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Tequila University

Jan 2012

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Photo Courtesy Verdad Restaurant & Tequila Bar

In addition to all the wisdom imparted by their professors, students learn lots of valuable things at college: how to do their own laundry, how to manage their money and schedules, and perhaps one of the most important life skills—how to drink.

Wait, what's that you say? You didn't take that last course? You were more likely to spend your evenings in the library instead of the bar? Well, fear not. Now that all those hours cozing up to periodicals have turned you into a super success, you can begin your study of the really important stuff at the Tequila University hosted by Verdad Restaurant & Tequila Bar in Bryn Mawr.

And never has school been more fun. At each of the "university's" events (held on the third Thursday of every month), you'll get to enjoy a tapas menu designed specifically to go with a variety of tequilas. At the end of the courses, you'll know your reposado from your anejo and you'll have a certificate to prove it. Courses, which start at 7pm, require reservations

Verdad Restaurant & Tequila Bar; 818 W Lancaster Avenue, Bryn Mawr; 610.520.9100; verdadrestaurant.com



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Where's the beef? Who cares!

Dec 2011

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"Eat your vegetables." It's a timeless refrain from parents around the country trying to get their children to down a boring scoop of peas or a stringy bundle of string beans. And it's one that's usually met with pouts and sometimes even tears. But with the arrival of Vedge on Locust Street, we think people will be crying tears of joy to eat their vegetables and only pouting if they can't get a reservation.

The new vegetarian restaurant is the creation of chef Richard Landau (who had vegetarian mouths watering since 1994 at Horizons Cafe in Willow Grove) and his wife Kate Jacoby who applies the talents she honed at Horizons as Vedge's pastry chef. With selections like daikon winter rolls with lemongrass tofu, chile, cilantro and creamy sriracha ... or a bracirole made from smoked eggplant & cauliflower, fresh garbanzos, olives and salsa verde ... the duo proves once and for all the vegetarians can have as much fun dining out as their meat-eating brethren. Adding to this impression is an ultra-creative cocktail list (witness the Bitter Butterfly, mezcal, Ramazzotti, sweet vermouth, ancho bitters and lime), and ample wine and beer menu put together by Jacoby. That's not to mention dessert—cheesecake with meyer lemon marmalade, clementine juice and blood orange supremes anyone?

Plates are small and reasonably priced, so experimentation is encouraged—especially when it comes to choosing something from the "Dirt List," a menu featuring unique spins on fresh seasonable vegetables like the purple carrot that is cured in sausage spices (that's not cheating!) and served chilled with white bean sauerkraut puree. So ... who wants another serving of vegetables?!

1221 Locust Street; 215.320.7500; vedgerestaurant.com



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Recharge From All The Charging

Dec 2011

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The aching back. The sore legs and feet. The stress bands that stretch across your forehead, furrowing it like the ruts left by a sleigh in icy snow. We're not talking about an extreme sport like mountain climbing, or basic training camp in the military. We're talking about something equally taxing: Christmas shopping!

If pounding the marble halls of the malls and various stores around town in search of something nice for someone else has left you with a bad case of shopper's fatigue syndrome (OK, we made that up), you might just want to do something nice for yourself and check into a spa for a few hours.

Located just above American Apparel and next door to the Apple Store on Walnut Street, Body Restoration might be just the perfect spot in which to recharge before you charge any more on your credit cards. They offer a range of traditional bodywork and beauty treatments, but what we really like is the sound of their Vnotherapy—a treatment that uses grape seeds, skins and pulp from the nearby Chaddsford Winery to treat your skin. The Crushed Chianti Scrub features Sangiovese grape must mixed with honey, wine yeast and grape seed oil and the spa claims it will detox, improve circulation, exfoliate and moisturize.

When you're done, they even sell gift certificates, so if you're just itching to keep shopping, you can get a great gift for some other poor, beleaguered shopper. Plus, you'll have a great story around the Christmas table: you can tell people you've been treated at the same spa used on movie sets by M. Night Shyamalan and Mark Wahlberg!

1611 Walnut Street (3rd Floor); 215.569.9599; www.bodyrest.com



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"Wanamake" it a Bright Christmas?

Dec 2011

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At the center of the Christmas celebration is one really big, really important birthday. So why not celebrate it with one really big Christmas Tree at a really important building that's also having a birthday this year: the Wanamaker Building..

