



Why We Love LOCAL DINING

Each year we celebrate our “Best of the Best” picks for local dining. We review new restaurants that have joined our rich collection of dining options. We savor special culinary experiences of the past year and share what we’ve discovered.

But this past year was different. The word unprecedented doesn’t capture the dramatic impact the pandemic has had on our local dining scene—the changing conditions, regulations and closings.

Yet our area restaurants have amazingly soldiered on—pivoting, adapting, dealing.

So we’ve pivoted, too. Rather than our annual “Best of the Best” list, we’re highlighting why we love our local dining scene, remembering what each place adds to our community.

We hope these early valentines to some of our favorites will remind you why we have to support the places where we gather to celebrate and share a meal with family and friends.

And so we urge you to make takeout a regular part of your life and to do what you can to make sure local dining survives and thrives once again.



Le Cavalier at the Green Room



Media's Towne House



Rosalie

NEW PLACES TO LOVE

Le Cavalier at the Green Room

42 W. 11th St., Wilmington
302-594-3154 / LeCavalierDe.com

Likely the most anticipated restaurant opening in 2020 was from a chef with Wilmington roots, Chef Tyler Akins' (Stock, Res Ipsa, Zahav) neo-French brasserie in the Hotel DuPont. Mixing the best of the landmark space with new life for a refined yet welcoming feel, Le Cavalier (meaning horseman) serves up modern (unstuffy) French food with North African influences—branzino with blistered herbs, harissa, pistachio dukkah, plus tagine, steak frites and a house burger with dijon-aise. The familiar oak paneling and chandeliers are there, along with velvet banquettes and globes on the lighting fixtures creating a place for dining more often than just anniversaries. A fresh new era for the esteemed Green Room and a new place to love.

Media's Towne House

177 Veterans Sq., Media
610-566-6141 / [Facebook.com/MediaTowneHouse](https://www.facebook.com/MediaTowneHouse)

Happily, memories created in the iconic, block-long D'Ignazio's Towne House in Everybody's Hometown can find new life in this reincarnation as Media's Towne House. D'Ignazio's closed in 2015, but this long-awaited update that respects the sense of place and memories was, well, worth the wait. Since the November opening, diners have been generous in their praise of the five dining spaces, particularly the outdoor courtyard (the IdleWild) and the cozy pub (Shebeen—Irish for illicit bar). The upscale Colony Cocktail Club sports green banquettes and I.M. Pei-designed chandeliers. Pick your preferred ambiance and sip an Irish coffee or tuck into Guinness short ribs, shepherd's pie or fish and chips. A place for new memories for decades to come.

Rosalie

Wayne Hotel, 139 E. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-977-0600 / RosalieWayne.com

Many thanks to Marty Grims, of Fearless Restaurant Group, for transforming the former Paramour space in the landmark Wayne Hotel into the stunning new Rosalie. Similar to Autograph and White Dog (more Grims creations), each room creates a unique ambiance for enjoying impeccable service and wonderful food, here, Italian soul food from Chef Merick Devine. The inviting wrap-around porch, attractive bar with custom mural, private dining rooms, redone lounge in the hotel lobby join to make it difficult to choose where to dine. Sample snacks for the table (speck pizza gets raves), any kind of pasta (chitarra made using guitar strings, or simple squash and sage ravioli), or popular branzino. Takeout is available, but you'd miss half the pleasure. So great to have these special spaces preserved.

Avlos Greek Cuisine

258 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-455-4110 / AvlosGr.com

A taste of Greece arrived in Phoenixville, and what a flavorful taste this new-ish restaurant brought to the former Majolica space. Initially opening in early 2020, only to have to close in mid-March, the BYOB reopened for takeout in May, later adding popular outdoor dining on Bridge Street. Its authentic cooking caught the eye of restaurant critic Craig LaBan who dubbed it a top outdoor dining spot. You'll find a mix of the usual favorites—grape leaves, spanakopita, moussaka—plus authentic takes on lamb dishes, octopus and grilled vegetables with plenty of EVOO. Here's hoping the Skartsilas sisters, the owners, keep the kitchen buzzing as long as Chef Andrew Deery did.

Bloom Southern Kitchen/ Eagle Tavern

123 Pottstown Pk., Chester Springs
484-359-4144 / BloomSouthernKitchen.com

Southern cooking offers much-needed, soul-satisfying comfort food, so we were thrilled when Bloom Southern Kitchen opened in the historic Eagle Tavern (original liquor license dated 1727). The eagle is still on the façade, along with hand-painted flowers (in bloom), and the interior got spruced up, too. Maybe the best news is former Funky Lil' Kitchen's chef, Michael Falcone, heads the kitchen. Savor spicy deviled eggs, pimento cheese balls, hush puppies, buttermilk

biscuits, along with fried green tomato BLTs, chicken fried steak, fried shrimp po' boy Andouille. A strong whiskey and bourbon list (Blanton's, Widow Jane, Angels Envy, plus local Manatawny) and cocktails add to the hospitality. The eagle has landed with a great new home.

La Tartine

109 W. Gay St., West Chester
484-288-2044 / LaTartineWC.com

Among several new restaurants slated for West Chester in 2020, only a few had the moxie to open their doors. La Tartine, a modern Mediterranean café concept, opened in early May, offering Med specialties, along with crepes, juices and smoothies. The light, healthy fare, with gluten-free and vegan options, was welcomed by locals, many enjoying meals in the open-air marketplace along Gay Street. From Lebanese meat pie (kibbeh), tabbouleh, falafels, shawarma to savory crepes, Capreses panini, açai bowls and organic lavender lemonade, the menu grew. We hope its following grows as well.

Mae's West Chester

39 W. Gay St., West Chester
484-887-0062 / MaeWC.com

Chef/owner Josh Taggart brought 25 years of experience at a raft of award-winning restaurants (Lacroix to Dilworthtown Inn) when he achieved his dream of opening his own place, a gem of a farm-to-table BYOB on Mother's Day 2020. There's a warm, inviting vibe along

with seasonal menus for brunch, lunch, dinner, takeout, family meals and catering. Family takeout meals, which sell out, range from balsamic glazed pork tenderloin to meatloaf to taco kits. Similarly the chef has fun with catering menus—Taste of Italy, Philly Special, Backyard BBQ and Street Taco options. There are pop up shops, diners at SIW Vegetables and good causes. West Chester welcomes its newest chef-driven-and-owned restaurant.

