

love

LOCAL DINING

COUNTY LINES **2022**

Who would have thought our local restaurants would have to continue to display superhuman feats of creativity for another year? Chefs have kicked up their take-out game, explored ways to serve up family meals, and become virtuosos of the extended outdoor dining season.

It's been another crazy year (we're retiring "unprecedented"). Yet almost 20 new restaurants have opened, expanded or reinvented themselves. One of our favorites just reopened after the double whammy of hurricane Ida piling on with the pandemic. Another reopened after a devastating fire. Chefs got to cook. And we applaud them for it.

So, again this year we've looked at the local dining scene and reflected on how fortunate we are. There's so much to love about local restaurants, and we're sharing some of what we found.

Please support these local treasures that add so much to our communities. Do it also for the very personal reason that we need to have places to meet with friends and celebrate with family over great food and drink.

We urge you to choose a few places from our list and help local dining survive and thrive in 2022.



Greystone Oyster Bar



Sedona Taphouse



Stove & Tap



Peter Clark Kitchen

NEW PLACES TO LOVE

Greystone Oyster Bar

7 N. Church St., West Chester
610-241-3369 / GreyStoneOysterBarWc.com

Transport yourself to the Northern Italian Coast with a visit to the highly anticipated Greystone Oyster Bar (from the Mercato folks), the newest local option for fresh seafood. Enjoy the hip ambiance as you browse the menu for all things seafood, including, you guessed it, fresh oysters. With oysters in the name, we suggest you try them raw, fried in Greystone lager batter or grilled with garlic butter and Parmigiano. Other tempting dishes: New England-style lobster roll with hand-cut fries or Greystone gnocchi in vodka sauce. Grab a signature drink at the black-and-white marble bar—Church St. Paloma, Greystone Cosmo or craft beer brewed on site. Cheers to this welcome addition!

Sedona Taphouse

44 W. Gay St., Ste. 1, West Chester
610-738-5104 / SedonaTaphouse.com

West Chester no longer has to envy Phoenixville, where its branch of Sedona Taphouse quickly became a local fave. This upscale, casual spot serves up 50 craft beers on draft and in bottles along with a broad menu, including steaks, seafood, pasta, sandwiches and salads. Try Desert Fire Jalapeños before digging into Devil's Pass pasta or Acapulco fish tacos. Save room for the huge desserts, like salted caramel cheesecake. This location is the second in PA and the 15th throughout the East. We also love the patio seating, weather permitting, on the 44 West mixed-use plaza at Gay and Church Streets, where local musicians play in the evenings.

Stove & Tap

158 W. Gay St., West Chester
484-999-0922 / StoveAndTap.com
(Locations in Malvern and Landsdale)

Happily West Chester got a branch of the popular Stove & Tap local restaurant group (the owners also have a stake in Al Pastor and DePaul's Table, along with S&Ts in Malvern and Landsdale). Sample their self-named Tappy Hour, Taco Tuesday, Kids Eat Free Wednesday and Bottomless Brunch, or choose from their menu of shareables, handhelds, flatbreads and large plates. Pork belly bao buns, according to one satisfied diner, are "to die for." Smoked chicken Cobb salad, brisket dip, coconut curry mussels, DanDan noodles, plus 20 beers on tap will keep you coming back.

Peter Clark Kitchen

698 E. Market St., West Chester
610-783-3004 / PeterClarkKitchen.com

Our introduction to Peter Clark Kitchen was at a food competition where we discovered Chef Erin Morrison's scrumptious crab cakes with remoulade and decadent chocolate-covered bacon (don't knock it 'til you've tried it). Influenced by watching his father cook, Morrison opened the eatery

during the pandemic, creating the perfect place to put together dinner on the fly. Pick up gourmet versions of your favorite comfort foods: lobster mac and cheese, zucchini Parmesan, meatballs, garlic-smashed potatoes, or take a taste adventure with sophisticated lemongrass blueberry lemonade. We've seen 17 types of frozen soups, including vegetarian and vegan, to take home for warm, healthy, tasty meals. We love a break from cooking, so we'll be back.

Wrong Crowd Beer Company

342 Hannum Ave., West Chester
484-983-3003 / WrongCrowdBeer.com.

With a name like that, you've got to check out West Chester's first microbrewery with on-site brewing and canning. There's an obvious sense of humor here: the website responds "Heck, yeah I am" when you answer you're 21, and the beer names bring a smile—PilsNerd, Dan Good Beer, Cosmik Decree (with Zappa hops). While owners/brewers Dan Shaw and Bob Bagonis embrace their outsider persona, they brewed up a love letter to West Chester in their signature lager ... The Borough. Stop by on Fridays for new releases and order from their beer-food pyramid of nachos, wings and pizzas. A warm, friendly addition to the west side of town.

Artillery Brewing

The Barracks, 333 Granite Alley, West Chester
484-999-5976 / ArtilleryBrewing.com

A second microbrewery arrived in the Borough's west end, this one with a clear

theme—join the revolution. Starting as a nano-brewery near the site of the Battle of the Brandywine, Artillery Brewing carried the battle theme to its new location, the Barracks, and brews—Paoli Massacre (English bitters), The Traitor (English pale ale), Fog of War (hazy NE pale ale, of course). Owners Paul Zippel and Mike Loveless brew a wide variety of styles, from Bohemian lagers to light ales and the inescapable IPAs, to Belgian and German styles. There's pub grub (pretzels, pizzas, handhelds) plus cocktails and a house sarsaparilla to sample and love.

Paloma Restaurant Market

101 Bridge St., Phoenixville
484-302-7830 / ILovePalomas.com

A hop, skip and jump away from Phoenixville's luxury apartments, one of the newest restaurants in the oldest building in town is dishing up international flavors. Swing open the wrought iron gate, walk past the stone patio, and enter Paloma. Executive Chef Chris Siropaides and Executive Sous-Chef Chris Riordan are satisfying sophisticated palates with Asian-influenced duck breast with vegetables, thick udon noodles and hoisin broth, cavatelli Bolognese, French onion soup and warm baguettes that get raves. For dessert, Tahitian vanilla crème brûlée or butter-scotch budino. Remember your furry friend at outdoor dinners with Paloma's pup-cuterie. Another reason to visit Phoenixville.

Bella Tratoria

366 Ridge Rd., Spring City
610-495-5272 / BellaSpringCity.com

This remodeled former pizzeria (Bella Pizzeria) in Spring City, now under new management (David Backhus of Bloom) including a chef with stellar credentials (Jennifer Basanavage of Savona, Lacroix), is attracting attention with its seasonal Italian + craft pizza menu. It's not often the bread plate gets shoutouts, but this one with special dipping oils is a star, along with great apps like the octopus and grilled artichoke starters. Lemon thyme gnocchi, carrot ravioli, Barolo glazed beef cheeks show this is well beyond a mere pizza joint—though the bacon and leek pizza proves even that part of the menu is elevated. Worth a trip.

La Sponda

20 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown
484-593-4488 / LaSponda.com

We're all rooting for the latest restaurant in the best location in Downingtown—in the restored stone mill with an expansive patio overlooking the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek, a spot that escaped the ravages of Hurricane Ida last year. Firecreek, Stella Rossa, Barra Rossa, Milito's and an abandoned Enoteca Tredici plan preceded La Sponda (meaning water's edge). The concept is authentic Italian + wine bar, featuring seafood and homemade pasta. The menu ranges from on-trend Mason jar carbonara to classic chicken and veal Parmesan, with plenty of seafood—whole branzino, cioppino, seafood



Wrong Crowd Beer Co.



Artillery Brewing



Paloma Restaurant

risotto. Try the long Happy Hour, 3 to 6 p.m., and toast local restaurants.

