

Strolling Through Summer on West Chester's Gay Street



THE OPEN AIR MARKET KEEPS THE FUN OUTSIDE.

Cara Corridoni

EACH FRIDAY FROM MAY THROUGH SEPTEMBER, concrete barriers are set up and traffic is detoured. Cars are once again prohibited from driving down one of the Borough's main thoroughfares.

Out come the dining tables of all varieties, plus umbrellas, planters and partitions. It's goodbye to vehicle exhaust and thumping basses, and hello to tantalizing aromas and leisurely conversations as visitors enjoy a world-class meal and families gather at the 44 West Plaza, ice cream cones in hand.

West Chester first closed down its popular Gay Street corridor in the summer of 2020, a quick reaction made to help the town's renowned dining scene as the grip of the pandemic tightened. Even rushed and roughly defined, the concept was an immediate success. In the years that followed, businesses and community leaders have worked to fine-tune the design and are now looking to develop a permanent plan.

The Borough of West Chester hired consultants to work on ways to replace concrete barriers with permanent fixtures, add greater accessibility and have street activities spread out along the street, but the

changes are still at least a season away. In the meantime, welcome the 2023 seasonal menus, displays of merchandise and lilting laughter as another season of the Borough's outdoor party gets underway.

SET THE SCENE

As you head to Gay Street this summer, you'll find the Borough air alive with music, especially in the evenings. On the street's west end, Stove & Tap and Saloon 151 promise live entertainment from Friday through Sunday. Bar Avalon and The Social have similar plans on the street's east end.

The musical fervor picks up a notch on First Fridays each month, when the Downtown Business District hosts its Summer Concert Series. Live performances are expected from Chester County favorites, soul infusion band CayaSol and rockers Onyx & Honey. Find performances on the historic Courthouse steps on the first Fridays of June, July and August. And look for fun extras like complimentary face painting and free metered parking.

A Gay Street fixture since 1929, Taylor's Music Store is planning to take it a beat further, bringing the people to the music. In

addition to providing a stage for established and up-and-coming musicians, the longtime music shop hopes to create an interactive experience.

They'll be setting up drum and ukulele circles on select Saturday afternoons this summer. During the performances, instruments will be arranged in a circle on the street, and the sessions will be led by instructors from the school. But anyone — regardless of ability — is welcome to join, using extra instruments available for those who want to jam. Check Taylor's social media accounts for information about dates and times.

Come down on Saturday mornings for a different type of transformative experience. Follow the soothing sounds of ambient music to the front of the Gay Street Post Office building, where you'll find local yogis setting up their mats for a possibly (depending on the weather) hot yoga session. Every other Saturday, Deanna Stissi of Triple-Threat Fitness will host an all-levels yoga class in the street. Classes begin at 9 a.m. No registration needed, just bring a mat and \$5 cash.

RETAIL THERAPY

Now that you've left the stress of the week behind, it's time to take advantage of some therapeutic shopping. As you wander down the trafficless street, pause to thumb through racks of the season's latest fashions. Always on trend, Blink has a stock of strappy tanks and flirty slip dresses. Floral prints in all shapes and sizes are popular at Green Eyed Lady and Kaly. Keep walking and you'll find Tish Boutique continuing to straddle the line between tailored and casual. With plenty of tie-dye, denim and linen, your day-to-night beach wardrobe awaits on a rack.

Just across the street is Tish Kids. Opened last fall, it takes its first shot at summer styling with a selection of bathing suits from imaginative kidswear designer Molo and a collection of comfy coverups for your little one. On select Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. during the summer, Tish Kids will host a story hour. Register through their Instagram if your kiddo is interested.

Not sure what look you're going for? Squeeze in a trip to newcomer Bobbles and Lace. A block off Gay on North High Street, the shop is a modern clothing store that promises customers a complete retail experience. "What sets us apart is our styling. Every client who walks in will be styled head to toe, whether they leave with one piece or a whole wardrobe," says owner Crystal Gambardella.

While you're on High Street, stop in at Mayday, West Chester's newest cafe. Soak in the West Coast vibes, browse a collection of gift items you won't find elsewhere, and refuel your lazy afternoon with one of their specialty coffees. Sample different roasts at their pour-over station or take my recommendation and try the housemade iced honey-lavender latte.

TAKING IT ALL IN

Summer in West Chester just wouldn't be the same without plates piled high with your seasonal favorites. And this year promises to be



Stove & Tap



Saloon 151



Blink



Bar Avalon



Greystone Oyster Bar



The Social

as delicious as ever as chefs introduce the new while embracing trends that bring classics back to the dining forefront.