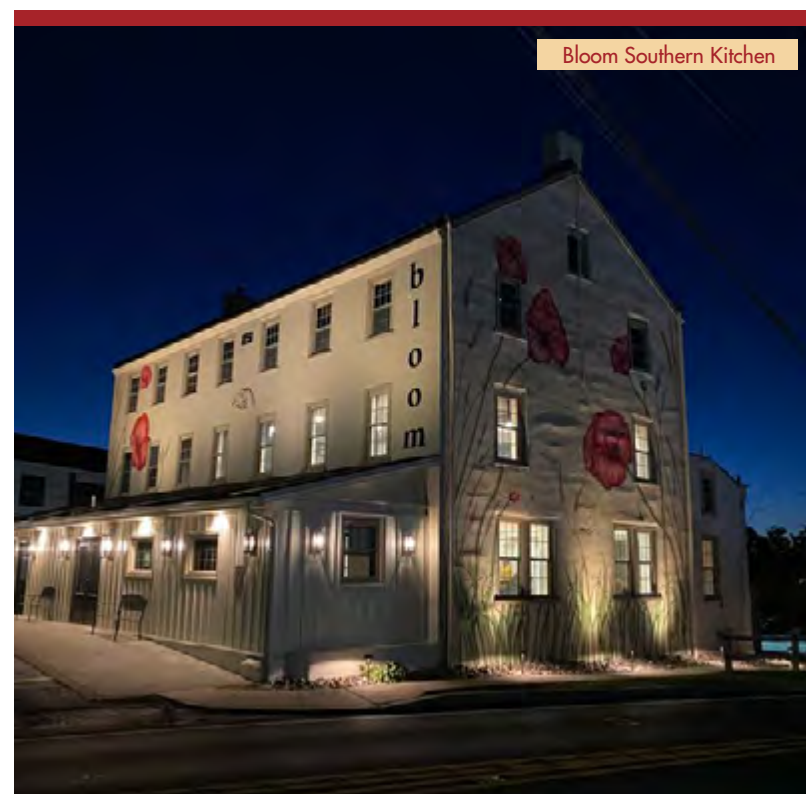
DRINKS, SWEETS & OTHER

PURVEYORS TO LOVE

Baba's Brew Kombucha

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

Luckily our area is home to an early farm-to-bottle kombucha brewer, Olga Sorzano, who learned from her Siberian-born baba. Although more brands are available now, we've seen the brightly colored bottles—Purple Rain, Flower Power, Bee's Knees and more—with the friendly squirrel since 2015. A slightly fizzy drink of fermented tea with a strange floating "mushroom" (scoby), kombucha is rich in probiotics, live enzymes and antioxidants. Hand crafted in small batches, Baba's Brew uses fair trade and seasonal organic ingredients, though Olga says you can add vodka. Widely available, at Mom's Organics, Whole Foods, Wegmans ... and soon when life improves, back in the Phoenixville tasting room.



Bloom Southern Kitchen



Mae's West Chester

Galer Estates Vineyard & Winery

700 Folly Hill Rd., Kennett Square
484-899-8013 / GalerEstate.com

Artful wines, tasting rooms and countryside views have made Galer Estates Vineyard and Winery a pleasure for palates and eyes for more than a decade. Many have toasted milestone occasions with award-winning rosé under barnwood beams by the marble bar and next to glorious stained glass in the main tasting room. Under enchanting lighting you can wander to the intimate Red Lion Tasting Room to share dreams and lovely glasses of cabernet franc and chardonnay with friends near the stone hearth. On the deck, breathe in the aromas of Huntress Red and the breeze while watching the vines grow in neat rows. A special piece of paradise.

Va La Vineyards

8820 Gap Newport Pk., Avondale
610-268-2702 / VaLaVineyards.com

The first time we set foot in the stone barn's tasting room, we knew we'd found a favorite. Va La captured our love of stories, charm and superb wine. One of its stories of origin—of an older Italian gentleman shaking his head over the craziness of growing grapes in Avondale ... then watching accolades for the wine roll in—tickled us. Visit and sip wine on golden afternoons while watching planes loop-de-loop over the nearby airfield. Chat at the bar and linger on the deck by the vines. The tastings here are perfection—amber Zaffarano with local goat cheese and honey and deep red Silk with Neuchatel truffles. We'll be back. We hope you will, too. Meanwhile, enjoy their Barn Door Pick Ups.

Colliers in Centreville

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

After our first visit to Colliers in Centreville, we learned not to plan our wine around dinner, but vice versa. Tastings in the quirky, bottle-filled shop and conversations with the cellar mistress about pairings led to late night Italian pasta and poached pears with sweetened mascarpone to accompany Italian Brunello and Super Tuscans. French Côtes du Rhône inspired hors d'oeuvres of buttery cheeses with a hint of truffle, earthy olives and desserts of fresh wineberry crepes. German Rieslings called for spring asparagus with Hollandaise. Try something new, she'd say, and we'd leave with Malbec from Argentina, bubbly from South Africa and an appetite for adventure. A place for life lessons about the wonderful world of wines for almost 40 years.

The Creamery

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

From 20th-century milk company to pop-up beer garden in 2016 to community gathering space since 2018, The Creamery had reclaimed and repurposed a part of Kennett Square and continues to evolve. Until recent restrictions limited activities, The Creamery has served up a full line of craft beers (local and more), good food and good times. Relying initially on food trucks, they built a kitchen and catering operation to supplement the beer and wine offered. Music and ax throwing were added (though axes were axed) and the grounds hosted community events like the weekly farmers market and annual Holiday Village Market. We can't wait for crowds of friends to gather again at this welcoming place.

Dia Doce

100 S. High St., West Chester
610-476-5684 / DiaDoce.com

On the southwest corner of Miner and South High Streets, patrons have lined up outside

Dia Doce's window (a concession to changing times). They are patient, so far. Inside the window, Thais da Silva Viggue and her staff assemble boxes of delectable, natural cupcakes, made from scratch every day using local and seasonal ingredients. Dia Doce offers more than 100 varieties—Black Magic, White Velvet, Simply Red, Salted Caramel, Strawberries and Cream are among her classics—plus gluten-free and vegan cupcakes on special order as well as some free delivery. In 2012 Thais won the Food Network's "Cupcake Wars." Later, she was #1 on the Philly HotList. We can't wait to see (and taste) what she does next.

Eclat Chocolate

24 S. High St., West Chester
610-692-5206 / EclatChocolate.com

For 14 years, Master Chocolatier Christopher Curtin honed his skills in Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany and Japan. He was honored in Cologne, Germany as a Master Pastry Chef and Chocolatier. His chocolates were acclaimed as the "best in America" by *Bon Appetit Magazine*, his caramels as the "world's greatest" by *Vogue*. His gourmet customers—for his chocolates, chocolate bars, truffles, mendiants, mondiants, caramels—are international. But West Chester, where Curtin has been since 2005, is his base, and his factory, near Henderson High School, is where the magic happens. All to enjoy in our own backyard.

La Baguette Magique

202 W. Market St., West Chester
484-947-5024 / Facebook.com/MagicBaguette

The orange awning of authentic French Bakery La Baguette Magique in West Chester beckons. It is as much a symbol of friends—*les amis*—at sidewalk tables or conversing in French while ordering pastries as it is the place we keep returning to for delicious celery silk soup, almond croissants, lavender gelati, heavenly chocolate-cov-



Malvern Buttery



Nomadic Pies

ered cream rolls and magical hot baguettes that give the special shop its name. From *bonjour* to *a bientôt* (see you soon)—and every spoonful of crème brûlée in between—it is our little corner of France and conviviality in Chester County. Plus it sells provisions from Andiamo! How lucky are we?

Malvern Buttery

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

When we heard John and Silenia Rhoads were opening the Buttery in Malvern, we were curious. When we learned their dream was to build a community café for gathering over European baked goods and great American style coffee, we were excited. The long-awaited day when "Opening Soon" signs were removed to allow sunshine to flood the welcoming space with wooden tables and a comfortable sofa holding the day's newspaper, we were delighted. Now—after years of enjoying scones, croissants, fresh breads and butters on wooden boards; big cups brimming with café mocha; salads and bowls filled with root vegetables and eggs—we yearn for more than the current limited takeout and know we'll be back soon and often.

The Master's Baker

319 W. Gay St., West Chester
610-436-9888 / TheMastersBaker.com

If ever there was a cake to behold, it's one from The Master's Baker: the tiered wedding confection decorated with buttercream frosting flower bouquets so lovely the garden daisies turned green with envy. Or the sculpted almond cake for Mother's Day. Definitely the pink champagne cake adorned with butterflies that turned the rough week into a magical weekend. The icing on the cake was beyond the icing that first met the eye—the inside filling: satiny espresso buttercream in

the top tier, chocolate ganache layered into the almond, and pink champagne buttercream for the pink champagne cake and weekend. Always magnificent and a local treasure for 50 years, with pick-up and bake-at-home offerings.