Since 1955, the Grand Hall of this shopping palace, which now belongs to Macy's, has been hosting a Christmas show featuring the workings of the Wanamaker Organ and a menagerie of brightly lit Christmas characters. Here are some interesting facts you might have known about the show:

During the original Wanamaker show, the amount of electricity used during the 21 seconds that culminated the show as 288,000 watts! During those 21 seconds, the store had to be careful about what else they turned on so as to not blow their transformers. The heat from all those bulbs helped keep the Grand Court warm.

Today, 34,500 energy-efficient LED lights are used in place of the old energy-gobbling incandescent bulbs.

For the original show, the orchestra pit in the balcony was draped in a heavy rubber sheet and filled with 3000 gallons of water to create the Dancing Waters Enchanted Fountain System. Water is not used today out of fear of damaging the organ.

The voice of today's Macy's Grand Court Light show is stage-and-screen star, Julie Andrews.

The Grand Court Organ was purchased in 1909 and was then known as the St. Louis Fair Pipe Organ. It has been recently restored and, with 28,500 pipes in total, is the largest playable instrument in the world.

The original Wanamakers display used a Santa Express train that weighed 1700 pounds. The entire original show weighed three-and-a-half tons!

You can see the show every day, every hour on the hour, from 10am-8pm. Open 10am-5pm on Christmas Eve. Closed Christmas Day. Macy's; 1300 Market Street; 215-241-9000.



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Get Your Kicks At Route 6

Dec 2011

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You might think Route 6 is that road that connects both ends of Cape Cod up in Massachusetts. And you'd sort of be right. But that's only half the picture, because as of last month, Route 6 is also the latest restaurant from famed Philly restaurateur, Stephen Starr.

Like its namesake, Route 6 (the restaurant) is appropriately New England in feel. There are whitewashed walls, chalkboard menus and nautical doodads aplenty (all in a former auto showroom!). But as any true New Englander will tell you, it ain't about the window dressing, it's about the food. And here, too, Route 6 evokes The Cape, promising to serve "a sea-to-table" menu with selections like buttermilk fried oysters, chicken fried lobster tails, Maine lobster rolls, and broiled crab cakes. Toss in a jar of pickles or a side of fries seasoned with Old Bay and you'll almost feel like you can hear the waves. There's also an extensive raw bar for the true seafood lover.

In summer, an outdoor courtyard lets you take your seafood in the fresh air, while in winter, a double-sided fireplace fights against the rolling fog (OK, maybe not, but it does help keep the Philly winter at bay). If the fireplace isn't enough to warm you up, the drinks menu features a range of creative cocktails plus 20 beers by the bottle and six on tap, including a unique brew made just for the restaurant by New Hampshire's "nano-brewery," White Birch Brewing.

600 N. Broad St; 215-391-4600; www.route6restaurant.com



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City Hall: A True Survivor

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Standing tall at the intersections of Broad and Market streets, City Hall is Philadelphia's most impressive and certainly most defining work of architecture. But its grand design hasn't always inspired admirers.

In fact, throughout history, many have felt that the ostentatiousness of the building clashed sharply with the city's humble Quaker origins. These feelings have been so intense that proposals have been made to tear the structure down and start over. The last time such a scheme was put forth was in the 1950s, but the plans were abandoned when it was determined that wrecking the building would cost just as much as did to construct it in 1901—\$25 million.

Thanks to its perseverance, City Hall is now the country's largest municipal building, and the 548-foot tower that tops it is the world's tallest masonry structure not supported by a steel frame. Standing atop the tower is a 27-ton statue of William Penn who is pointing toward Penn Treaty Park—the site where, in 1682, he signed a treaty of friendship with the Native Americans in 1682.

You can get an exceptional view of Philadelphia, and a peek inside its most dramatic building, by taking one of the City Hall Tower Tours that take place Mon-Fri from noon till 4:15pm.



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01

A Drinking Cabinet Where You Can Store Your Cares

Dec 2011

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As 2011 draws to a close, it's only natural to look back at what the year delivered. Apparently, the folks at *Philadelphia Magazine* feel the same way and, in casting their practiced eye over the year's offerings of new bars, have chosen The Farmer's Cabinet as the best cocktail bar of the year. We're happy to say—in the interest of peace on earth, which naturally abounds this time of year—that we heartily agree with the choice.

With its lights ensconced in mason jars, wooden-barrel décor, vintage-style wallpaper, and rough-hewn planks hanging behind the bar announcing the names of beers that are hard to find in Philly (or anywhere for that matter), The Farmer's Cabinet is definitely a fine place to imbibe. Add to this the steady vibe of the in-house Dixieland band and you'll not only be knocking back a few drinks, you'll also feel knocked back in time to the easy-going boozera preceding prohibition.