Maybe it's the continuing stress of the grown-up world, but the National Restaurant Association found comfort food will be a big dining trend this year. Luckily there are countless ways to get the warm and fuzzies while dining in West Chester, but perhaps none better than to embrace a simpler time with a perfectly cooked Avalon Burger from West Chester staple Bar Avalon. Topped with bacon and cheddar and served with a heaping side of truffle fries, this plate's arrival chases away every care in the world.

Summer wouldn't be summer without a little seafood. To find yours, turn off Gay Street onto Church Street, stroll past the fountains of 44 West Plaza, and swing into Greystone Oyster Bar. Grab a seat at the bar and order the jumbo shrimp cocktail, served with their signature cocktail sauce in a martini glass. The mid-century classic delivers the thrill of nostalgia with the sophistication of a James Bond movie.

Looking for seafood comfort of a modern kind? The Social's New Orleans BBQ Shrimp is sauteed in Cajun butter and served over goat cheese grits. So decadent it will have you wishing you were from the South.

Sundays aren't scary when you're out in downtown West Chester. Wind down the weekend with Saloon 151's popular all-you-can-eat crab legs, available summer Sundays from 3 to 9 p.m. While you're there, pop next door and check out their new tequila bar. Expect the same focus on tequila that they brought to whiskey.

Looking for something new and refreshing? Head to Teca for a glass of on-trend orange wine — an interesting wine that has nothing to do with oranges. Instead, it's a white wine made by leaving the grape skins and seeds in contact with the juice to give the wine a deep orange hue. Earlier this year, Teca began stocking wine from the Italian winery Gravner, a pioneer of the orange wine movement.

Equally refreshing if you're observing dry-June is the freshly made organic lavender lemonade from La Tartine. While you're there, sample homemade Mediterranean classics such as falafel and baba ghanouj.

IT'S BEEN AN ABSOLUTE TREAT

As your time on Gay Street begins to wind down, you've got to add that cherry on top. Whether your tastes veer toward the new and novel or cool and classic, West Chester has a place for you.

Start with the newly opened Eden Sweet House on West Gay Street, where the front case is full of homemade Asian-influenced goodies. I sampled an egg tart, featuring a sweet creamy filling inside a light, slightly crisp shell. Or choose a Japanese soy milk cream cake with strawberries, French puffs in original, chocolate or matcha, or a variety of thinly layered mille crepe cakes. All goodies are made on site by owner Steven Tso and his wife.

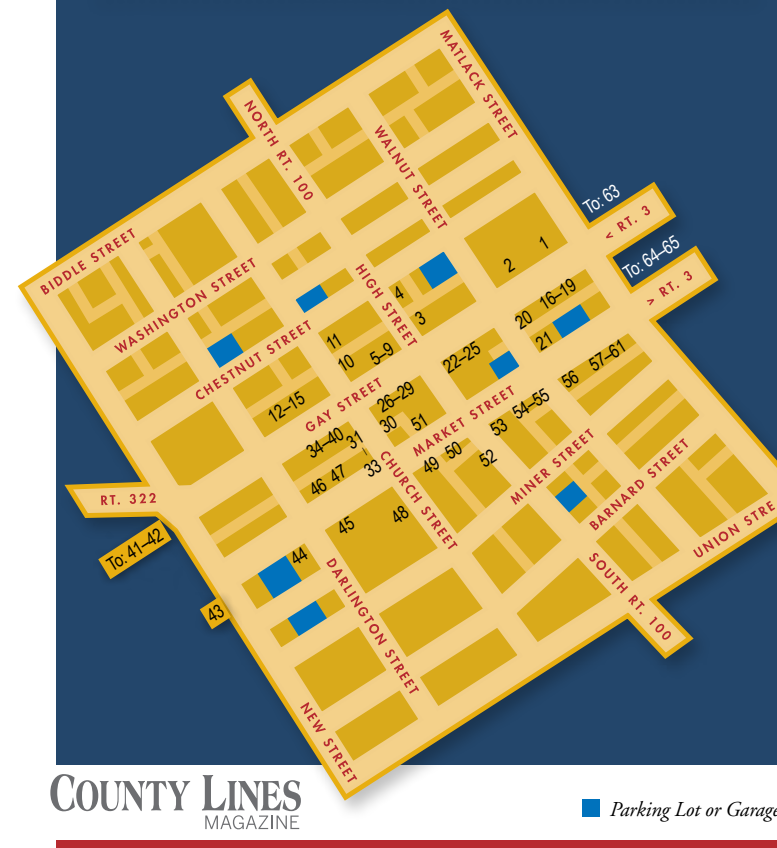
From the Far East, head farther east on Gay Street and grab a refreshing scoop of that Italian iced classic at the always fabulous D'Ascenzo's Gelato. The nationally recognized gelateria is celebrating 19 years on Gay Street with 24 daily rotating flavors served among overflowing window boxes and awnings reminiscent of a charming Italian village. Choose from classics like butter cookie and mint chip and seasonal favorites like lemon basil.