Michoacana Ice Cream

231 E. State St. Kennett Square
610-444-2996 / Facebook.com/LaMichoacanaKsq

Summer wouldn't be summer without Michoacana. On steamy afternoons or just after sundown, head to the bustling little shop in Kennett Square and sample ice cream with abandon—avocado, corn, guava, coffee, chocolate, vanilla, mint chip, cookies and cream. Then make your choices and continue the adventure by sprinkling cinnamon or chili on top of the scoops. Next stroll through town with cups or sit on the sidewalk bench to people-watch as neighbors line up for their treats as you lick your cones so you won't miss a dribble or drop. Summertime dreams in a cone. And they can't come back soon enough.

Nomadic Pies

132 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-563-9686 / NomadicPies.com

Since 2012 from a food truck, then in 2015 also from a storefront in Kennett Square, Molly Johnston has been preparing sweet pies (blueberry, peach raspberry, lime custard), savory pies (steak and gruyere, red Thai curry, bison chili) and quiches (chorizo, sweet corn, tomato and cheddar or prosciutto, asparagus and Parmesan)—the variety is amazing. She bakes large and small pies, all fresh, from scratch and sets her offerings weekly (check Facebook), limiting the flavors to what's locally available: apple pie, only in the autumn, strawberry only in season. A half-hour to an hour in the oven, you'll have a little bit of heaven to enjoy. Let's support our local pie-maker!



The Master's Baker

Carlino's Market

128 W. Market St., West Chester
610-649-4046 / CarlinosMarket.com

Whether your family totals a baker's dozen or just two including the dog, Carlino's has always welcomed us to theirs. Homemade olivata on crispy crackers and carefully curated grazing boxes with fine olives and cheeses impress the most discerning palates. Handmade pasta and broccoli rabe please even finicky nieces and nephews. Its fragrant seasonal melt-in-your-mouth panettone—family-made in Italy, then imported—adds a glow to Christmas morning's breakfast, nearly as bright as the tree. With a cup of coffee to go and decadent cupcakes from their bakery case, Carlino's turns every day into a holiday. In-store, curbside, delivery, catering—so many things to love.



Dia Doce



Va La Vineyards



La Baguette Magique

Growing Roots Partners

610-836-1391 / GrowingRootsPartners.com

“Local farms, local food and local fun” says the website for the organizer of five weekly farmers markets (Devon Yards, Downingtown, Eagleview, Malvern, West Reading) and more. Like the Good Food Fest that had been planned for November, showcasing local growers, producers and makers, as well as community events in Malvern (Malvern Blooms and Harvest Oktoberfest) and Eagleview (Crafted and Falling Leaf Fest, featuring young performers), also on hold. Lisa O’Neill, the driving force, kept the farmers markets going and safe—with pre-ordering and other precautions—so we could continue to eat fresh, local food. Lisa’s efforts made for a better community and helped sustain our farmers, food producers, artisans, crafters and others. Hats off to her and to Christy Campoli, who’s taking over now.

Lancaster County Farmers Market

389 Lancaster Ave., Wayne 610-688-9856

LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com

With a name and history dating back to the 1930s before landing at its current Wayne spot, Lancaster County Farmers Market has been bringing the Main Line quality meat and produce from our western neighbor. The Wayne Market, as it’s also called, now offers a wide range of specialized vendors. Find flowers and candy plus Abuelita’s Empanadas and Margaret Kuo’s takeout. Yes, Country Twist makes hand rolled pretzels and party dogs, but there’s also seafood from Main Line Marketplace. Check Sunnyside Pastries for whoopie pies, D’Innocenzo’s Bakery for Stock’s pound cake, and Ultimate Bake Shoppe Wayne for meringues. It’s all there, with curbside pickup and extended hours to keep us well fed on many levels.

Pete’s Produce Farm

1225 E. Street Rd., West Chester

610-399-3711 / PetesProduceFarm.com

From distant memories of hayrides when the kids were tiny to recent memories of juicy local peaches hiding under peaks of cream whipped with honey from the farm’s busy bees, visiting Pete’s Produce is to step into history and come a little closer to the land and sky. Brilliant seasonal colors draw us to the farm every year: early purple pansies, yellow sunflowers, pumpkins of glowing orange and ghostly white, scarlet and gold tomatoes, green watermelons waiting to be scooped up for summer picnics. Meals of corn and beans harvested that morning, at tables graced with bouquets from the field, fill body and soul with abundance. Our own cornucopia of local goodness, opening again with all its bounty in the spring.

SIW Vegetables at Hill Grit Farm

4317 S. Creek Rd., Chadds Ford

610-388-7491 / SIW-Vegetables.BlogSpot.com

Family farms that reinvent themselves deserve our support, and here’s one that keeps finding new lives—including being a location for an M. Night Shyamalan movie. It’s evolved from dairy farm to vegetable farm cultivating 50 acres with 50 types of veggies and hundreds of varieties, including 85 heirloom tomatoes, all sold at the farm stand, farmers markets and wholesale to restaurants. Plus the famous Field-to-Fork summer dinners cooked on site by notable local chefs (Jeffrey Miller, Dan Butler and Josh Taggart of Mae’s West Chester) who soldiered on during 2020. Add in weekly Farm Stand dinners for pickup, CSA shares and events held in the barn dating to the 1660s. So many reasons to love what they do.

West Chester Cooperative

Info@WestChester.coop / WestChester.Coop

We love that our local sustainable food population has grown to the point of sustaining its own food co-op in West Chester. Years in the works, the co-op now has a physical home on East Market Street with almost 400 member/owners, making it the only grocery store in walking distance in the borough—a boon to long-time residents and WCU students alike. The pilot GoBox program (open to non-members and highlighting the co-op’s diverse offerings) was a hit, as were specials like organic chestnuts sold for holiday stuffing and roasting on an open fire. Look for the CSA’s fresh produce, educational programs, cooking classes and more. Here’s hoping they continue to grow in every way.

EVENTS TO LOVE

Kennett Chocolate Lovers Festival

Unionville High School

750 Unionville Rd., Kennett Square

KennettChocolate.org

Chocolate lovers are a special breed, willing to go to great lengths to satisfy their passion. So it’s no surprise that this annual, often sold-out fundraiser for the United Way of Southern Chester County has continued to grow, attracting fans of chocolate in all its forms for a family-friendly day of sampling hundreds of chocolate treats—cakes, candies, cookies, cupcakes and brownies, oh my! Held in January 2020 (stay tuned for plans for 2021), there were treats prepared by professional, amateur and student bakers. Join in for more fun with smaller Evenings of Wine and Chocolate fundraisers at private homes and a year-long Year of Living Chocolate raffle with winners getting a different chocolate treat every month!

Sweet Charity/ CCCF

26 W. Market St., West Chester

610-696-8211 / Chescof.org

“Giving never tasted so good” is the perfect tagline for this dessert-centric fundraiser for Chester County Community Foundation. For years this annual event—one of our favorites—assembled the best bakers and dessert chefs—The Master’s Baker, General Warren, Cakes & Candies by Maryellen—to wow sweets-lovers and do-gooders at a meet and mingle. Although the late-March 2020 event was cancelled, plan on a two-part, month-long 2021 program called Food for Thought. Weekly Zoom panels on food safety, food security and more combine with desserts. Join the dessert tasting trail planned for the last week of March visiting local spots offering specialty treats to support good causes as you nosh.

Taste of Phoenixville

TasteOfPhoenixville.com

Every January since 2003, about 600 people shook off the chill of winter and gathered for a feast and to support the work of Good Samaritan Services. Recently in Franklin Commons, earlier at the Foundry and the Phoenixville Country Club, the event featured live music, dancing, live and silent auctions, spirits from local breweries, vineyards and distilleries plus food prepared by Phoenixville’s finest restaurants. This year, the fundraiser will be take-out, on Sunday through Thursday, January 17 through 21, featuring a different restaurant each night: Great American Pub, Bistro on Bridge, Molly Maguire’s, Stonehouse Grille and Uncle B’s. Appetizer and cocktail carryout packs, too! A tasty way to show your support for those in need.