Santucci's Original Square Pizza

379 W. Uwchlan Ave., Downingtown
610-664-8100 / SantuccisPizza.com

A square pizza? With the sauce on top? Mmmm, it's good! Especially the crust. Dating back to 1959, the original restaurant in Northeast Philly on "O" Street was founded by Joseph and Philomena. Three generations later, the Santucci family, using the same recipes, has expanded to the suburbs and Jersey shore. Santucci's opened in Downingtown last year, producing pies that are just as good as the original. Check out the menu—short rib gravy fries, stromboli, flatbreads, fries, wings will also keep you coming back to try all the signature items. Plus there's a bake-at-home option.

Iron Hill Taphouse

260 Eagleview Blvd., Exton
484-874-2897 / IronHillBrewery.com/Exton-PA
(*Iron Hill Brewery locations in PA and DE*)

Marking its 25th year with 19 locations in five states, Iron Hill opened a new concept back in January 2021—a taphouse and production brewery in a 45,000-square-foot space in Exton. The fast-casual spot in an industrial setting (concrete floors, gleaming brew tanks) has counter orders from the still extensive menu—small plates, big bowls, burgers, pizzas, handhelds. Sample mini-corn dogs, upside-down pizza, fried garlic bologna sandwich alongside their award-winning beers, plus rotating options on tap. This large-scale production facility pumps out 20,000 barrels per year (20 times what a brewpub can do). See what the next phase for this beloved brewer/restaurant chain delivers.

Ship Inn Seafood & Steak

693 E. Lincoln Hwy., Exton
610-363-7200 / ShipInn.net

Did any local foodies miss the episode of Robert Irving's "Restaurant Impossible: Sinking Ship Inn"? Yes, the popular Food Network show came to the historic Exton restaurant—founded in 1796 as the Ship Inn—for a 48-hour makeover of the interior, menu and management. The old-fashioned space was modernized and made much lighter and brighter. Similarly the menu—heavy on heavy foods—was infused with new, contemporary dishes—fried brie, Korean BBQ chicken cheesesteak, spice crusted swordfish, crispy eggplant flatbread. Many recent visitors were curious about the changes and report being favorably impressed. Watch the TV episode online to preview the update to this Chester County classic. Then go taste for yourself.

GuGu Asian Table

638 E. Baltimore Pk., Kennett Square
610-388-1062 / GuguAsianTable.com

Whether you're a patron or a worker, you're esteemed family at GuGu Asian Table, the new BYOB restaurant near Longwood Gardens that opened last fall. GuGu, meaning "family," is owned and operated by Tony and Suki Liu, owners of Lily Asian Cuisine in downtown Kennett. Fans love the interior, a fusion of Asian simplicity and local Chester County stone and wood touches. The Asian fine food also has a hint of Pennsylvania influence. We suggest sampling broadly from the menu—crab dumplings, bang bang shrimp, sushi, sweet potato rolls, savory drunken rice noodles and Thai iced tea. Then indulge in melt-in-your-mouth coconut pumpkin cheesecake or mochi ice cream balls. Love at first bite!

Letty's Tavern

201 E. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-5688 / LettysTavern.com

It's said the ghost of William Penn's daughter, Lettitia, haunts the historic Kennett Square Inn. But the three new owners—Matthew Killion, Jacob Short and Executive Chef Dan Daley—clearly weren't scared because they named the restaurant after her. Letty's eclectic menu includes local and international references—mushroom toast with whipped ricotta and crispy sage as well as a Korean fried chicken sandwich—plus a variety of soups, salads, sandwiches, burgers, pizza and other entrees. Cocktails are especially creative. Try a Mi Novia or a Sweater Weather. We're glad this landmark got a new life and a bottle shop on the lower level.

The Naked Olive

759 W. Cypress St., Kennett Square
610-444-2424 / Facebook.com/TheNakedOlivePA

What's not to love about The Naked Olive, a new Mediterranean BYOB with Greek favorites in a garden-inspired setting? Opened in early 2021 by the Iliadis and Stamatiadis families, the casual, airy space delights with a bicycle-based sideboard holding green plants and seasonal décor, shelves of copper kettles on the wall, and fresh flowers on tables. Try red wine-marinated lamb lollipops in tzatziki sauce, traditional Greek salads, and fig and prosciutto flatbread. Don't skip dessert! Lemon mousse cake with smooth frosting is so delicious you'll want three slices. *Tiropita*, a round pastry with golden rings of phyllo filled with cheese, drizzled with honey, is another perfect ending to the meal.



Fox Barn at Twenty9



DePaul's Table



The Landing Kitchen

Revival Pizza Pub

240 Windgate Dr., Chester Springs
610-947-0999 / RevivalPizzaPub.com

A spinoff of Stove & Tap, helmed by Joe Monnich and Justin Weathers, this new pizza place is in Weatherstone Town Center. Pizza here is wood-fired, and you can build your own or select a specialty, such as a spicy pepperoni with pickled jalapeño and Calabrian honey. Not in the mood for pizza? Try shareables, handhelds, pasta, mussels, salads and crostini as well as ten taps of craft and national beers. All served up in a large modern space, high ceilings, oversized windows, overlooking the Chester County countryside.

Di Bruno Bros. Main Line

385 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne
484-581-7888 / DiBruno.com
(*Locations in Ardmore and Philly*)

Open since spring 2021, Di Bruno Brothers' newest space in Wayne is like an artisanal market in Tuscany. Lose yourself among rows of delectables: breads, olive oils, balsamic vinegars and gourmet chocolate bars. Stop at the *Alimentari* for wine. Twirl the carousel of truffle oils. Follow enticing aromas to its café. Need recommendations? Staff—passionate about food—guide you to samples while telling stories of meals they designed for wedding proposals. Take home slices of salamis in brown wrappers or chubs—short, plump sausages. Ask at the *Fromaggi* counter for suggested pairings and discovered rich mole salami with cocoa and chili spices, perfect with melt-in-your-mouth Brabander cheese. A food lover's dream!

Fox Barn at Twenty9

16 Great Valley Pkwy., Malvern
610-251-9229 / FoxBarnAtTwenty9.com

A \$1.3-million renovation transformed a two-story, full-service restaurant into a

pub, catering operation and barn venue (weddings, meetings, parties and more). Exposing the beamed ceiling in the historic building uncovered the charm of the original barn, and redesigning the 2,000-square-foot deck added space for enjoying sunsets in Great Valley at Happy Hour. The menu leans into comfort food, exemplified by the app combo—prime rib egg rolls, wings, tater tots, buttermilk chicken fingers. There's plenty of meat and barbecue laced through the selections, including samplers offering beef brisket, pulled pork and bratwurst, along with grilled salmon, fish tacos and veggie wings for others. A great new look!

Pizzeria Vetri

138 W. Lancaster Ave., Devon
484-207-6663 / PizzeriaVetri.com

The art of authentic pizza-making found a new location at the Devon Yards complex in late summer 2021. Located in the Amis Trattoria building, this sleek, industrial space uses a simple formula: four ingredients in dough that's fermented for four days, then cooked in a 650-degree oven for distinctive leopard spots. First a pop-up, it's now expanded to seven days a week, offering Neopolitan round and 28-inch-long Metro pies including squash, crudo and Maurizio (rosemary). Try the prosciutto and burrata boards, pear truffle salads, chocolate budino. Or order the adult or little chef pizza kits for take out. Next location is planned for the KOP Town Center. More to love.

DePaul's Table

7 E. Lancaster Ave., Ardmore
610-589-0500 / DePaulsTable.com

"Big steaks are coming to the Main Line," read the *Inquirer* headline announcing that the stunning space of the former brasserie-concept Bercy in Ardmore had evolved into a modern



Di Bruno Bros.

