Wayne spot closed). It's grown since 2012, with just four pizzas on the menu (now eight), plus a few specials, all in the Neapolitan style. Most try the Regina Margherita, with fresh, fresh, fresh, top-quality ingredients of San Marzano tomatoes, mozzarella di bufala and basil—though the Covacino (arugula, prosciutto) is also a fave. Enjoy a gradient of flavors and textures from crispy crust to soupy center. There's a reason Napoli locals showed Anthony Bourdain how to eat pizza with knife and fork (check YouTube). An expanded menu includes pastas, but we wonder why.

LORENZO & SONS PIZZA

27 N. High St., West Chester
484-999-8756 / LorenzoAndSonsPizza.com

For big pizza fans, Lorenzo's has BIG pizzas (28 inches, or a 14-inch *personal pizza*!) and a big reputation, again landing a spot on the *Daily Meal*'s top 101 in the country. The busy shop on the busy corner of Gay and High Streets in West Chester feeds thin-crust goodness (well, there's a Sicilian option, too) to local college students (there's a Ram Runner with BBQ chicken and ranch dressing),

borough workers and residents who hope there's no wind when they walk out with a very big box. Now that there's delivery, you can enjoy the crispy, classic, cheesy, gooey street pizza even if you have a compact car.

PICA'S RESTAURANT

1233 West Chester Pike, West Chester
484-983-3704 / Picas-Restaurant.com

It's hip to be square sang Huey Lewis in a possible theme song for Pica's pizza style. Third generation Pica family members opened a second location in West Chester, and Delco fans who migrated west found the new source of square pizza with sauce on the top, cheese on the bottom. The website for the Upper Darby location still boasts a pic of #1 fan, Tina Fey, while the West Chester site shows the big stone building that has a parking lot filled with converts. So-called upside-down pizzas have a lighter, chewy crust that's crispy throughout. Fresh-tasting, sweet tomato sauce and plenty of classic toppings make for a choice that's uniquely local.

RIZE PIZZA

124 E. Market St., Bldg. A, West Chester
484-473-8924 / RizePizza.com

Another square pie option with a Delco connection (Broomall), is Rize Pizza, which is seeking to elevate pizza with its light, fluffy, yet crispy crust with toasted sesame seeds on the bottom. A self-proclaimed Roman style pizza, the eight-piece Rize pie gets its distinctive crust from dough that rises for three hours. The extensive menu—with round, thin-crust and upside-down options—includes intriguing choices like the Southern Belle (fried chicken), Angry Bird (Cajun chicken), Monte Carlo (ham), Snap Dragon (sausage, long hots) and Venus (veggie, of course).

POP-UP WITH LEGS

THE CREAMERY OF KENNETT SQUARE

401 Birch St., Kennett Square
484-732-7040 / KennettCreamery.com

What started as a pop-up beer garden evolved into a community gathering space, as the Creamery ended its second successful season in October. Crowds continued to be attracted to the funky converted industrial space by the craft beer selection (16 taps, more in cans), casual eats from their kitchen plus a revolving group of food trucks (ribs, brisket, pulled pork, links), and a welcoming space dotted with picnic tables, lawn games and gardens. That families come to sip and visit creates the community vibe. And adding off-season events—the

Mushroom Cap Half-Marathon post-race party in November and the Holiday Village Market in December—extends the fun.

PRE-THEATER / POST-THEATER

SPENCE CAFE

131 N. High St., West Chester
610-918-1272 / *Spence.Cafe*

Spence Cafe has served West Chester diners well. For more than a century, the Spence Cafe—originally an oyster house on Gay Street—catered to the borough's elite. Now in a cozy spot on North High, this reimagined BYOB is down the block from the converted armory, home to the Knauer Performing Arts Center and the Resident Theatre Company, making it the closest spot for pre-theater fare. With its kitchen commanded by Andrew Patten, the menu includes braised short ribs, rack of lamb, filet mignon plus crab cakes, pan roasted halibut and specials. You and the many other diners holding tickets may be tempted to linger, as it's just a short dash to catch the curtain.