West Chester Open-Air Marketplace

DownTownWestChester.com

After years of envying Media’s Dining Under the Stars on warm Wednesday evenings and Kennett’s expanding Dining on State Street, West Chester made some lemonade with pandemic lemons and created an Open-Air Marketplace along four blocks of Gay Street. Both restaurants and local shops brought dining and business out into streets temporarily shut down to traffic. The experiment was so successful, it was extended to the end of November. And we’re rooting for the popular plan to return as soon as weather (and PennDOT) permits!

FOOD TOWNS TO LOVE

WEST CHESTER

Andiario

106 W. Gay St., West Chester

484-887-0919 / Andiario.com

West Chester’s reputation as a dining destination was built in part on the quality of its restaurants, and no new-ish eatery has added as much pizzazz as Andiario. It’s on all the “Best Of” dining lists, including being the only suburban spot on *Philly Mag’s* top 50, and rightly so. The creative use of local ingredients produces an innovative and ever-changing seasonal menu that makes you want to peruse it for the pure pleasure of savoring each dish described. These are the meals you want a master chef to cook for you—no need to make pheasant and wild mushroom tortelloni with brown butter and sage at home. Chef Anthony put his name on his restaurant, and his cooking put it on the area’s culinary map. And it’s right here.

Bar Avalon

116 E. Gay St., West Chester

610-436-4100 / AvalonRestaurant.net

We’ve loved watching whatever Chef John Brandt-Lee was up to—his restaurant on South High Street, experiment in Downingtown, hip Bar Avalon on East Gay Street. Wherever he is, there follows great food and hospitality. So, when he started getting even more creative during recent months, we amped up our applause. Pay It Forward Cards (fundraiser for local schools, plus a surprise for strangers), Pay What You Want Dinners and other fundraisers for Chester County Food Bank, 30 free turkey dinners for deserving families, along with Facebook and TikTok videos of DJ-ing and dancing all capture one of the hardest working restaurateurs in town. He’s a big reason we support independently owned restaurants.

Four Dogs Tavern

1300 W. Strasburg Rd., West Chester

610-692-4367 / TheFourDogsTavern.com

It might be the most historic restaurant in our area. Housed in the 18th-century stables of the Marshallton Inn and once a common stop on the road from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia, the building was converted in 1978, unearthing in the attic a portrait of four dogs by a 19th-century painter.



Sweet Charity CCCF



Andiario



Bar Avalon



Pete’s Produce Farm



Kennett Chocolate Lovers Festival

In 2006, Chef David Cox took over the restaurant, returning from stints at the Waldorf Astoria, Picholine and Artisanal, among others. Dishes such as charred octopus and pumpkin-seeded scallops created a faithful following. By the fireplace in the bar or outside on the patio during warm weather, sometimes with live music, the atmosphere is warm, friendly and always inviting. A special gathering place we dubbed the “best of comfort food and haute cuisine” back in 2007.

Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant

3 W. Gay St., West Chester (20 locations)
610-738-9600 / IronHillBrewery.com

At the corner of Gay and High Streets, Iron Hill is a landmark in West Chester dining, the second of 20 locations (others in Phoenixville, Exton, Media, Delaware, New Jersey and beyond). It’s our go-to place for celebrations, business lunches or just a pleasant meal. For beers, brewed seasonally and in-house, try Pig Iron Porter, Kryptonite Double IPA and Vienna Red Lager. For food, enjoy burgers, sandwiches, pizzas, salads, tacos as well as entrees like Fish and Chips and Chicken & Baby Back Ribs plus ready-to-heat meals. Kevin Finn, one of three founding partners, is a major contributor to the West Chester community. We’ll show our support by going back again and again.

Kildare’s Pub

18 W. Gay St., West Chester
610-431-0770 / KildaresPubWC.com

If you’re in the mood for a taste of Ireland—for Bangers & Mash, Colcannon Soup, Corned Beef & Cabbage, Shepherd’s Pie—and want to down that comfort food with a pint or two of Guinness (or something else from a list of about 50 beers), you’ll do well to stop at Kildare’s. Or for game day or family gatherings during the pandemic, order takeout—baked pretzels, fried pickles, a country fried chicken sandwich—and enjoy football, soccer (the real football) or rugby on your own big TV. When there’s a new normal, Dane, Steph and their staff will take care of you when you return to your favorite stool at the bar.

Limoncello

9 N. Walnut St., West Chester
610-436-6230 / LimoncelloRestaurant.com

Fridays could never come fast enough, especially when it came to end-of-week dinners and drinks at Limoncello. In the heart of West Chester, yet seemingly close to Rome, so many choices to satisfy your cravings. Fresh bruschetta, then a blushing order of penne alla vodka next to flowers at the sidewalk café tables. Maria’s Meatballs or Chicken Limoncello with linguine and delectable asparagus in the dining room. Lip-smacking cocktails—a Limoncello Crush or an Apple and Gin

Autumn with cider, Tanqueray, honey and cinnamon—by the bar. The hubbub of laughter and conversation here always warms the spirit, even if you’re just stopping by for their curbside family dinners.

The Lincoln Room

28 W. Market St., West Chester
610-696-2102 / Facebook.com/The-Lincoln-Room

What a special treat it is to have a tearoom in town. When you crave tea sandwiches served on three-tiered trays or scones with lemon curd, there’s a perfect place to go. Set in the historic Lincoln Building, this spot is a refuge where you can savor a piping hot cup of tea, brewed just for you in a lovely ceramic teapot. Baby showers, birthday parties or lunches with old friends here make lasting memories. Catering, Fondue Fridays and other events increase the reasons to enjoy a very civilized occasion in this special spot.

Lorenzo and Son’s Pizza

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

We celebrated when Lorenzo’s moved into the corner of High and Gay Streets, bringing their gigantic slices and 28-inch pies to West Chester. How great to have a bit of South Philly (established there in 1970) in Chester County. The walk-up take-out window has been busy, along with delivery during recent months. The hours are shorter—fewer folks are looking for a midnight slice after hitting the bars. Pizzas, steaks, hoagies, pressed sandwiches—the simple things we yearn for now more than ever.

Más Mexicali Cantina

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

On a spring or summer day, nothing compares with the view of West Chester from the patio rooftop of Más. Add in one of its margaritas (10 flavors, 3 frozen), some of its homemade chips and guacamole, and you’ve got a perfect afternoon. If you want something stronger and more refined, check out the tequila menu: there must be a hundred, from Clase Azul Plata to Don Julio 70 Crystal. For dinner taste the freshest, best-tasting fajitas, burritos and enchiladas you’ve ever had north of the border—dine in or curbside pickup. For mañana? We note National Margarita Day in February. Start the countdown to Cinco de Mayo!

Mercato Ristorante and Bar

33 W. Market St., West Chester
610-701-6326 / MercatoWC.com

In a town with so many Italian restaurants, was there room for another? You bet. “Born in Italy, served in West Chester” is what Mercato claims and happy diners back that up. Mercato pivoted recently



Limoncello



Mas Mexicali Cantina



Mercato



Pietro's Prime

to offering a specialty menu designed to bring their dining experience to your home, with family-style dinners (three and four courses, Fettuccine Alfredo, Penne Vodka, Spaghetti Marinara and more), Mercato Deluxe Dinners (Orecchiette with cherry tomatoes and asparagus in a blush sauce) and Cocktails To Go (Mercato Mule, Espresso Martini). The already lovely patio with string lights, umbrellas and heaters, expanded to fill the block, offering even more space to enjoy a bite well into fall.