Italian steakhouse. Justin Weathers and Joe Monnich (of Stove & Tap) partnered with Anthony DePaul (of ChopHouse fame) to bring 28-day dry aged Pat LeFrieda beef to the 'burbs last May. Designed to be a fresher take on a Center City steakhouse, DePaul's menu is full of the usual suspects—NY strips, Delmonicos, chops, lobsters, seafood towers—plus a 48-oz. bone-in tomahawk rib eye for \$140. There's a Happy Hour, kids food, porcini dusted scallops and celeb spottings (Charles Barkley, Adam Sandler).

Lark & The Landing Kitchen

611 Righters Ferry Rd., Bala Cynwyd
484-434-8766 / LarkPA.com

It's a bit outside our territory, but trust us—the destination is worth the drive. Renowned Philly Chef Nick Elmi (Laurel) and Fia Berisha landed in Bala Cynwyd with the opening of The Landing Kitchen for sandwiches, salads, pastries and coffee, later adding Lark for elegant dinner options like goat cheese gnocchi and glazed rohan duck breast. Both eateries embrace the industrial setting of the former Ironworks along with stunning views of the Schuylkill River. Start with breakfast and lunch at The Landing and then



La Sponda



Iron Hill Taphouse



Ship Inn

finish the day on the rooftop for a memorable dinner and cocktails at Lark. Here's to a full day of show-stopping food. All without a trip to the city.

Rye BYOB

112 W. State St., Media
610-263-7832 / RyeBYOB.com

Who doesn't love small plates? That's the basic concept of Ryan Sulkowski's newish (opened October 2020) reinvention in the former Lotus Farm to Table space in Media. Local, seasonal ingredients and some chef magic are designed to elevate the food, yet keep it approachable and affordable in a place to visit week after week. From the grilled celeric steak to the hearty double cheeseburger and an array of satisfying pastas—ricotta and Meyer lemon cappelletti with fig and maple—the menu delights. There are summer truffles, tempting mocktails and decadent desserts like affogato and chocolate rye cake with chocolate berries and stout sorbet. As we said—what's not to love?

FOOD TOWNS WEST CHESTER

Andiario

106 W. Gay St., West Chester
484-887-0919 / Andiario.com

What can you say about a restaurant that's at the top of everyone's list? Philly *Inquirer's* Top 10, *Philly Mag's* #12, plus accolades from local foodies. Interestingly Chef Anthony Andiario, who was poised to become a national star, used the pandemic to reassess and take a break

from his 60k Instagram followers. First he turned to takeout, then to limited \$75 prix fixe dinners four nights a week, with changing seasonal menus released each weekend. It's still a celebration of local food, now linked to Baguette Magique's bakery offering surprises—meals of ricotta gnocchetti with oxtail ragu. The narrowed focus includes live-fire cooking, hand-crafted pastas and dishes like beef collar with radicchio and melon. Sign up for email alerts. Now!

Bar Avalon

116 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-436-4100 / AvalonRestaurant.net
(Location in Bryn Mawr)

There's never a dull moment in the Bar Avalon kitchen with Chef/owner John Brandt-Lee cooking up trendy and creative ideas to keep customers wowed. Brunch better at Bar AV with their take on a breakfast charcuterie board featuring a Mimosa version (fresh fruit, granola parfait, French toast bites, mini muffins) and the Bloody Mary version (hot sauce, shrimp, cheese-stuffed olives, bacon strips). Or host a party in their newly renovated Bourbon Bar, the perfect space for cocktail and intimate dinners. Stay up to date with all Bar AV's latest creations on their social media pages—fun in themselves! And plan a visit to the newish sister location in Bryn Mawr.

Four Dogs Tavern

1300 W. Strasburg Rd., West Chester
610-692-4367 / TheFourDogsTavern.com

Among quaint homes in historic Marshalltown, you'll find Four Dogs Tavern. While the setting's casual enough to bring your pup, its food is no ordinary pub grub. Savor wild

Burgundy snails or mushroom soup with white truffle essence by the fireplace or seasonally outdoors by a fountain flowing over mossy rocks. Try a grilled Reuben with rutabaga sauerkraut. At the classic Chester County bar, kick back with a local draft beer—The Four Dogs Tavern Brew from Stolen Sun in Exton or another from Media or Delco breweries. Walk the grounds and the Marshallton Village Heritage Center to build your appetite for sinfully rich Six-Layer Chocolate Cake. A long-time favorite.

Iron Hill

3 W. Gay St., West Chester
610-738-9600 / IronHillBrewery.com
(Locations in PA, DE and beyond)

We think of Iron Hill as a go-to restaurant in West Chester. It's where we send visitors and go ourselves. It feels like West Chester. Kevin Finn, Mark Edelson and Kevin Davies founded Iron Hill as a craft brewery and scratch kitchen in 1996 and opened their second location in West Chester back in 1998. Now it's hard to think of West Chester without it. Dine on the patio to watch the action on Gay Street or inside by the tall vats and sip a Pig Iron Porter. Choose from an extensive menu—from pub burger to crab cake sandwich, Cajun fettuccine to char-grilled rib eye, cheesesteak egg roll to Triple Chocolate Hill sundae. You'll always leave happy. And want to return.

Limoncello Ristorante

9 N. Walnut St., West Chester
610-436-6230 / LimoncelloRestaurant.com
(Location in Chester Springs)

Celebrating its 15th anniversary, Limoncello feels like a permanent part of the local dining scene,

with its authentic Italian food and hospitality, now managed by the second generation of Mingrinos, with a newer location in Chester Springs. Pivoting to more delivery, takeout and curbside business, Limoncello's Family Style Takeout meals (4 course feed 5 for \$65) and Sicilian pizzas are legendary. All the classics—arancini to cannoli, plus lobster ravioli, chicken parm and saltimbocca, too. Not to be missed, the signature Chicken Limoncello (asparagus, crab, white sauce), Limoncello cake (soaked in the liqueur) and the limoncello recipe on the website (takes 28 days). We're yearning for the return of the lunch buffet.

Mae's West Chester

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

Josh Taggart, a highly acclaimed chef (once winning *Esquire's* Best New Restaurant of the Year), opened his family-friendly, farm-to-table restaurant named for his mother and daughter in, aptly, May 2020 with wife Erin. The seasonal menu is ever-changing and always tempting, with sandwiches a special favorite—a Cuban on ciabatta and seared salmon wrap with bacon, cabbage and green goddess dressing. Entrees, both sophisticated and satisfying, include braised short ribs with sweet potato puree, roasted carrots and red wine jus and chicken breast with herb stuffing, caramelized shallots and garlic pickled pepper sauce. Their cooler offers to-go items and you'll find surprises like chocolate bombs there, too. May they become a West Chester mainstay!

Más Mexicali Cantina

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

Three floors celebrating Mexico, with well over 120 tequilas and major margaritas. It's mas in every way. During the warm months, the rooftop is where you'll relax with the best view in town to watch the sunset and sip a pitcher of sangria. Start with wings and honey chipotle or nachos and fresh guac. The burritos, chimichangas, enchiladas, ensaladas, tacos and fajitas are all muy bueno and muy grande, seasoned with just the right amount of chili to light your fire. Their Taco Tuesdays add a side of trivia to the fun. So grab a Corona, Modelo or something wet to balance the heat and start the countdown to Cinco de Mayo.