HOTEL WARNER

120 N. High St., West Chester
610-692-6920 / *HotelWarner.com*

Though the current Warner Hotel was built in the 1930s Warner Brother's Theater, it has a new theater connection. It's just a short post-theater amble from Knauer Performing Arts Center and a splendid place to dissect the latest production in the Marquee Bar. Hungry? Order from West Chester favorites. Thirsty? Select from a strong beer and wine list, or choose a specialty cocktail—perhaps the French 75 or rye boulevardier.

SEAFOOD SOURCE

HILL'S QUALITY SEAFOOD MARKETS, INC.

Newtown Square, Media, Exton, Glen Mills
610-359-1888, 610-566-3788, 610-594-1290,
610-579-6010 / *HillsQualitySeafood.com*

When it comes to seafood, you want to trust the source—one bad oyster will convince anyone. Maybe a place where you can inspect the seafood before eating it, that doesn't smell fishy, with a reputation dating back to 1975 and that cares about sustainability? Like Hill's Quality Seafood, which displays its fresh fare in pristine cases at its area locations. With a wide variety of fish (arctic char to wahoo, with four kinds of salmon), other seafood (crabs, clams, scallops, oysters, mussels), plus prepared foods (crab cakes get raves), soups (try the classic snapper), dips and side dishes, it's a top choice. So, look your next fish in its clear eye.

SOUL OF THE SOUTH

THE GABLES AT CHADDS FORD

423 Baltimore Pk., Chadds Ford
610-388-7700 / *TheGablesAtChaddsFord.com*

Well, we declare: it sure is nice to have a Yankee menu with Southern charm. After an outing to nearby Brandywine River Museum or Longwood Gardens, stop at this 1800s converted dairy barn for shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, and loaded pimento, crab and artichoke dip. For dessert, choose between Dave's Bourbon Pecan Pie or Ann's Chocolate Banana Cake with bananas foster mousse and caramelized bananas. When the weather's pretty as a peach or even a little nippy, lounge on the front patio (it's got fire pits) or covered stone terrace. In all weather, (Thurs. through Sat.) soak up live piano music in the bar.

SWEET TREAT

GENERAL WARREN

9 Old Lancaster Rd., Malvern
610-296-8084 / *GeneralWarren.com*

Life is indeed sweet when tasting good and doing good meet on the same (dessert) plate. At 2017's Sweet Charity event, a benefit for Chester County Community Foundation, General Warren's Praline Pecan Cheesecake wowed professional judges, capturing "Best Dessert" honors. Created by executive pastry chef Andy Sciarretta and proprietor Patrick Byrne, the cheesecake boasts candied pecan crumble, gluten-free crust and caramel sauce. If you missed Sweet Charity, fear not: this winner is on General Warren's dessert menu. Order away but beware that no amount of sweet talk will get the chefs to divulge the secret ingredient.

STEAKHOUSE

PIETRO'S PRIME STEAKHOUSE AND MARTINI BAR

125 W. Market St., West Chester
484-760-6100 / *PierosPrime.com*

As it marked its 10th anniversary last summer, Pietro's reminded us why we don't need to travel to the city for a great steakhouse experience. Regulars wax poetic about the filet mignon, New York strips and ribeyes. They're equally passionate about seafood appetizers and entrees: colossal crab cocktail, black and white tuna, and seared jumbo scallops. Classic steakhouse sides—creamed spinach, onion ring—also earn compliments. When the lobster mac and cheese is a special

side, it's a special night. "Martini bar" is in the restaurant's name, so what to drink is a foregone conclusion. Live music and outdoor seating in warm weather are two more reasons we're happy this steakhouse is right around the corner.