Miss Winnie’s

211 E. Market St., West Chester
484-266-0508 / MissWinnies.com

Miss Winnie’s is a spot of sunshine—great food, incredible prices and rays of Jamaica’s no-worry attitude. Award-winning Chef/owner Bert’s jerk chicken sandwiches with jicama slaw hooked diners at the start. The tangy mango chutney with a little kick reeled fans in time after time. You can eat in, listening to reggae music and sitting next to tributes on the wall to Bob Marley and Miss Winnie—Bert’s mom, whose Jamaican recipes were gold. Or order take-away, although the heavenly fried plantains will likely be devoured before you reach home. To eat here is to be happy. One love!

Pica’s Restaurant

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

Iconic family restaurants add something special to our area, so we were excited when Delco mainstay Pica’s (opened in 1956, after moving from West Philly) came to West Chester in 2017. Yes, there’s a full Italian menu with classic apps, pastas and specialties, but it’s the square pies with the cheese on the bottom, sauce on the top served up by three generations that built the legend. Tina Fey fed that legend when she shared slices with Jimmy Fallon on TV in 2014. In 2020 a new audience was introduced to the pizza when Barstool Sports president David Portnoy gave his one-bite pizza review—with a respectable 7.8 rating. Yep, it’s on most pizza life lists, and you can check it off.

Pietro’s Prime

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

We’ve searched some far-off places for the ideal steakhouse—Kansas City, Fort Worth, Buenos Aires to name a few. But none was better than Pietro’s right here in downtown West Chester. With low-light setting the mood, an ice-cold Bombay martini to sip, after a luscious appetizer of lump crab, the bone-in ribeye is presented, seared on the outside, pink inside. It is succulent, juicy, magnificent. Founded by Marisa

Giunta—great-granddaughter of Pietro—who works alongside Sean Powell, the Executive Chef, Pietro’s offers date-night level dining, even with take out. Plus serving the community for 80 years.

Roots Café

133 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-455-0100 / RootsCafeWC.com

After sleeping late on Saturdays, wander into West Chester and Roots Café where a delicious brunch is always on the menu. Eggs Benedict—with creative, seasonal twists of lox and spring greens or fall sweet potato rosti and avocado salad—and mimosas stretch a lazy morning past noon. Whether you relax indoors at a homey wooden table next to a painting by Chester County artist John Hannafin or at an outdoor table by herbs growing in the sunshine, the stacked Roots burger or salads of fresh local vegetables and greens were worth lingering over. And another reason to love dining in the Borough.

Spence Café

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

The full name of The Original Spence Café and the fish on the sign hint at the history behind this charming BYOB now on North High Street. There were other versions, but always with a strong seafood selection and mastery in the kitchen under Chef Andrew Patten. The New American menu lets you choose soul-satisfying options like short ribs or heart-healthy seafood, all prepared to let the ingredients shine. During the pandemic, only dinner is available with catering coming soon and special weekly curbside menu offering several options—often including their beloved crabcakes. Enjoy the seafood, even if it’s not Friday.

Teca

38 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-738-8244 / TecaRestaurants.com

Roberto Guadagni has been welcoming you since 2002 to Teca. We might have gone just for its renowned wine list. Fancy a bottle of Chateau Cheval Blanc? It’s \$2900. More affordable? The Tenuta Casali di Bibbiano, made in the Tuscan vineyard of Roberto’s dad, Alberto. For now, we focus on the food. Some Langostini Grigliate (grilled prawns), Rollatini di Melanzana (eggplant, spinach and cheese) or Linguine Allo Scoglio (mussels, clams, calamari, shrimp and spicy San Marzano sauce). Half-way through the menu, we realize that we better practice our Italian. One thing is certain: we are well past spaghetti and meatballs. And with another location in Newtown Square, we have double the love.

KENNETT SQUARE & CHADDS FORD

The Gables at Chadds Ford

423 Baltimore Pk., Chadds Ford

610-388-7700 / TheGablesatChaddsFord.com

Enjoy history mixed in with hospitality? Then The Gables is your kind of place. Dating back to the 1740s, with years as a dairy barn, the property feels like it's always been part of the Brandywine Valley scene. The main building is welcoming, with a cozy bar accented with comfy banquettes and a piano, wood-beamed dining room with fireplace, sun-filled event rooms. Plus the stone-walled patio, seasonal beer garden, fire pits and lush grounds. Ann Kolenick's Southern roots are reflected in the fresh American dishes (shrimp & grits, fried green tomatoes) and her mastery of chocolate in the award-winning desserts (chocolate espresso cake and Bourbon Street chocolate banana cake). Eating here is satisfying on so many levels.

Hank's Place

1625 Creek Rd., Chadds Ford

610-388-7061 / HanksPlaceChaddsFord.com

On your way to or from Longwood Gardens or the Brandywine River Museum, stop at Hank's Place and eat at Andrew Wyeth's favorite restaurant, a 70-year-old neighborhood favorite. Enjoy a Kennett Square Mushroom Omelet or Hank's Breakfast Sub, with fried eggs, cheese, Lancaster ham, sausage and bacon. Though not a Greek restaurant, Hank's added Greek specialties to the menu (gyro, spanakopita, Greek frittata, Greek salad) under former owners Peter and Skoula Skiadas. Current owners, Anthony and Katie Young, who bought it in 2017, planned to change nothing. To date, except for adding outdoor tents plus other pandemic precautions and more take-out options, they haven't, leaving this community favorite intact.

La Verona

114 E. State St., Kennett Square

610-444-2244 / LaVeronaPa.com

When we yearn for authentic Italian cooking—cucina classica, with a mix of fine dining and warm hospitality—we head for La Verona. There, owners Jack and Sam Mavraj make sure each meal is memorable as they take care of every detail, fulfilling their motto, "Let us spoil you." Inspired northern Italian cooking produces veal chop artichoke mushroom demi glaze spe-

cials, house-made braised short rib ravioli and so much more. A Trip Advisor Favorite and member of the Kennett Business Hall of Fame, La Verona kept State Street outdoor tables full well into the fall. Plus take out and inside dining options to satisfy everyone through the long winter.

Lily Asian Cuisine Sushi & Grill

104 W. State St., Kennett Square

610-925-3700 / LilySushiAndGrill.com

Our vote for a place to find the best sushi and sashimi has long gone to Lily's. The husband/wife team of Tony Liu and Suki Li make sure the seafood is consistently fresh and expertly prepared. We judge sushi/sashimi partially by the presentation and the work at Lily's is a joy to the eyes as well as the palate—Angry Dragon Roll, Kiss of Fire Roll, One Night Stand Roll On Tuesdays, after the pandemic ends, we'll once again get all-we-can-eat sushi. And visit the planned second location on Route 1, scheduled to open spring of 2021.

Sovana Bistro

696 Unionville Rd., Kennett Square

610-444-5600 / Facebook.com/SovanaBistro

Sovana 2.0 and #sovanastrong are the bywords as this beloved upscale bistro with its farm-fresh, French/Med menu rebuilds after the devastating fire in early January 2020. Luckily no one was hurt by the fire, and the outpouring of community support helped the displaced staff during the early months. Then came the pandemic. Yet rebuilding continued. A GoFundMe campaign, virtual wine tastings and cocktail kits keep the spirit of Sovana going, reminding fans of the past 22 years of craft cocktails, strong wine list, house-made pastas and wood fired pizzas. A place serving up tuna and beet tartare with equal panache. Can't wait to see the reboot, scheduled for early 2021.

Talula's Table

102 W. State St., Kennett Square

610-444-8255 / TalulasTable.com

We still remember a day one November making a reservation for the Farm Table ... then showing up for dinner one year later. Long known as the toughest reservation in the country, that was how it's done. The wait seemed interminable, until we savored eight flawless courses of a seasonal menu—salmon, cheeses, sourdough, squash, mushrooms, beef, chocolate merengue—from local sources, paired with our BYOB wines from Collier's. The Farm Table and the small Nook Table continue to preserve the tradition under Chef Dylan Sweeney. These days,

it's possible to get an occasional reservation sooner for a singular dining experience at the table or to shop any day at the gourmet market or order gourmet dinners to go.

