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Features

Meandering in the Brandywine Valley: Following in the Path of the Artists

by Allison Chase Sutherland

When I set out on a getaway, I like to stop along the way. It gives you a chance to rest and stretch your legs and increases the anticipation of the journey before you. A nice place to pause on your way to the Brandywine Valley is Havre de Grace, Maryland, a quiet area to look out over the waters of the Susquehanna River.



Uncorked Adventures: Why Erie, PA Belongs on Your Summer Travel List

by Linda Barrett

Tucked along the shoreline of Lake Erie, Erie, Pennsylvania offers a perfect blend of small-town charm and scenic beauty. Whether you're drawn in by the lake, the vineyards or the simple joy of wandering through a lively waterfront town, Erie invites you to connect with local stories, soak up the flavors, sights and spirit, and explore at your own pace.



Clarity - The Latest Iteration

by Allison Chase Sutherland

Chef Matthew Cockrell was born and raised in Vienna before he embarked on his career to become a chef. He worked in numerous restaurants along the way, which gave him a solid foundation in addition to his culinary studies. His first professional restaurant job after that was working with Chef Patrick Orange at La Chaumière, for which he is extremely grateful and which was instrumental in his formation as a chef.



The Buzz About Mead

by Linda Barrett

Once a reminder of Renaissance fairs and fantasy fiction, mead is making a welcome return to the modern palate. With roots in ancient civilizations and a growing following among craft beverage enthusiasts, this honey-based drink is blurring the lines between wine, beer and something entirely its own.






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SUMMER 2025

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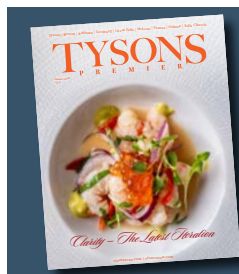
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ON THE COVER

Clarity –
The Latest Iteration

Article on page 24

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A scenic view of a river, likely the Susquehanna River, with a wooden dock and several boats in the background. The water is calm, and the sky is clear. In the foreground, there are some rocks and green foliage on the right side.

Meandering in the Brandywine Valley

Following in the Path of the Artists

by Allison Chase Sutherland

Havre de Grace, MD

When I set out on a getaway, I like to stop along the way. It gives you a chance to rest and stretch your legs and increases the anticipation of the journey before you. A nice place to pause on your way to the Brandywine Valley is Havre de Grace, Maryland, a quiet area to look out over the waters of the Susquehanna River.

The Inn at Montchanin

Continue another hour north and you will arrive at Montchanin, Delaware, at the The Inn at Montchanin Village & Spa - A Historic Hotel of America, dating back to 1799. The village was named in honor of Ann Alexandrine Montchanin, the immigrant mother of Pierre Samuel DuPont de Nemours. With antique furnishings throughout, you are transported to a bygone era. Various historic buildings and an assortment of quaint stucco or clapboard houses comprising twenty-eight rooms and suites in twenty-one structures are tucked in among ivy-covered trees, tasteful landscaping, and dahlia gardens, and are clustered in a triangular shape, giving it a real village feel. The DuPont room in the pink house is a particularly elegant accommodation. An antique lantern lights

the doorway. A bird nests there. Out front, the gardens are lit by lanterns and lead to a birdhouse shaped like a historic house. Come dusk, lightning bugs will appear among the foliage. Relax out front and you just may hear a distant train whistle and cross the tracks on your way out. White wicker rocking chairs on the porch up the steps overlook white hydrangeas. It even has its own doorbell.

Once inside, you go up the stairs past a colorful needlepoint rug to be greeted by a four-poster covered wooden carved bed, immaculately made to the standard that you could bounce a quarter off it, complete with a wooden trunk at the foot. If you get chilly at night, they have blankets on a rack by the bed beside the valet stand. The whole back wall leading up to a high ceiling shaped like a slanted roof is made of stones of various grays and browns and at the summit is a ceiling fan. Against the wall, you will find an antique glass-encased breakfront bookcase with secret doors that open to behold a writing desk with snippets of writing from long ago, with slots and little drawers as though for mail, with three bigger drawers beneath leading to claw feet - the most intriguing dresser I've ever seen in an inn.