Cocktails might be serious business here (witness the "Wabash Cannonball" with eight-year-old Demerara rum, apple brandy, honey, fig preserves, lavender & balsamic vinegar), but beer holds its own as well. The joint has 26 taps featuring craft beers from around Europe plus four extra taps pouring house-crafted beer (it's made at their brewery in Alexandria, Virginia). If somehow you can't find a draft pour you like, there are another 150 European beers in the bottle to choose from.

Need to soak up the suds with some food? Like the benevolent manager of an old-timey speakeasy, The Farmer's Cabinet has got you covered there too, with a hearty continental menu focusing on house-cured meat. Beef and pork aside, our favorite food choice is the Bavarian Pretzel served with house-made ranch and whole-grain mustard. Why? Because it makes us thirsty for even more great tipples, of course.

1113 Walnut Street; 215.923.1113; www.thefarmerscabinet.com.



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Opa, O La O La

Nov 2011

Category: Wine&Dine

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Earlier this year, mod-Greek restaurant Opa made a much lauded entrance along the nightlight hotspot that is found at 13th and Sansom Streets. Their sleek, minimalist decor and modern approach to traditional Greek cooking made them an instant fave with local diners.

Now, they're doing something that should help their star rise even higher among Philly foodies: offering a deal. From now until the New Year, Opa is delivering a \$5.95 lunch bargain that includes a chicken or lamb gyro with a drink and side of oregano fries.

Gyros not your thing? Well, you still might want to visit the light blue, white and ivory space for lunch to enjoy their other offerings like *keftedes* (herbed veal meatballs with ouzo/tomato sauce); *bifteki* (feta-stuffed local-grass-fed beef burger stuffed with tomato/dill/cucumber relish); or the autumn grain salad (arugula, squash, dates, figs, nuts and smoked yogurt). They're all reasonably priced—especially when you consider the money you save by not having to travel all the way to Greece to get Greek food that's this good.

1311 Sansom Street; 215.545.0170; opaphiladelphia.com.



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A Different Kind of Hair Club for Men

Nov 2011

Category: Discover, Relax

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When it comes to getting their hair cut, guys typically have two choices: go to a frilly salon where women have a host of alien-like technology on their heads (and speak an equally confusing alien-like tongue to each other) ... or venture into a rough-and-tumble barber shop with grimy windows and a guy named Sal who gives everyone pretty much the same haircut.

Enter Philly Bloke at 123 East Lancaster Ave in Paoli—a new style of men's haircutting (salon seems too girly a word), that allows patrons to feel more like they've gone to their favorite buddy's house to get groomed than to a chi-chi girly outpost in the mall.

Shaggy dudes get to browse through the most recent men's magazines while waiting for their turn in the chair, or they can watch the latest game on flat screen TVs—complete with a free beer and pretzels (or for the more discriminating, biscotti!). If you're of the inclination, you can also enjoy a cigar while taking in the positive quotes around the walls (don't worry—there are no kitty cats) set amongst shots of James Dean and stills from *Singing in the Rain*. The overall vibe is one of a men's club—but it's one from which you leave better looking than when you entered, rather than rumpled and red eyed.

This is due entirely to the skill of owner and sole Philly Bloke hairstylist Eric DeBella, who's trained at top hair studios like Oribe, Toni and Guy, Vidal Sassoon, and Bumble & Bumble. He offers every client a full 45 minutes of his time—but with the cool vibe and environment in which guys can escape all things girly, we think men might just wind up hanging out even after their hair is done. How many mall salons can say that?

On Saturday January 7 (in honor of its one-year anniversary), Philly Bloke will be offering a prize wheel for both new and returning clients featuring discount coupons and free "bring a friend" haircuts. See [web site](#) for details.



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Lime&Tonic: Another Philly

Nov 2011

First!

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Did you know that Philadelphia was the home to the first brick house, the first public parks, and the first public school in the American Colonies? It is also the spot where the first hospital (The Philadelphia Hospital) was established in 1732; where in 1752, the first lightning rod was installed to protect a building; and where, in 1787, the first vessel ever moved by steam—a skiff invented by John Fitch—navigated the Delaware River.

We're pleased to announce that with this post, another first is coming to Philadelphia: Lime&Tonic! While not as life-changing as a steamship or lightning rod, Lime&Tonic is definitely as fresh and fun as any public park you'll find around town! That's because each week, we bring you news from hot restaurants and cool clubs. We let you know about can't-miss hip happenings and fun adrenaline-fueled events in and around the city. And, of course, we'll soon be bringing you discounted, curated offers exclusively reserved for our members. So sign up today. It's a real revolution in the way you'll see your city!



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