Verbena BYOB

102 State St., Kennett Square

484-732-7932 / VerbenaBYOB.com

Verbena is a culinary love letter sent on Valentine's Day. The restaurant opened on that special day in 2018—the chart of the stars from that night hangs on the wall later signifying its connection to anniversaries and love. From spectacular, creative soups—apple one year and sweet potato the next—to salads of greens with avocado puree, then filets of salmon or beef, and finishing touches of mille feuille of pastry layered with blackberries and tea-whipped Chantilly cream, the tastes are always memorable, even in the takeout meals they now offer. Intimate candlelit tables and food presentation are as pretty as the purple flower that symbolizes romance and gave the restaurant its name: Verbena. A star in Kennett.

PHOENIXVILLE

Bistro on Bridge

212 Bridge St., Phoenixville

610-935-7141 / BistroOnBridge.com

In Phoenixville, one of the best places to hang is Bistro on Bridge. It's casual, relaxed, on two floors, with high-top tables, a surprisingly diverse bar, and satisfying menu. Beer lovers enjoy 24 taps, plus more choices in bottles and cans. The food menu mixes classic and creative. For apps there are eight flavors of wings, duck nachos, or risotto balls with pesto aioli along with more substantial "Bistro Bowls," including a Vietnamese- and Mexican-inspired version. Like Bistro on Bridge? Try Bistro Dos. It's down the street, offering Latin-inspired food along with a wide selection of tequilas and mezcal. Double your pleasure.

Great American Pub

148 Bridge St., Phoenixville

610-917-3333 / TheGreatAmericanPub.com

The third location, after Conshohocken and Wayne, of the Great American Pub is in Phoenixville. The historic building there offers several dining areas including our favorite in fair weather, the patio, which recently transformed into a tented space with heaters. Enjoy simple, always excellent, very All-American food. The starter menu includes cheesesteak spring rolls, brisket fries and much more. For salads, choose

a Palm Beach or Blackened Shrimp and Salmon Caesar. Try wood-fired pizzas and fajitas or an Impossible Burger. You can even get gluten-free pasta. Mexican, Italian, Asian, Cajun, Vegan, Western ... America, after all, is a diverse country.

Kimberton Inn

2105 Kimberton Rd., Kimberton

610-933-8148 / KimbertonInn.com

The rustic elegance of the Kimberton Inn found new levels when it recently added curbside pickup and creek-side dining, complete with nature's soundtrack and views of the red bridge. The pleasures of patio dining and meals inside this 200-year-old former inn remained, though with distance. Ambiance and service continue to get as many raves as the signature dish: "Probably the Best Salad You'll Ever Have," with greens, apples, toasted sunflower seeds, aged gouda, sweet sesame walnut dressing. Chef Tom Wolter, who took the helm in 2018, gets high marks for his way with seafood (think moist, flaky sautéed halibut with lemon thyme cream) as well as his duck, lamb and filet mignon. And then there's the key lime pie

Steel City Coffeehouse & Brewery

203 Bridge St., Phoenixville

484-924-8425 / SteelCityCoffeehouse.com

Was it the coffee and pastries, music on the stage, art on the walls or word on the street that Steel City Coffeehouse was the best place to meet on Bridge that first drew us there? Or news that there were food and beverage options for everyone—vegetarian, lactose- or gluten-intolerant included? It's hard to remember, but two things are certain. One: its community feel at the heart of Phoenixville and behind its soul brought us back. Two: their Oreo cookie bomb—the iconic sandwich cookie baked into the middle of a big chocolate chip cookie—stole our hearts and tastebuds forever. We know we'll need both in 2021!

MEDIA

Azie Media

217 W. State St., Media

610-566-4750 / Azie-Restaurant.com

Azie Media is ... unexpected. One moment you're on State Street in Media, and the next it's LA meets Tokyo. Very chic. The restaurant serves beautiful sushi, sashimi and nigiri, plus more creative Asian fusion fare. From the bar, order premium sakes, Asian beers, champagnes, wine or from the seasonal craft cocktail list. Visit or order takeout from the sister restaurants: Azie Main Line in Villanova, Teikoku in Newtown Square, and



The Gables at Chadds Ford



La Verona



Verbena BYOB



Kimberton Inn



Azie Media



General Warren



Autograph Brasserie

Mikado Thai Pepper in Ardmore for more variety. Can't decide what to order? The Azie roll never disappoints—spicy tuna, tempura crunch, avocado, samurai eel sauce. Pleasure in a roll.

Desert Rose

305 W. State St., Media
484-442-8012 / DesertRoseMediaPA.com

They're often thought of as fierce, deep-seated enemies—at least their governments are—but their cuisines are strangely compatible. At Desert Rose, Israeli and Iraqi cuisines (with a bit or Morocco mixed in) are brought peacefully to the table by Jason and Natalie McHugh. Falafel, fresh chicken shawarma, home-baked pita. The hummus, at room temperature with tahini and olive oil, or warm with eggplant and poached egg, will take you to the streets of Tel Aviv or Baghdad. It's a small restaurant that's been selling out its takeout offerings, and a very special addition to the ethnic options in town.

Margaret Kuo's

6 W. State St., Media (Wayne, Frazer)
610-892-0115 / MaragretKuo.com

Since 1974, Margaret Kuo has established several well-regarded restaurants, winning awards from the Wine Spectator nine times, Best of Philly four times plus others. The Wayne restaurant, the flagship with an entrance marked by two Han Dynasty dragon reliefs, spans two floors. Inside, you'll find one floor devoted to Chinese—think Hot & Sour Shiitake, Chengdu Lover's Beef and Poet Su's Pork Belly—and the other to Japanese—think Clam Soup, Grilled Squid, Kobe Beef Sukiyaki. Always a feast of authentic dishes, and a perfect choice for your Year of the Ox celebration. Order take-out from Caviar and feast!

Pinocchio's Restaurant and Beer Garden to Go

131 E. Baltimore Ave., Media
610-566-7767 / PinPizza.com

This is indeed a hometown favorite, even for those beyond Media, for lunch, dinner and late night snacks of comfort food—pizza, cheesesteaks, burgers and more. With 65 years and three generations of the same family now bringing 1,000 varieties of craft beer (plus domestic and imported brands), what's not to love? The first pizzeria in Delaware County and the oldest restaurant in Media, Pinocchio's deserves all our love and support to make it to the next generation.

MALVERN

Classic Diner

352 Lancaster Ave., Malvern
610-725-0515 / TheClassicDinerPa.com

Also: Downingtowntown, Malvern, Newtown Square

We love hearty breakfasts, especially the way the Classic Diner serves them up at Malvern (since 1995) and West Chester (since 2014), plus catering and now significant takeout and delivery. Not your typical diner, their self-described meals are “generous, delicious, well-presented traditional and nontraditional” meals. While we've always been partial to the awesome breakfast fare—from peanut butter and banana stuffed French toast to breakfast sandwiches your way—their new dinner packages are a hit. Try Southern Comfort Fried Chicken, Street Taco Bar and Braised Short Rib Package for 4 (short ribs, truffle whipped potatoes, herb roasted veggies, hippie salad). Classically good for every meal.

Dixie Picnic

215 Lancaster Ave., Malvern
484-320-8024 / DixiePicnic.com

Get some good Southern cooking in Pennsylvania! Huh? Maybe they've relocated the Mason Dixon line? Dean Prescott and Tracey Deschine, the owners of Dixie Picnic, explain they “just want to celebrate the food and family they love, all from the American South.” And so, calling on the recipes of Momma, Ruby, Bucky, Anne, Aunt Myrtle, Aunt Sadie and Aunt Bert, Dixie Picnic offers a unique, slightly Southern take on box lunches, artisan sandwiches and flavorful, fresh baked goods from the on-site bakery. Our fave is the “upcakes”: a cupcake flipped over so the tops and sides can be iced. About 20 varieties, and they're all sooo good!