Mercato Ristorante & Bar

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

"Born in Italy, served in West Chester," says Mercato Ristorante as they offer up

southern Italian cuisine, from brick-oven pizzas to handmade pastas. Dine inside the sleek space or brave the elements on their heated patio under string lights. We love the specialty pizzas, like the Mercato, topped with sweet peas, pork belly, caramelized onions, buffalo mozzarella, organic egg and a drizzle of truffle oil. Or choose pasta dishes, including pappardelle Bolognese with wide fettuccini, pork and beef ragu and whipped ricotta. Pair your meal with a cocktail (Mercato Bellini, pomegranate martini, blood orange Cosmo) and enjoy a bit of Italy right here.

Miss Winnie's Jamaican Jerk

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

Sometimes you just need the joy of genuine Jamaican comfort food. There's a little place called Miss Winnie's on the east side of town where you can get jerk pork, jerk chicken, jerk wings or even beef oxtail stew or curried goat on some weekends. In short, very authentic, filled with the earthy spices of the Caribbean. They offer patties, jicama slaw, plantains, rice and rum or guava swirl cake that will move you and remind you of the rhythms of the islands. Chefs Bert and Nick Johnston (Bert's son) run the kitchen. One taste and you know Bert learned to cook these dishes from his mother and with love.

Opa Taverna

40 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-696-4100 / OpaTaverna.com

If you're looking to stay true to a Mediterranean diet, then head for the Greek restaurant so popular that it outgrew its small space a few years back. Opa Taverna offers a broad selection of expected street food options—kababs, gyros—plus substantial entrees like lamb chops and grilled fresh fish. The Opa chips are a must—crispy zucchini and eggplant chips with tzatziki—as are the octopus and haloumi. It's all there—from souvlaki to saganaki to spanakopita. Order a bottle of Greek wine and pretend to be half way around the world. Just remember to save room for the baklava.

Pietro's Prime Steakhouse & Martini Bar

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

The best steak—a 16-ounce New York strip grilled to perfection, served rare—after a gloriously cold Bombay martini, buffalo fried oyster appetizers, Kennett mushroom soup, caramelized onions and au gratin potatoes on the



Mae's West Chester



Mercato Ristorante



Pietro's Prime Steakhouse



Bar Avalon



Limoncello Ristorante

side, followed by a creamy slice of cherry ricotta cheese cake. The piano tinkles lightly; there’s live music three nights a week. We can’t think of finer dining. Eating light? Then the fresh prime steak salad is for you. Off red meat? There’s plenty of seafood and chicken on the menu. Just a few reasons why co-owner Marisa Giunta’s family has served the community well for over 80 years.

Roots Café

133 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-455-0100 / [RootsCafeWC.com](#)

Wend your way through the charming dining rooms of Roots Café to the back door where a colorful flower-painted wall announces your arrival at the garden. Sunlight through the leaves beckons hungry breakfast and lunch customers to tables and chairs near a small bubbling fountain. On chilly days, stay indoors at the warm wooden tables. Indoors or out, the friendly smiles, congenial atmosphere and scrumptious breakfast burritos, Belgian waffles, beet salads and Roots Hot Chicken always delight us (dinner servers Thursday–Saturday). Morning or afternoon, the Mimosa or Bloody Mary cocktails make a lazy or crazy day brighter.

The Original Spence Café

131 N. High St., West Chester
610-918-1272 / [Spence.cafe](#)

The fish on the sign may prompt you to order seafood—baked oysters Spence (spinach, bacon, Pernod), seared halibut, the cioppino—but all parts of the menu display the experience found in the kitchen. Chef Andy Patten does it all and does it well. Ask anyone who’s tucked into his braised short ribs. There’s consistent quality from this BYOB that chooses to focus on the food, as each well-presented plate offers a balance of flavors, textures and colors complementing the entree—no upselling side dishes here. The chef presents the perfect saffron risotto, Yukon gold mashed potatoes or wild rice pilaf to accompany your main course. A complete pleasure with every forkful.

Teca Italian Restaurant

38 E. Gay St., West Chester
610-738-8244 / [TecaRestaurants.com](#)
(Location in Newtown Square)

Merging the meanings of pinacoteca (panini bar) and enoteca (wine bar), Teca combines delicious Italian small plates and an award-winning wine list, for a must-go dining spot in downtown West Chester. The bar is eye-catching with multi-colored tiles and a striking overhead lighting fixture. Taking inspiration from all regions of Italy, Teca serves authentic entrees like spaghetti all’Amatriciana flavored with pancetta and caramelized onion and pork Milanese with baby arugula, lemon estate olive oil and shaved Parmigiano. And dinner isn’t complete without a selection from their extensive wine list, selected specifically to complement every dish.

Two Birds Café

653 Downingtown Pike, West Chester
610-222-6200 / [TwoBirdsCafeWC.com](#)

The short version: Two Birds Café = 5 stars, even from notoriously picky Yelpers. Longer version: This cozy neighborhood spot on the outskirts of West Chester specializes in crowd-pleasing, homey, seasonal breakfast, brunch and lunch. Husband and wife, Justin and Jess, blend their talents for cooking and baking, letting you choose to eat healthy or not. Regulars recommend ordering the cinnamon rolls immediately, then leisurely savoring the options: toasts (avo, beet, salmon), plates (burrito, pancakes), omelets (brisket, Greek), Benedicts (classic, Cali) for breakfast, plus greens, grass-fed burgers, buttermilk fried chicken and more for lunch. Enjoy from 7:30 to 2, with breakfast served all day. We’re in love!

KENNETT SQUARE

Byrsa Bistro

127 E. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-5050 / [Kennett.ByrsaBistro.com](#)
(Location in Glen Mills; opening in West Chester)

Locals cheered Byrsa Bistro’s 2020 return to Kennett, bringing its savory western Mediterranean menu, spanning Spain, Morocco, Italy, Tunisia and more. Its been a regular among the outdoor dining spots on State Street, serving up fresh, healthful dishes like paella, lamb shank and branzino along with its popular Mediterranean sampler (hummus, veggie dip, olives, stuffed grape leaves) and flatbreads. Owner Ahmed Chraga is a welcoming presence here and at the Glen Mills location in the historic train station. Fans should check out the new Byrsa Pizza location on Street Road in West Chester.

La Peña Mexicana

609 W. Cypress St., Kennett Square
610-925-2651

What it lacks in ambiance, La Peña more than makes up for in authenticity and affordability. For 15 years, this humble one-story striped building painted the colors of the Mexican flag has been the site of great eat-in and take-out delights attracting the attention of no less than the *Inquirer’s* Craig LaBan, who included it in his 2017 Best of the ‘Burbs. Whether you go for LaBan’s rec of a flaky smoked pork chop chimichanga, the owner’s fave of green chili enchilada with chicken, or the popular taco al pastor, you’ll find your perfect pick among the wide range of options. Simple food, well prepared, in generous portions. Love it!

La Verona

114 E. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-2244 / [LaVeronaPA.com](#)

If northern Italian food is your passion, La Verona has you covered here at home. Owner/general manager



Original Spence Cafe



Two Birds Cafe



Byrsa Bistro



La Verona

Sam Mavraj makes you feel like a special guest the minute you open La Verona’s front doors with beveled glass windows. Chef/co-owner Jack Mavraj ensures your taste buds get the royal treatment as you dine on grilled octopus under the stars for date night or sample gluten-free pasta inside for a weekday lunch. From the moment you pick up your sensational thin crust Mediterranean pizza—topped with spinach, tomatoes, feta and olives—at the gleaming wood bar for a late evening snack, you’re planning your return.

Lily Asian Cuisine Sushi & Grill

104 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-925-3700 / [LilySushiAndGrill.com](#)

Peek into the arched windows of Lily Sushi on State Street. Glowing Asian lanterns and ceiling twinkle lights draw you into the simple, elegant dining room where wooden tables create a warm ambiance. The many diners and take-out orders are a testament to the great Chinese, Thai and Japanese dishes the restaurant has served for ten years. Try seafood Tom Yum soup, Singapore thin rice noodles, chicken teriyaki or a brilliant ahi tuna tower with layers of crunchy spicy tuna, crabmeat, avocado, sushi, rice and caviar. Here’s wishing them another ten years of rolling out sushi with great names like Angry Dragon and Kiss of Fire.