ALL YOU CAN EAT SUSHI

LILY ASIAN CUISINE

104 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-925-3700 / *LilySushiAndGrill.com*

TGITu is an acronym dear to the heart of local sushi fans. Tuesdays at Lily's mean lunch and dinner guests pay one price, and order to their tastebuds' content from the All You Can Eat sushi menu ... which includes so much more than sushi. Popular appetizers are chili garlic edamame, crab Rangoon and teriyaki steak. The impressive variety of raw and non-raw sushi and rolls guarantees that eel, salmon and tuna lovers can happily break rice together. All-you-can-eat dinners also include entrées—bang bang shrimp, orange chicken, Chilean sea bass. Our sage advice: get there early or make reservations, and if you like your sushi with sake or saporro, BYOB.

SWARTHMORE CELEBRATION

BROAD TABLE TAVERN

10 S. Chester Rd., Swarthmore
610-543-7500 / *TheInnAtSwat.com*
Broad-Table-Tavern/About

It's high time Swarthmore College got a good restaurant. Intimate, quiet, artful, with happy, conversant servers, the Broad Table Tavern is right on campus, popular with parents visiting their brainy offsprings. Chef Keith Ahern works wonders, from grilled octopus to Greek salad to vegetarian "Impossible Burger." Appetizers include a risotto whip with honey and fruit, crispy and lightly fried broccoli and radishes, and a veggie flatbread with or without bacon. All outstanding, farm-to-table, exquisitely prepared. Note the enviable list of beers, wines and cocktails. Follow the wine list to the bottom: Dom Perignon goes for \$290 a pop. Parents can celebrate the end of paying tuition.

TAILGATE

BRANDYWINE POLO CLUB

232 Polo Rd., Kennett Square
610-268-8692 / *BrandywinePolo.com*

Chester County tailgating is worlds away from the experience in the Linc parking

lot. Here, tables are set with flowers and silver for guests wearing bright colors beyond dark green. And tailgating at Brandywine Polo Club offers extra panache for spectators watching the sport of kings. Sip champagne and cocktails, often from crystal and never from cans, as you replay the scene from *Pretty Woman* (wear polka dots and a big hat). Park by the field to tailgate from your car, an easy walk to the mid-match divot stomping, when spectators mingle, sip champagne and help replace turf kicked up by the ponies. Just beware the steaming divots!

TEA WITH HISTORY

THE LINCOLN ROOM

28 W. Market St., West Chester
610-304-9576 / *on Facebook*

According to legend, tea's invention dates back to 2737 B.C., when leaves blew into the boiling water of a Chinese emperor who liked the taste and restorative powers of the brew. Some years later, tea's history connected with Boston Harbor in the 18th century. In West Chester, tea with history abounds in the charming Lincoln Room tearoom, in the 1833 Lincoln Building, notable for sightings of horse thief John Tully's ghost and site of the publication of the first biography of Abraham Lincoln. Try the shared Tea for Two, with special teas, tea sandwiches and desserts, or enjoy quiche, scones, signature croissant bread pudding and other treats while learning more about this piece of history.

THE SPOT TO BE

STEEL CITY COFFEEHOUSE

203 Bridge St., Phoenixville
484-924-8425 / *SteelCityCoffeeHouse.com*

It was music to everyone's ears when Steel City was saved in 2016 by new owners, Laura Vernola and Ed Simpson. This coffeehouse/music venue/community spot has it all: great food, concerts and open mic (musicians, poets, performers), story time, pop-up holiday bookshop. Come for Hobo Ed's coffee, a Breakfast Bowl, flatbreads or artisanal ice cream (blackberry sage with lychee). Support local and the rebirth of this community hub.