Now that you've satisfied your craving, don't forget your furry companion. Stop in at Salty PAWS, where lactose-free ice cream is made with your pup in mind. Their treats come in canine-friendly flavors like maple bacon and peanut butter and are made using dog-safe ingredients. On Gay Street, dining is dog-friendly and so is dessert.

The four closed blocks of Gay Street offer you variety — from fine dining to retail thrills to outdoor concerts and hours of people-watching. So, grab a seat and enjoy the sweetness of a mid-summer treat as the sun slowly dips behind the horizon and the air cools to a temperature that makes you just want to pause and enjoy it all for a while longer.

For more on what's happening, visit DowntownWestChester.com. ♦

Downtown West Chester



Restaurant Guide

1. Roots Cafe
2. The Social
3. Mayday Coffee & Shop
4. The Original Spence Café
5. Mae's West Chester
6. Buddy's Burgers, Breasts & Fries
7. The Couch Tomato Café
8. DP Dough
9. Iron Hill Brewery & Rest.
10. Turks Head Café
11. Kooma Japanese Rest.
12. Saloon 151
13. Blazin' J's
14. Gryphon Coffee
15. La Tartine
16. Bar Avalon
17. Taco Mar
18. FIRE Nashville Hot Chicken
19. dolce Zola
20. Split Rail Tavern
21. Limoncello Ristorante
22. Lorenzo & Sons Pizza
23. Side Bar & Restaurant
24. Teca
25. Opa Taverna
26. Sedona Taphouse
27. Kildare's Irish Pub
28. Jaco Juice & Taco Bar
29. Kung Fu Tea
30. Greystone Oyster Bar
31. Slow Hand
32. New Haven Style Pizza
33. Juice Pod
34. Stove & Tap
35. The Mediterranean
36. Jitter's Sports Bar
37. Ryan's Pub & Restaurant
38. Andiaro
39. Penn's Table
40. Wrong Crowd Brewing
41. Artillery Brewing
42. Nudy's Café
43. La Baguette Magique
44. Carlino's Specialty Foods
45. Pietro's Prime
46. Sterling Pig Brewery
47. Love Again Local
48. Market Street Grill
49. Tsunami Sushi Bar and Asian Cuisine
50. Mercato Ristorante & Bar
51. Playa Bowls
52. Barnaby's
53. Saucey's Pizza
54. Shawarma
55. Santino's Tap & Table
56. Más Mexicali Cantina
57. Bonchon Chicken
58. Rai Rai Ramen
59. Poké Bros.
60. Rize Pizza
61. Pizza West Chester
62. Manjé Caribbean Cuisine
63. Miss Winnie's
64. Peter Clark Kitchen



Salty Paws



Teca



Eden Sweet House



D'Ascenzo's Gelato

West Chester Events

Chester County History Center

THROUGH JULY 1

“Seventeen Men”—an exhibit featuring the men of the U.S. Colored Troops and their role in the Union Army during the Civil War. 225 N. High St. Tues–Sat, \$5–\$8. MyCCHC.org.

Open-Air Market in West Chester

THROUGH OCTOBER 29

Gay Street is closed to vehicles Friday morning through Monday morning. Restaurants and retail line the street, for strolling, eating, exploring the town. DowntownWestChester.com.



West Chester TAPS

Memorial Day through Labor Day
Wednesdays

Enjoy a borough-wide happy hour to unwind with friends every Wednesday, 4 to 7 pm. Participating locations offer select \$4 beers, \$5 wines and \$6 cocktails plus half-price appetizers. DowntownWestChester.com for locations.

First Fridays

JUNE 2, JULY 7, AUGUST 4

Extended hours at galleries and boutiques, restaurant specials, entertainment and more. DowntownWestChester.com.

Uptown! at Knauer Performing Arts Center

JUNE 2—INTO SEPTEMBER

June 2, Kiss The Sky; Jimi Hendrix Tribute; *June 7*, One Alternative; *June 9*, Better Than Bacon; *June 10*, Sharp Dance Company; *June 12*, Grease sing-along and costume contest; *June 24*, Green River—Creedence Clearwater Revival Tribute; *July 21*, 615 Collective. 226 N. High St. Tickets and times, UptownWestChester.org.