Talula’s Table

102 W. State St., Kennett Square
610-444-8255 / [TalulasTable.com](#)

By now, everyone is well versed on the transcendent experience of super-local dining at the Farm House Table or smaller Nook (\$115/person, 8 courses, BYOB). Drool over the seasonal menu posted on social media. Yet before the artisanal destination dining experience unfolds in the evening, the gourmet market serves up seasonal, homemade specialty foods for Sunday supper or take out. Along with your lemon-lavender scones, spiced salts and European-style butter in the market, pick up entrees like perfect pot roast, shrimp & grits, Kennett mushroom risotto. Or order Sunday dinner-to-go (3 composed courses, \$28/person) and enjoy meals like Mastering the Art of French Eating, with coq au vin.

Verbena BYOB

102 E. State St., Kennett Square
484-732-7932 / [VerbenaBYOB.com](#)

Open Verbena’s door to unparalleled culinary adventures. Each week’s menu is new—incorporating fine foods that local purveyors bring to the kitchen. Every course brought to the table is inventive, beautiful and exquisite to taste. Start with an *amuse bouche*—creamy, aromatic potato truffle mousse one evening, another day silky winter soup. Continue with colorful bib lettuce salads with green beans and Oxford oranges. Savor flavors of beets and brioche with

PHOENIXVILLE

Avlós

258 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-455-4110 / [AvlosGr.com](#)

At a pretty blue-and-white sign on Phoenixville’s Bridge Street, discover Avlós. The two-year-young restaurant serves superb home-cooked Greek dishes on sidewalk tables decorated with succulents bearing messages including “Peace” and “Relaxation” written in Greek, and indoors on white tablecloths by a red brick wall adorned with pretty scenes of Greece. On warm evenings, dive into the octopus lauded by noted food critic Craig Laban. In winter, order cumin-scented meatballs or lamb chops. All year around, give in and ask for a bucket of tzatziki and a Mount Olympus-sized order of fresh pita—it’s that good.

Bistro on Bridge

208-212 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-935-7141 / [BistroOnBridge.com](#)

Grab stools by a window at Bistro on Bridge to watch Phoenixville’s outdoor excitement while chowing down cheesesteak eggs rolls and double onion cheddar burgers. Imbibe Wolfe’s Neck IPA, sweet Chocolate Milk Stout or bourbon specially selected for the Bistro. Enjoy Southwest salads with blackberry margaritas or pear martinis. For more fun and games, climb the steps—past the tap handle-chandelier—to second-floor picnic tables by the rooftop’s VW van. Find live music, late night snacks and drinks at a “beer lover’s paradise,” as one fan put it. On Sundays, brunch on Belgian waffles and mimosas. There’s so much to love here.

Great American Pub

148 Bridge St., Phoenixville
610-917-3333 / [TheGreatAmericanPub.com](#)
(Locations in Wayne and Conshohocken)

Bridge Street landmark, the Great American Pub is a one of three family-owned restaurants, this one in the historic Columbia Hotel. We’re big fans of the friendly, welcoming outdoor spaces—both the porch and side patio—along with the gaslight bar and cozy dining rooms. The versatile, affordable menu is stuffed with vegan, GF and meat-lovers options. Enjoy bar food classics—wings, fried pickles, giant pretzels, quesadillas—along with mesquite barbecue ribs and smoked brisket served many ways, including over fries. And come for the fun—open mic comedy, bingo, quizzo, karaoke, corn hole tournaments or whatever will engage the community.



Stone House Grille



Brick & Brew

Steel City Coffeehouse & Brewery

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

Laura Vernola and Ed Simpson took over the coffeehouse—now styled as a café, brewery and listening room—in 2016. Since then, it’s become a haven for local musicians, with performances scheduled, generally on Saturday nights. Steel City’s simple but excellent food is available at breakfast, lunch and, on Thursday open mic night, dinner. They serve eggs, sandwiches, flatbreads, muffins and cookies, but watch for the specials like spicy Thai peanut noodles. The small brewery features Steel Mill Stout, plus there’s Maple Springs wine and New Liberty Distillery liquor. A community gathering spot, seven days a week.

Stone House Grille

1300 Hares Hill Rd., Kimberton
610-933-1147 / StoneHouseGrillePA.com

A neighborhood gem in the crossroads town of Kimberton, Stone House Grille is a self-described “groovy vibe American restaurant” with tempting specials, live music and seasonal beer garden. The main source of beer here (previously BYOB) is Hares Hill Brewery, named for the restaurant’s address. There’s brunch, the Happiest Hour (at 2 on Saturdays, at 4 other days), and a standard menu of burgers, tacos and grits. It’s the specials, and organically and locally sourced ingredients, that make the pilgrimage worthwhile: Ba-Boom pork chop with oyster mushrooms and savory brown butter, short rib nachos with shrimp grits, beef tips stew with lemon whipped potatoes. Go before it’s discovered.

MEDIA

Azie

217 W. State St., Media
610-566-4750 / Azie-Restaurant.com
(Location in Villanova)

Step into a world transformed. Lights, mirrors, lacquer, glass. You’ll feel a bit hipper when you enter. The three-chef team—Jose Villanueva, Akihiko Takeshima San, Ken Dumrongkitmun—offers a menu that’s decidedly Asian—sushi, sashimi, nigiri, tempura, with global influences. So many choices—from classic and signature sushi rolls (try the Azie, New Philly or TNT), rice and noodles, main courses (crispy duck, kobe beef burger), to poke bowls and tempura cauliflower bowl. Specialty and signature cocktails or draft and bottled beers are best enjoyed on the rooftop deck, in season of course, as you take in the view of State Street.

Brick & Brew

26 W. State St., Media
484-443-8441 / BricknBrewPub.com
(Locations in Havertown and Malvern)

The Media location was the second of the group of B&Bs, after Havertown and before Malvern. Each place has a distinctive vibe, matching its hometown, like the cozy feel in Media’s location in “Everybody’s Hometown.” A tempting beer list is on tap, including Troegs’ Sunshine Pils and Cape May IPA Nitro, along with fun cocktails (Darby Road). The apps—stuffed pineapple with pulled pork, Delco barbecue sauce and avocado salsa—and upscale bar food are the reasons to go. Grilled octopus salad, fried pickles, pulled pork sandwich, belly pork burnt ends, short rib pizza, will grab and fully satisfy. Maybe Mare of Easttown would have been happier had she dropped in ...

Margaret Kuo’s Kitchen

1109 W. Baltimore Pk, Ste. A, Media
610-891-8880 / MargaretKuosKitchen.com
(Location in Wayne)

Asian food fans are familiar with Margaret Kuo. Starting with the Peking at Granite Run Mall in 1974, and adding locations in Wayne, Media, Malvern and the Lancaster Farmer’s Market, her restaurants won numerous awards: from the *Wine Spectator*, *Zagat’s*, *Philly Mag* and others. But although some locations were sold or closed, last year Margaret Kuo’s Kitchen at the Promenade at Granite Run opened. Master Chefs Su Lin and Sean Wei, both long-time veterans with Kuo, were in command. The aroma and taste of Peking duck, mu shu pork, cumin sauteed lamb and hundreds of other Szechuan and Cantonese dishes sang from the menu. We’re delighted she’s back in Media.