VEGGIE OPTIONS

GREYHOUND CAFE

81 Lancaster Ave., Malvern
610-240-0222 / *TheGreyHoundCafe.com*

TASTE

236 Bridge St., Phoenixville
484-924-9530 / *SandCastleWinery.com*
Taste-Phoenixville

I'm not a vegan but that was delicious!" That's the line we're hearing from omnivores wowed by Malvern's Greyhound Cafe and Phoenixville's Taste. Since they debuted in 2017, the two restaurants have proven vegan food can be flavorful and filling—in an umami-protein not just leafy-green kind of way. A welcoming BYOB, Greyhound serves Italian and Texican dishes as well as a range of starters, pizzas, sandwiches, salads and desserts. Buffalo chicken wings, Smokey Craig's Ba Be Que, Rigatoni and Sausage Fra Diablo earn high praise as does weekend brunch.

Taste began life as Sand Castle Winery's retail store, but last spring, it was re-conceptualized as a chic, chill restaurant-bar. Meat-free meats from renowned Herbivorous Butcher shine in dishes such as blackened ribeye steak, huli huli rib sliders and Korean bbq wraps. To drink: Pennsylvania spirits and brews and Sand Castle wines, of course.

GAME DAY WINGS

P.J. WHELIHANS

12 General Warren Blvd., Malvern
610-981-4600 / *PjsPub.com*
Other area locations

With its newest location in our area, PJ's recently opened in Malvern, adding to 14 others and a food truck. Roomy and cavernous, there are 48 taps and more than 50 TV screens for sports fans. And wings! With 12 kinds of sauces—Hot'n Honey, Sweet Chili, Kickin' Korean, Garlic Parm, Ghost Pepper, for example. You'll have a hard time choosing. If wings don't satisfy, try juicy burgers, signature sandwiches, various entrees and all kinds of stuff to eat with your fingers. Is there a better place to watch the Eagles fly?

WISH FOR 2018

WYEBROOK FARM

150 Wyebrook Rd., Honey Brook
610-942-7481 / *WyebrookFarm.com*

Our fingers are crossed that Wyebrook's doors will swing open again, after the restaurant, butcher shop and market on the 360-acre farm closed in December to resolve zoning and infrastructure issues. Since 2012, Wyebrook continuously redefined "sustainable" and "farm-to-table" through imaginative cuisine and hands-on classes. We'll never forget our first (and last?) butchering class and sampling pork pate, local cheese and

chocolate boudino with new friends. We'll also remember its community spirit, from an Oktoberfest fundraiser for West Nantmeal Historical Commission to a fried chicken benefit for Chester County Food Bank. While Wyebrook meats are still at Reading Terminal Market, we're waiting for the day we can pick them up in the 18th-century stone barn at the end of a country road.

LOCAL COOKBOOK

THE DINNER PLAN

Getting dinner on the table shouldn't be a monumental task ... but sometimes it just is. That's why we're huge fans of *The Dinner Plan* co-authored by Hockessin resident Kathy Brennan and Caroline Campion. The 135 simple dishes call for ingredients found in your grocery store (no juniper berries). Recipes have color-coded tabs so it's a snap to find "make ahead/one-dish" or "pantry/extra-fast" options. Some favorites: Mexican Skillet Lasagna, Go-to Scalloped Potatoes, Fast Bolognese and Lemony Quinoa with Add-ins. Scattered throughout are tips on worthwhile kitchen gadgets and easy ways to give dishes extra zing. Like their first book, *Keepers*, this is one, too.

FOODIE CLASSES

COLLIER'S OF CENTREVILLE

5810 Kennett Pk., Centreville
302-656-3542 / *ColliersWine.com*

Interested in getting schooled on all things wine? Then head for Collier's. The charming, intimate Centreville shop's second floor is where on-site classes are held, but the accommodating cellar mistress and owner, Linda Collier, will also arrange classes in your home or office—perfect for team building and *way* better than ropes courses. A master's class of topics, with titles like Big, Bold Beauties (no wimpy wines need apply), Bubbles from Around the World, and Wines of Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Bulgaria—who knew?) show Collier's broad knowledge. And there's humor: who else would post wine pairings for Halloween candy and fried chicken? ♦

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