Turk's Head Music Festival

JUNE 4

Two stages feature seven local bands performing, plus 90 artists, craftspeople and vendors with booths in Everhart Park. 100 S. Brandywine St. Noon to 7 pm. Rain date, June 11. Free. TurksHeadFestival.com.

2023 Town Tours & Village Walks

JUNE 8—AUGUST 17

This year, “Our Agricultural Heritage” will kick

off on Thursday, June 8, at the United Methodist Church, 129 S. High St. 5 to 7:30 pm. Tours continue on Thursday evenings. ChesCo.org/Planning/TownTours.

Summer Solstice Music Festival

JUNE 10

A family-friendly music festival supporting live local music and celebrating the start of summer. Benefits and held at Brandywine Red Clay Alliance, 1760 Unionville Wawaset Rd. 2 to 10 pm. \$25–\$75. WayKool.com.

Music at Marshall

JUNE 16, JULY 6, 27, AUGUST 17

Picnic concerts in Marshall Square Park. Food trucks open at 5 pm. Music at 6:30. *June 15*, Sin Brothers; *July 6*, Slingshot; *July 27*, Butterfoot; *Aug. 17*, Chico's Vibe. Check website for weather updates. 200 E. Marshall St. 6:30. Free. MarshallSquarePark.org.

Fête de la Musique World Music Day

JUNE 21

Showcasing local musical talent. Stroll through town and listen to musicians as they perform on street corners, sidewalks, plazas and more. 11 am to 9 pm. Free. DowntownWestChester.com.



Concerts in the Park

JUNE 22, JULY 20, AUGUST 4

Bring a chair or blanket and kick back to enjoy live music. Bands TBD. Food trucks on site. *June 22*, Hoopes Park, 700 Hoopes Park Ln.; *July 20*, Everhart Park, 100 S. Brandywine St.; *Aug. 4*, John O. Green Park, S. Matlack & E. Miner Sts. 6:30 pm. West-Chester.com.

Family Fest at The American Helicopter Museum

JUNE 24

Family and fun with helicopter rides, classic car and motorcycle show, food trucks, inflatable games, static aircraft displays, music and more. 1220 American Blvd. 10 to 5. \$20; under 5, free. AmericanHelicopter.Museum.

Touch A Truck Day – Night Out Against Crime

AUGUST 1

Emergency responders are on hand (ambulanc-

es, fire trucks, police cars) as well as games, rides, food trucks, face painting and more. West Chester Henderson High School, 400 Montgomery Ave. 6 to 8 pm. West-Chester.com.

Movie in the Park

AUGUST 11

Bring your blanket, chairs and picnic to Bayard Rustin Park for a family movie (TBD). 401 E. Gay St. Movie starts at dusk. West-Chester.com.

SHiNE in the VINES

SEPTEMBER DATE TBD

Celebrating 24 years of supporting patients living with cancer. Benefits the Abramson Cancer Center at Chester County Hospital. Check website for location. PatientSHiNE.org.

21st Up On The Roof

SEPTEMBER 16

A fundraiser benefiting the West Chester Downtown Foundation. Enjoy food by Limoncello and John Serock Catering. Desserts by some of West Chester's favorites. Complimentary beer, wine and the always-popular Rooftop Martini. Rooftop, Chestnut Street Garage, 14 E. Chestnut St. 5:30 pm. DowntownWestChester.com.

42nd Annual Chester County Restaurant Festival

SEPTEMBER 17

Local vendors and restaurants take over downtown West Chester, serving up delicious, gourmet, ethnic and unique favorites. Plus a Beer and Wine Garden. West-Chester.com.

WCU Family Weekend Meets Homecoming 2023

SEPTEMBER 29—OCTOBER 1

West Chester University hosts families, alumni, students, faculty, staff and community members for a weekend of programs, athletic events, school spirit and lots of fun. Visit WCUPA.edu.

82nd Chester County Day House Tour

OCTOBER 7

Longest running house tour in the country, organized by the Women's Auxiliary to Chester County Hospital, showcases the history, architecture, art, landscape and antiques that exemplify fine Chester County living. Tickets on sale this summer. ChesterCountyDay.com.

Rotary Club of West Chester Chili Cook-Off

OCTOBER DATE TBD

Over 70 chili-cooking teams—businesses, nonprofits, hometown cooks—line the streets and compete for prizes. Sample as many as you can. Vote for your favorite. Benefits local nonprofits. Gay St. WestChesterChiliCookOff.com. ♦