Pinocchio’s Restaurant & Beer Garden To Go

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

Since 1955 Pinocchio’s has been a family-friendly destination as well as Delco’s first pizzeria and first bottle shop, now run by its third generation. And it’s as a bottle shop that its popularity grew, drawing beer fans to talk brews, mix and match six-packs, and fill growlers and crowlers from 25 rotating taps. Boasting 1,000 varieties of beer, with 200 coming from craft or international breweries, this is indeed a beer mecca. They get new beers in every weekday, so stop in and see what there is to discover in the

long line of display cases. A rainbow of bottles and cans to delight beer nerds and new fans alike.

The Towne House

117 Veterans Sq., Media
484-445-2041 / TowneHousePA.com

All Delco was relieved when the iconic D’Ignazio’s Town House, site of 65 years’ of meals and memories, reopened under new management in late 2020. Diners have gotten to know Town House 2.0 and found their favorites among the five reimagined spaces, giving raves for the décor and ambiance: Idlewild’s outdoor courtyard with light fare and summer drinks, Shebeen’s Irish pub with 300+ whiskeys, Colony Club’s sophisticated velvet lounge, Towne House’s farm-to-table update, and Towne Hall’s event space with stage. Food and drink are properly themed for each space, with a clear nod to Irish fare—Irish breakfast to traditional fish & chips.

MALVERN

Classic Diner

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

Who doesn’t love food from an iconic diner? At Malvern’s cozy, upscale Classic Diner, plates are loaded with your favorite brunch foods with creative twists and seemingly infinite scrumptious choices. Add apple sausage to egg platters, or deliciously thick smoked salmon slices and heaps of mushrooms to egg and cheese sandwiches. Ask for tomatoes—or not—on avocado toast with chia seeds and sprouts on multi-grain bread. Indulge in the chia pudding parfait with vanilla, maple, berries, pears, nuts and more. Try delivery, pick up or dine in at booths and counters looking out sunny windows or into the servers’ galley.

Dixie Picnic

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

Dixie Picnic is still serving up down-home comfort food and—as its sign says—sunshine, even when it’s cloudy. Whether you’re eating in or taking out, the smell of lip-smacking, Southern family cooking greets you when you open the door. Known and loved for weekday boxed lunches and “upcakes” (upside-down cupcakes with more surfaces for frosting) slathered in sweet buttercream icing, the restaurant also offers salty Smithfield ham biscuits, pimento cheese sandwiches with ham and cucumbers,

pulled pork with Georgia barbecue sauce, caramel applesauce, deviled eggs and soups from scratch when the weather turns cold. Bette, Bucky and Mama—kin whose original recipes are used today—would be proud.

The Flying Pig Saloon

121 E. King St., Malvern
610-578-9208 / Facebook.com/TheFlyingPigSaloon

Looking for a place “where everybody knows your name ...”? We found one on King Street in Malvern. If you haven’t been, make a resolution to visit The Flying Pig to experience the hip, cozy atmosphere where 20-somethings and 60+-somethings hang out together and rub elbows at the bar that harkens back to a small town pub. Sip a craft beer from their stellar selection (some hard-to-find surprises), or have an old-fashioned cocktail. Then tuck into their surprisingly good bar comfort food and specials, like pork belly kabobs. Enjoy live music and a collection of pigs decorating the interior.

General Warren

9 Old Lancaster Rd., Malvern
610-296-3637 / GeneralWarren.com

You have to look back to 1745 for the origins of the Inne, which became the General Warren Tavern in 1825, named after Dr. Joseph Warren, the first American general killed in the Revolution. As a stage coach stop, post office, temperance hotel and nursing home, it survived until the 1950s, when it again opened as a bar and inn. Since 1984, it’s been a restaurant, one of the finest in Chester County, offering 275 years of hospitality. Dine in the tavern or restaurant, on patio or terrace—it’s all white-table-cloth excellence. Proprietor Patrick Byrne makes sure every detail is perfect, from your Old Fashioned at the bar to your beef Wellington at your table. Whether it’s a wedding, anniversary dinner or Wednesday night out, every visit is memorable and why we love it.

Restaurant Alba

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

The best restaurants evolve with the times, and Restaurant Alba has done just that. Starting in 2005 as a small BYOB serving dinner near the train station, it’s grown to adding lunch service along with a well-curated wine list highlighting Italian wines. Adjusting to recent conditions, its always hyper-local menu (think arancini with



The Towne House



Flying Pig Saloon



General Warren

Birchrun Hills cheese and Chester County honey) has turned more rustic, featuring homier dishes. Throughout the years the focus has remained on food cooked on the wood-fired grill and hand-made pastas—grilled bruschette topped with burrata, grilled grass-fed flank steak and hand-cut tagliatelle. They’ve earned their three bells from *The Inquirer’s* food critic.

Tonino’s Pizza & Pasta Co.

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

The Sotto family’s 40+ years of hospitality experience creates your fulsome dining experience at Tonino’s. Some mistake it for a mere pizza joint, in part because the Neopolitan pies, lined up as you enter, are a major draw—thin, crispy-crust goodness, with gourmet varieties, a 30-inch option and Granma’s square pie bring in those searching for pizza perfection. But there’s so much more at this BYOB with a private room in the back—fresh semolina house-made pasta, eggplant stuffed ravioli, seafood specials like branzino, plus chicken and veal Italian classics of marsala, piccata, parmigiana, pontevecchio. Come for the pizza but come back for the pasta and seafood.

WAYNE

A Taste of Britain

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

Whether you go for “pinkies up” or “pinkies down,” your spot of tea at A Taste of Britain is spot-on. The cozy English tea-room serves authentic, traditional English recipes on lovely china. There are towers of tea sandwiches: cheese and chutney, chicken or egg salad, cucumber and cream cheese. Dine on Cornish pasties of beef and potato in puff pastry or shepherd’s pie. Treat yourself to a Bakewell tart with custard and jam or gingerbread with lemon curd for “afters.” There’s always the favorite of the Queen and the rest of us—scones and a pot of tea.

Autograph Brasserie

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

Love American pop culture and the greats who influenced it? Autograph Brasserie in Wayne is for you. From the celebrity autographs, photographs and album covers adorning the

walls to the menu of classics including vegetarian options, Autograph is the spot for wonderful food and atmosphere. Braised short ribs, Parker House rolls, shrimp cocktails and the Signature Sundae with the divine brownie at the bottom get high marks. Wine Not Sundays are a good time for checking the intensive wine list. Don’t forget to look up while you’re in the bar—the trombone, sax and music-inspired chandelier coming from the ceiling are loads of fun.

Black Powder Tavern

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

Washington ate here. He probably slept here, too, as did several of his troops. You can have more fun by stopping here for Happy Hour. Bernie Bottmeyer, General Manager, offers about two dozen beers on tap; several wines as well. The bites are delicious: southwest chicken meatballs, bacon-wrapped pretzel dog, bacon and caramelized onion flatbread. Chef Robert Stegbauer suggests you stay for dinner: chicken potpie, beer-battered shrimp, fish & chips, glazed meatloaf. Top it off with apple crisp à la mode or pumpkin cheesecake. Believe me, the soldiers of the Revolution didn’t have it nearly as good.

Christopher’s A Neighborhood Place

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

Since 2001 Christopher’s has been a tried-and-try neighborhood place. It’s in its name, website and DNA. Though we were sad when the Malvern location closed, the original Wayne spot is still going strong, seven days a week serving lunch, brunch and dinner from a wide ranging menu backed up by a full bar. From meatloaf to mahi mahi tacos, with specials like risotto pan seared halibut with pine nut brown butter, you’ll find solid American fare with upscale options. Even the kids menu ranges from chicken fingers to salmon tails. So order your Yuengling, Elijah Craig small batch, or skinny spicy margarita and enjoy the warm atmosphere here. Even if it’s not in your neighborhood.