General Warren

9 Old Lancaster Rd., Malvern
610-296-3637 / GeneralWarren.com
610-388-2700 / Brandywine.org/Conservancy

Every celebration at the General Warren is sublime. The white tablecloths are elegant; fresh flowers are inviting. Jewelry sparkles in the candlelight and smiles are reflected in the crystal-clear wine glasses. You'd expect nothing less at a place celebrating its own 275 years of hospitality. And oh, the food—shrimp cocktail and tableside-prepared Caesar salad appetizers, and Beef Wellington and grilled scallop entrees. Classic crème brûlée and anything they ever offer with chocolate is so decadently delectable, whether dining in, taking out or enjoying in tents or the new igloos, bubbles or terrace huts. Thank you for adapting!

Restaurant Alba

7 W. King St., Malvern
610-644-4009 / RestaurantAlba.com

Ah, the aroma of a wood-burning stove. A smooth red wine to sip. For over 15 years, Sean and Kelly Weinberg have served up wholesome contemporary cuisine—homemade rigatoni, wild mushrooms, polenta and Parmesan, grilled trout, butterscotch budino—made from high quality, locally produced foods. Think simple but sublime—bruschetta with whipped ricotta, honey and sea salt. Restaurant Alba has an ample wine list—over 100—and was recently recognized by *Wine Spectator*. Sean has also won a James Beard award. What's not to love?

WAYNE

A Taste of Britain

503 Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-971-0390 / AtoBritian.com

For Anglophiles or binge-watchers of “The Crown,” A Taste of Britain provides escape to the U.K. for a bite or a cuppa. This charming tearoom offers light meals, British merch, plus catering, private dinners and takeaway meals. Peruse the tea menu as long as a serious wine list, then pick Brit comfort food—pasties, sausage rolls, steak & ale pie. Try the scone of the month (chocolate, toffee, pecan) or chocolate Guinness cake. Takeaway dinner bundles and small private dinners on site have been popular recently, as was the Boutique next door that popped up for holiday shopping. A beacon of civilization in Devon, where you can find a Union Jack tea tidy.

At The Table

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

Tara and Alex Hardy's bold vision for an intimate BYOB (26 seats) on the Main Line celebrated four years in November. Their New American menu, with a modernist twist, of artfully presented dishes (remember the 25-ingredient salad?), was surprisingly well received. Adding curbside pick up, a large outdoor tent, and full restaurant buy-out options (with just four tables inside), they're doing their best to keep the place going. We hope plenty of folks grab their changing take-out dinners (country meatloaf, truffled mashed potatoes, pumpkin crème brûlée), so they can come back with their chef tasting menus and aspirational food (foie gras appetizers, anyone?).

Autograph Brasserie

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

Marty Grims of Fearless Restaurants opened Autograph in the former Le Mas Perrier space, and now the restaurant feels like a Main Line mainstay. The posh and inventively designed interior offers rooms for every mood—the light Sycamore Room, clubby Club Room, people-watching Boulevard, and our favorite, lively bar area with eye-catching chandelier made of brass instrument. And the solid, well-prepared meat-centric menu with excellent house-made pasta and delectable desserts also satisfies. Meet for brunch, after-work drinks or date-night dinners. The food and service will be great, the crowd posh and the experience memorable. Patio dining, takeout and tents have become the order of the times, but we're looking forward to sitting among the 500 autographed photos of American icons once again.

Black Powder Tavern

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

George Washington slept there. Maybe. More certainly, the Continental Army used the building to store its gunpowder, while the tavern provided a roof and food to tired soldiers fighting for independence. Since 2013, it's been the Black Powder Tavern, though it maintains a connection to the past by hosting a lecture series on the Revolution, and through its menu, serving Lafayette's Onion Soup, Black Powder Tavern Poutine and a South Philly Pork “Sangweech.” Save room for some Chocolate Brownie Custard or Warm Apple Crumble, reminds Robert Stegbauer. It also has about two dozen craft beers, mostly American, an extensive wine list and creative cocktails that attract a loyal following.

Christopher's—A Neighborhood Place

108 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne 610-687-6558
ChristophersANeighborhoodPlace.com

Run by Chris and Molly Todd, the restaurant is a warm and welcoming drop-in-anytime spot for local and organic fare. It's a great place to go with friends, family and co-workers to eat and drink. Kids love it. So do adults (heavily weighted toward parents). Often the restaurant has the atmosphere of a birthday party. Serving plenty of burgers, pizzas, mac 'n' cheese, chili, hot dogs, there are also sophisticated items on the menu, like grilled salmon or mussels Provencale. Plus a well-stocked bar, drinks to go and meals in the Wayne picnic tent all add up to make it A Neighborhood Place.

White Dog Café

200 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
610-225-3700 / WhiteDog.com

In 1983, Judy Wicks founded the first White Dog Café near the U Penn campus and helped launch our local farm-to-table movement. Today, three cafés have been added, in Haverford, Glen Mills and Wayne, now under the Fearless Restaurants umbrella. Most ingredients continue to come from local farms and ethical sources, continuing the legacy of civic engagement and environmental sustainability. Best of all, the food is excellent, from the pumpkin soup to truffle Parmesan fries to prosciutto wrapped rainbow trout to olive oil cake, you'll have a wonderful meal in a charming atmosphere surrounded by whimsical portraits of dogs. Or if you prefer, enjoy takeout with your own pup. Truly a treasure!

WESTERN MAIN LINE

Appetites on Main

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

Their award-winning patio stayed open late into the fall with plenty of outdoor heaters to take off the chill and allow extra time for pooches to sup from the doggie menu. No-contact menus and payment, plus waitlists and other safety protocols were new but the menu still sported the favorites because they are “in the business of delighting your tastebuds.” Curbside pickup and delivery made game-day favorites even more accessible. Nachos, burgers, every kind of wings (even plant-based, boneless versions) and so much more to satisfy your cravings for comfort food, needed now more than ever.

Nectar

1091 Lancaster Ave., Berwyn
610-725-9000 / TasteNectar.com

Among the first local restaurants to bring the glamor of Center City dining—with its David Rockwell-designed interior—Nectar has long been an elegant dining destination, and much more than Buddakan in the 'burbs. As its own website says: “A sensuous, sumptuous, savory experience, features the Asian-inspired-French-infused signature cuisine of star chef Patrick Feury.” Yes, Chef Feury and his talented sushi chefs are still turning out perfectly executed dishes with fresh ingredients, though now with more take-out orders. Try the seasonal main courses (rack of lamb), sample tempting sushi and sashimi

options, or order wild boar lo mein or wok Amish chicken. So much to love when East meets West, with artistry.

Ron’s Original Bar & Grill

74 E Uwchlan Ave., Exton
610-594-9900 / RonsOriginal.com

Fire pits ablaze, Ron Inverso set out to offer the “best food ... at reasonable prices.” More than 30 years later, his successful restaurant invites you to enjoy great meals from healthy ingredients. Build your own pasta dish, with homemade fettuccine and spaghetti topped with an assortment of sauces, meats, seafood and vegetables. Or choose ovals, pizzas or stromboli as well as sandwiches, piadini, hoagies and wraps. You can’t read the menu without getting hungry. Happy hour all week and a beer garden on weekends, often with live music. You won’t leave without wanting to come back or order more take-out, curbside pickup or delivery.

Terrain

138 W. Lancaster Ave., Devon
610-590-4675 / ShopTerrain.com

Eating in a greenhouse just feels good. Must be all that extra oxygen from the plants. And bread baked in flower pots helps. We’ve long loved leisurely brunches at Terrain—both Glen Mills and the newer Devon location—with the seasonally changing menus featuring local ingredients, decidedly crunchy dishes—quinoa fritters, green chickpea hummus, avocado toast (of course), kale Caesar salad, farro bowl. But there’s whimsy that offers a Chocolate Terrarium dessert. And delight in a beverage menu listing choices like wild kombucha, Belvoir ginger beer, hibiscus spiced cider, LUMI cold pressed wellness shots. You feel cleansed just reading that. Curbside pickup and delivery (Toast, Caviar, Doordash) are not the same, but will sustain us.