Rosalie Italian Soul Food

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

They had us at Italian soul food. That’s even before seeing the smashing 2020 redesign

inside the historic Wayne Hotel and the promise that the food and drink will “transport you and fill your soul.” Come for the Happiest Hour, enjoy light fare in the Atrio near the bar and fireplace, or choose more substantial options in the exquisite dining rooms. You can even eat in the covered patio that’s heated for comfort when it’s cold outside and even more delightful when it’s warm. The branzino (with caponata, castelvetro olive), casoncelli (veal, golden raisin, amaretti) and fig pizzas are favorites from this newest addition to the Fearless Restaurant Group (Autograph, White Dog Cafes).

Teresa’s Café and TND

124 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne
610-293-9909 / Terasas-Cafe.com

Imagine, this destination beer spot in the ‘burbs has now hit 15 years! During that time Teresa’s Next Door (or TND) has accumulated its fair share of accolades: *Philly Mag’s* Best of the Suburbs, three stars from *The Inquirer’s* Craig LaBan, and James Beard Award semi-finalist for Bar Program. They’ve continued to offer their superb selections of beers—from Pliny the Elder to the best local brews to a gluten-free tapbox—along with 300 whiskeys from around the world and more (16 gins, 8 tonics). The menu is similarly diverse, ranging from hyper-local foraged chicken mushroom crab cakes to triple cheese-burger pizza. Even during the worst of the pandemic, you could enjoy mussels, waterzooi and other specialties.

WESTERN MAIN LINE

Nectar

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

Executive Chef Patrick Feury had a storied career (Waldorf Astoria and Le Cirque in New York, Les Olivades in Paris, Le Borgata in Atlantic City) before joining Chef de Partie Kenny Huang and Pastry Chef Julie Waters at Nectar where, in beautiful high ceilings and low light, they oversee a brilliant Asian-inspired menu. The chicken curry dumplings and Vietnamese beef tenderloins starters are sublime. The specialty rolls are the next treat. Main courses such as rack of lamb, filet mignon or wok lobster follow, with several lo mains and rices on the side. For dessert, the chocolate torte is truly special. No wonder Nectar is consistently ranked one of the best restaurants in the suburbs.

more LOCAL FOOD NEWS

In this busy year for local dining, there’s more news about restaurants opening, returning, expanding or doing something new. Here are a few quick bits of news.



- The Kennett/Unionville dining destination **Sovana Bistro** is open again after its devastating fire just before the pandemic. Return to enjoy their stylish menu, hip bar and gracious service.

- Lovers of local meats have discovered **Wyebrook Farm** is back, selling pastured Black Angus cattle and heritage Berkshire cross pigs, available for home delivery or pick up at select farmers markets.

- **Wayne’s Great American Pub** expanded ... to the roof, making it the first place in town with a rooftop bar—the Skytop Garden—overlooking North Wayne Ave. and the train station. Max capacity 200, in season.

- In the news last fall for sightings of actor Adam Sandler, Wayne’s **DanDan** opened a new location in Ardmore’s Suburban Square for those yearning for good Sichuan/Taiwanese. Wonder if they’ll make special pork-free dumplings for us, too?

- **The Social on 30** in Downingtown is an offshoot of The Social in West Chester, both specializing in Southern scratch cooking—think comfort food, like shrimp and grits, with New Orleans inspired touches. Owner Don Moore was attracted to the new town by its amazing growth.

- West Chester favorite **Core de Roma** (heart of Rome) opened a new location this past summer in the former spot for La Collina in Belmont Hills. Expect the same authentic Roman cuisine from Luigi and Judy Pinti at this sister BYOB.

- Sadly Bryn Mawr’s glittering Enoteca Tredici closed the doors of one of the loveliest bars on the Main Line. Yet happily, **Marc Vetri** (independent of the Urban Outfitters umbrella) announced his plans to open an Italian steakhouse there with business partner Jeff Benjamin. A fun, not stuffy concept is planned under the esteemed Vetri name.

- The elegant **Blue Elephant** in Pottstown, part of the sprawling Win Signature Restaurant Group (Teikoku, Azie), plans to open a second location on North Wayne Ave. in Wayne (former Matador space). Expect its modern take on Asian fusion food.

- **Nick Filet**, home of the steak-house-quality sandwich (filet mignon steak sandwiches and lobster rolls), has expanded from Paoli, Cape May to Wayne and soon to West Chester, with plans to continue growing nationwide—Orlando, Dallas.

- Nostalgia lovers are anticipating the opening of the sixth branch of a **Nifty Fifty’s** franchise on West Chester Pike in Newtown Square, near Route 252. For your 1950s burger and fries retro fix.

- **Artisan’s Exchange** has gone beyond bringing Philly-famous Federal Donuts to Chester County by now offering Dizengoff hummus—the same nectar served at award-winning Zahav in Philly.

- New management in the front of the house (Steve Khuu of Enotica Tredici) and in the kitchen (Chef Gotteher from Ripplewood) will transform **Villanova**

U’s Refectory from a generic eatery convenient when visiting the campus to a destination offering one of the best burgers around. Just ask Craig LaBan.

- **Levante Stables** reopened in the 19th-century German farmhouse-and-stables property renovated into a year-round indoor/outdoor taproom and beer garden in Chester Springs after starting as a pop-up in 2017. We’re major fans of beer gardens and patio imbibing—string lights, picnic tables, red umbrellas, food trucks, music. Renovations have made the interior cozy for cool weather gatherings.



- **Pizza West Chester** shows what foodies will endure for a great pie. No online, phone, GrubHub or DoorDash orders. To get one of Speer Madanat’s pizzas, it’s walk in and cash only for a slice or a whole plain or pepperoni charred-crust pizza. Oh, and weekdays only. Details on Instagram.

- Horray! Fearless Restaurants (Autograph, Rosalie and more) bought the historic Vickers Tavern property in Exton. Plans are to make it the fifth **White Dog Café** (Philly, Wayne, Haverford, Glen Mills). Thanks for saving this classic spot! ♦

Appetites on Main

286 Main St., Exton

610-594-2030 / [AppetitesOnMain.com](#)

If you want a place to watch the game, choose Appetites on Main, with 18 TVs, 14 beers on tap and over 60 in bottles. You can cheer—or boo—your team as you chow down on wings, fries, potato skins, eggrolls, potstickers, sliders ... virtually every kind of finger food you and other fans might want, and all in huge portions! If you'd like less excitement and gratuitous commentary, grab a table in the huge, pet-friendly patio. The doggie menu offers six options for your furry friend, from chopped beef to cut-up hot dogs. Night owls love the late closing time.

Bluefin

555 Wellington Sq., Exton

610-458-3234 / [BluefinEagleview.com](#)

(Locations in Bala Cynwyd and East Norriton)

This is the third restaurant—the others are in East Norriton and Bala Cynwyd—of owner Chef Yong Kim and his mentor Chef Niche San. All are dedicated to excellent Japanese cuisine, although Eagleview adds some specialty items to the classics. Of course the bluefin tuna, salmon, yellowtail, trout, and snapper are top notch. Crab, shrimp and shellfish also are first rate. But look for fish and other items not typically found on other sushi restaurants: sea robin, monkfish, sea urchin. Keep in mind, beer or wine is not on the menu: it's BYOB.

Mama Wong

268 Eagleview Blvd., Exton

484-713-8888 / [BestMamaWong.com](#)

Song Li, CEO of an Exton-based medical company, wanted his employees to feel at home, so he founded Mama Wong's and turned to Hongbin Luo, formerly executive chef at Han Dynasty, for inspiration. The menu draws on Sichuan and Cantonese dishes—chicken lo mein, stir-fried pork, sizzling beef—although Luo's take on these dishes tastes so much better than versions you may know. Insiders tip: order in advance for the Peking duck. And a warning, especially to Westerners: some dishes are very hot! And others may not be for the timid: griddle pork intestines. Wonder if Craig LaBan ordered those during his visit ...

Ron's Original Bar & Grille

74 E. Uwchlan Ave., Exton

610-594-9900 / [RonsOriginal.com](#)

If there's a restaurant we'd call home, it would be Ron's. For over 30 years, Ron Inverso

has treated us to pizzas, ovals, pasta, grilled sandwiches, piadini and hoagies—all fresh, all made from scratch, basically like mama used to make. First, pick from among 30 beers, 30 wines, mostly by the glass, plus about a dozen cocktails—perhaps honey pear bourbon? Then choose an app, maybe an order of Victoria's (Secret) Fries. And then, a Caprese melt sandwich or eggplant piadini, or something more substantial like the chef special bourbon-infused, bone-in pork chop. Eat every last crumb because soon you'll be back for more.

AROUND CHESTER COUNTY**Amani's BYOB**

105 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown

484-237-8179 / [AmanisBYOB.com](#)

All local restaurants have been hard hit by the pandemic, but only a few suffered a follow-up blow from Hurricane Ida in September. Damage to Downingtown's Amani's required gutting and professional cleaning before rebuilding could begin. Take-out Thanksgiving meals were a small step back after flooding and destruction wrecked the recently renovated restaurant. Fortunately a \$50k GoFundMe campaign reached its goal to allow rebuilding, with much of the work done by the chefs. Hats off to owners Jeanine and Jon Armann (a three-time Best Chef in Chester County). We hope to see more Instagram posts like the pre-Ida one from September 1 showing surf & turf carpaccio, gala apple gastrique with micro borage. We love that it's reopened!

Bloom Southern Kitchen

123 Pottstown Pike, Chester Springs

484-359-4144 / [BloomSouthernKitchen.com](#)

The bright modern farmhouse renovation of the historic Eagle Tavern that is Bloom Southern Kitchen was warmly welcomed by diners hungry for farm-to-table cooking with a Southern influence. These are times when comfort food hits the spot and a menu of Southern classics is right on target. Come here for gumbo, barbecue shrimp and heirloom grits, Nashville hot chicken, braised collards, cornbread battered fried okra and, of course, fried green tomatoes. The drinks menu is also Southern inflected, including honeysuckle cocktails and mint juleps. Whiskey and bourbon selections are impressive

and organized into four tiers. Makes you happy that Happy Hour recently returned.

Catherine's Restaurant

1701 W. Doe Run Rd., Unionville

610-347-2227 / [CatherinesRestaurant.com](#)

The candles glow. Fresh roses on the table charm. Catherine's is just the place for a special occasion or any evening with people you love. Once Unionville's general store, the restaurant with front red-and-white-striped awnings and a lush garden patio in the back exudes character. Its friendly service lives up to the reputation of Catherine Davis, a long-time beloved waitress in Philly years ago, who gave the restaurant her name. The seafood is delicious: blackened sea scallops, halibut, superlative mushroom soup with lump crabmeat. Past country roads, old homes, fields and foliage, so even getting there is a treat.

Station Tap

207 W. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown

484-593-0560 / [StationTaproom.com](#)

Across from the Downingtown SEPTA station, Station Taphouse is a must-stop. Yes, it has plenty of brews on tap, more in bottles. But it's the convivial atmosphere and surprisingly creative menu that keeps loyal fans returning. Cumin barbecue wings, chili-glazed pork sandwich, pan-seared scallops ... yes! Plus specials like duck confit poutine, fall cassoulet, topped off with a chai pumpkin cupcake iced with brown sugar buttercream. For more on tap, beer to go, cocktails and wine, visit the Bottle Room next door. And drink local.

The Whip Tavern

1383 N. Chatham Rd., Coatesville

610-383-0600 / [TheWhipTavern.com](#)

Ah, the Southern Chester County countryside! Horse country, wide open spaces, rolling hills. And there, on a winding country road, sits K.C. Culp's intimate English pub, feeding mums, chums, dates and mates, all chatting horseracing and polo, watching rugby or cricket on the telly. Join in, any day but Tuesday, and dine on shepherd's pie, fish and chips, bangers and mash, Scotch egg, Welsh rarebit and sticky toffee pudding. There's even haggis on the fifth weekend of the month. Wash it down with a pint of Smithwick's Red Ale, Moreland Old Speckled Hen, or Guinness draught and feel like a Brit for a bit.

DELAWARE**Banks' Seafood Kitchen and Raw Bar**

101 S. Market St., Wilmington

302-777-1500 / [BanksSeafoodKitchen.com](#)

We love seafood with a water view, even if the water is a river. So meals at Banks' Seafood along Wilmington's Riverwalk are extra special. Chef/owner David Banks has a long history with this spot, working almost 30 years with the predecessor restaurants (Harry's Seafood Grill, then Harry's Fish Market) before taking ownership in 2018. Dine on Blue Point or Colville Bay oysters at the raw bar, order award-winning crab cakes or Lobster in the Nude (shell removed). There are seafood nachos, snapper cerviche and sashimi selections, plus whole branzino, Faro Island salmon, big eye tuna and more.

Buckley's Tavern

5812 Kennett Pike, Wilmington

302-656-9776 / [BuckleysTavern.com](#)

Once a private home on a dirt road, then stagecoach station, tollgate, taproom and ice cream shop, the building has seen people come, go and come again since 1817. Today we know the white two-story building with wrap-around porch as Buckley's Tavern, where

Rolls-Royces mix with pickup trucks in the parking lot. The food and the comfortable yet classy atmosphere are satisfying from start to finish. Dig into burgers, potpie or fish and chips. Savor spicy Thai noodle soup or poached pear salad. End your workday on the porch, rooftop deck or by the fireplace with a Dark and Stormy cocktail or the Painkiller, with pineapple, rum, orange juice, coconut and nutmeg.

La Fia

421 N. Market St., Wilmington

302-543-4474 / [LaFiaWilmington.com](#)

What's not to love about chef-driven restaurants? Especially when a Philly-famous chef like Bryan Sikora (Django BYOB, Talula's Table) serves up an inventive, seasonal menu featuring small plates that have attracted crowds to downtown Wilmington since 2013. Do a pre-theater dinner (The Grand and The Queen are nearby) or snag the \$35 prix fixe, three-course bargain on Wednesdays. Come for the branzino with herbed faro, Long Island duck with cashew-herb puree and so much more. Order a specialty cocktail and see why the sister Merchant Bar opened across the street. The Crow Bar at Trolley Square and Heath Kitchen in Kennett the brand.

Le Cavalier

42 W. 11th St., Wilmington

302-594-3154 / [LeCavalierDE.com](#)

Wilmington is justly proud of the latest version of the famed Green Room in the landmark Hotel Du Pont. The widely anticipated 2020 opening of Le Cavalier (or Le Cav) has been followed by the foodiverse and local foodies alike. Reviews are positive on the thoughtful transformation of the classic space to a more accessible neo-brasserie with a lively bar—try the Hotel Du Pont cocktail of cognac and fino sherry. Chef Tyler Akins created a menu mixing Provençal, North African and Middle Eastern flavors. Of note: onion soup, gnocchi Parisienne with caviar and Le Big Cav Burger with special sauce. Recent Friday afternoon Holiday Teas were a nod to the grand tradition of this special place. ♦

The local dining scene is changing rapidly, so check websites and other sources for up-to-date information. And for more great places to eat, read the Dining Guide in this issue and our Food News columns and dining coverage on our website, [CountyLinesMagazine.com](#).