Vickers

192 E. Welsh Pool Rd., Exton
610-363-7998 / VickersRestaurant.com

Named for a Chester County potter and abolitionist, Vickers is one of the last bastions of fine dining with European-style service. For almost 50 years it has been known for table-side prep and flaming presentation—from Caesar salad to steak Diane and Bananas Foster. A ballroom, five private dining rooms and vintage cocktails combine to create an atmosphere of genteel dining from another time. Yet Vickers has evolved from its Continental cuisine, now offering some lighter

fare—think sliders and a bistro menu—though still elegantly presented. And for the first time in its history, there’s curbside takeout for elegant dining at home.

AROUND
CHESTER COUNTY

Amani’s BYOB

105 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
484-237-8179 / AmanisBYOB.com

Although it’s been over 10 years since Downingtown saw the opening of Amani’s—the almost eponymous BYOB of chef Jonathan Amann—it feels as fresh as the ingredients used in the creative dishes on its menus. Now adding takeout and family meals to his ambitious menu, the Johnson and Wales-trained chef continues to serve up exciting choices from the local sources he’s cultivated from area purveyors. Charred octopus sliders, yellowfin tuna poke bowl, smoked short rib Bolognese to name a very few. There are many delicious reasons Amann was named Best Chef in Chester County for three years running during his arrival on the scene. He deserves a shot at #4.

Birchrunville Store Café

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

You wouldn’t know it from the map (it’s a long, winding trip to get to the town, population 101), but the Birchrunville Store Café has long been one of the best restaurants in the Philadelphia area. There, Chef Francis Pascal, trained in France and Italy, drew inspiration from Pennsylvania’s rolling countryside. For 21 years, his small restaurant has turned out some of most elegant dishes you’ll ever taste. Roasted beets, warm figs, crispy pheasant, veal porterhouse ... all so luscious. Which is why we’ll drive there again and again. Oh, if you’re too early for dinner, or just want to indulge in an amazing dessert, visit its Butterscotch Pastry Shop across the street for breakfast or lunch.

Catherine’s Restaurant

1701 W. Doe Run Rd., Kennett Square
610-347-2227 / CatherinesRestaurant.com

This is the kind of place to share conversation with friends in the lovely setting of a historic Unionville country store-turned-restaurant. A place to trade exciting announcements over goat

cheese ravioli, sea scallops and creative salads at candle-lit indoor tables. A meal at Catherine’s can make ordinary days special with their divine signature mushroom soup with lump crab meat under umbrellas on the patio reminiscent of a village café in Provence. Comfortably casual with a touch of country elegance, at Catherine’s every bite is a pleasure. And every sip of coffee to accompany a forkful of dessert should be savored to make the moment last a little longer. A special gem in an iconic Chester County town.

La Maison

1470 Old Ridge Rd., Pottstown
484-680-2631 / MartinsKitchen.com

“A tiny auberge serving fine French cuisine in the time honored tradition found in the countryside of rural France.” That’s La Maison’s description of its special niche in our local dining landscape. Chef Martin Gagne transports diners by serving multi-course magic in the intimacy of the dining room in his 300-year-old house in historic Coventryville. Menus for Friday and Saturday dining are more formal (filet de fletan au mousseline de brochet en croute) than those available for Thursday curbside pickup (heirloom pumpkin soup with chicken quenelles, white asparagus tarte with gruyere). How lucky we are to take our palates on an international journey.

The Whip

1383 N. Chatham Rd., Coatesville
610-383-0600 / TheWhipTavern.com

Turn at the “Blow Horn” sign and then park along the road that cuts through rolling countryside and walk up to the tavern. In riding, walking or fashion boots, you’re always welcome at The Whip—our favorite British pub. Hearth and hospitality are warm in winter; beers, ales and ciders are cold in summer. We love their pub fare—the best without pulling out a passport and crossing the pond: Welsh rarebit, Scotch eggs, bangers and mash. Malt vinegar on the table and a side of mushy peas are par for the course with fish and chips. Mmmm ... their sticky toffee pudding is brilliant. Loyal Whipsters get takeaway delivered to their cars.

Victory Brewing Company

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

At its Downingtown brewery, you’ll drink—and eat—in Victory’s first taproom, now 300 seats, serving 29 beers on tap, from Black is Beautiful, a porter, to Victory Classic, a lager.

The brewery’s 35 huge fermenters—the largest is 400 gallons—are just beyond the dining room. The food—cheesesteaks, burgers, pizzas, fries, fish ‘n’ chips, and the like—is consistently excellent. Since 2014, Victory moved the bulk of its growing production to Parkesburg, opened taprooms in Kennett Square and Charlotte, North Carolina, and announced plans for a 14,000-square-foot brewery/taproom in Philadelphia. Not bad for childhood friends Bill Covaleski and Ron Barchet, who were inducted into the Chester County Business Hall of Fame in April of 2020.

DELAWARE –
DINING WITH HISTORY

Buckley’s Tavern

5812 Kennett Pk., Wilmington
302-656-9776 / BuckleysTavern.com

Dating back to 1817, the building on historic Route 52 once housed a taproom and an ice cream store. Later, as a tavern, Buckley’s hosted local gentry—du Ponts, Frolic Weymouth and friends from local Chateau Country. In 2012, Chef Tom Hannum, former executive chef at the Hotel DuPont,

along with Vance V. Kershner and Coley du Pont took on this legacy restaurant. Despite its heritage, Buckley’s is a relaxed, friendly place, serving comfort cuisine. Try the mac ‘n’ cheese, tobacco onions, burger, crab cakes, or meatloaf—in two dining rooms, bars and outdoor grill. We look forward to the return of their pajama brunch and other signs of more normal times.

Columbus Inn

2216 Pennsylvania Ave., Wilmington
302-571-1492 / ColumbusInn.net

The Columbus Inn began as a bakery in 1798, then became a tavern in 1812. A bar through the 1950s—basically a dive bar with notable visitors (Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley)—its menu became more elegant in the ‘50s when Wally Senza, a famous golfer, took it over. Under current owner, Chef Ross Essner, the Inn has thrived and become a landmark. Its brunches are favorites—Philly Omelette or Eggs Chesapeake. Its Shellfish Cobb, off the regular menu, is a feast. And the long list of beers, wines, liquors and cocktails will also make your heart warm, like the Christmas Eve cocktails to-go menu featuring Red Rudolf sangria and cranberry-ginger mules.

Jessop’s Tavern

114 Delaware St., New Castle
302-322-6111 / Jessops-Tavern.com

Before Philadelphia, before Wilmington, there was a settlement called Fort Casmir, later renamed New Castle. In Historic New Castle, the building that today houses Jessop’s Tavern is over three centuries old, named after Abraham Jessop who ran a barrel-making business. In 1996, the Day Family, seeking to reproduce the Colonial atmosphere, began a tavern featuring period fare—English, Dutch, Belgian and Swedish dishes. You can start with Halve Maen Mossels, continue with Fricken Chicassee, and finish with Oli Bolen Apple Cakes. And you might drown it with so many different kinds of Belgian, German or American beer—Nitro Hot Cocoa Imperial milk stout anyone? A step back in history with beers of today. ♦

The local dining scene is changing rapidly, so it’s best to check websites and other sources for the most up-to-date information. And for more ideas of great places to eat, read the Dining Guide in this issue. We also recommend you check our Food News columns and updates on our dining coverage on our website, *CountyLinesMagazine.com*.