Eight dormer windows, which encircle the space, look out onto the green leaves of mature trees, the likes of Japanese Cypress, but can also afford privacy with their louvered brown shutters and flouncy whimsical curtains with exotic animals and flowers. There are comfy armchairs near the gas fireplace with porcelain statues of horses, a cow, and birds on the mantle, a gold-framed pastoral painting above lampshade-adorned sconces to each side, a book about DuPont on the gold and black lacquer tray in front, and a couch to the side. There are porcelain and wooden statues scattered throughout the suite. In the corner of the room there is a very unique wooden screen with numerous windows and a door. There are gilt-framed oil paintings in the main room and even in the spacious beige-tiled bathroom with marble counters and both a shower and oversized bathtub with recessed lighting over each, not to mention a magnifying standing mirror, blow-dryer, and heated towel rack. The bathrobes are embroidered with the signature cow and bird logo.

You are conveniently provided with a mini kitchen off to the side with a sink, mini fridge, microwave, and coffee maker, with silverware and Botanic Gardens china dishes adorned with painted flowers, butterflies, and dragonflies. You are also provided with stemless wine glasses and a wine opener and teas the likes of white orchard and organic mint melange. They even have TV trays. You could practically live here. Check yourself in the full-length marble wood carved mirror flanked by bright sconces (or the one in the closet upstairs) on your way out. They even have umbrellas by the door. They make it known that they're there to take care of you. They even deliver a Wall Street Journal to your door every morning, and there are various magazines in the room. You'll be prepared for any eventuality. Simply put, they thought of everything.



The Inn at Montchanin



Watermelon-poblano gazpacho, Columbus Inn



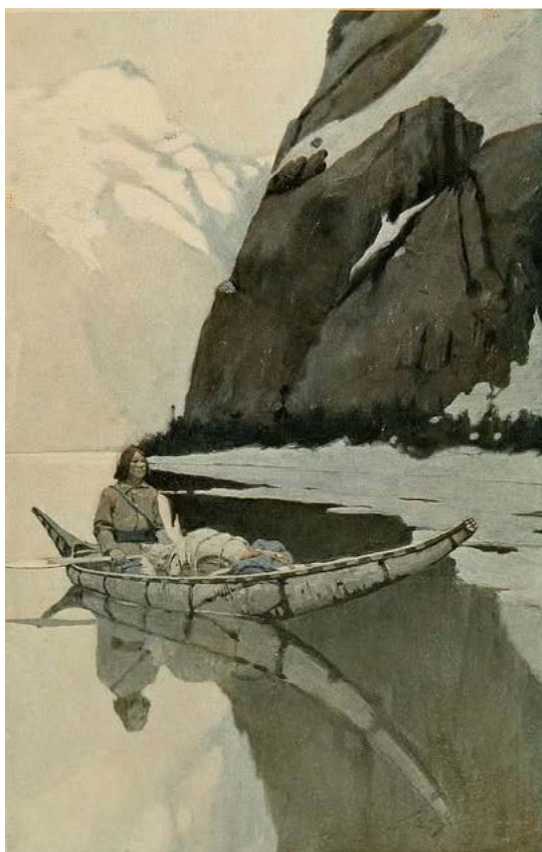
Pan-seared Jail Island salmon, Columbus Inn

Columbus Inn

Head to the historic Columbus Inn on Pennsylvania Avenue in Wilmington, Delaware for dinner. Manager Hayla was friendly and welcoming, and our server Noah was highly attentive. The atmosphere couldn't have been more inviting. The interior is cozy and there is a pub off to the side. For an unexpected combination, try the watermelon-poblano gazpacho with spiced pepitas, chili-lime queso fresco, and tortilla strips. For starters, check out the house-made toasted ricotta gnocchi with cherry tomato sugo and Sicilian pistachio pesto. Don't miss Grandma's pierogies served over flavorful pork belly, with deeply caramelized onions, loaded sour cream, and cave-aged cheddar. Next, the pan-seared Jail Island salmon is crispy on the outside and flaky on the inside, served with English pea and carrot risotto and a carrot purée. Outside the trees are lit up in white lights surrounding the restaurant. It makes for a nice farewell to a lovely evening.



Frank E. Schoonover with
Allison Chase Sutherland as a child



Beaver in Canoe, alternate title Junction of the Yukon

Art in the Brandywine Valley - Frank E. Schoonover

What happens when you bring a 4-year-old little girl to a museum? You may just develop in her a lifelong love of art. In the spring of 1969, I attended an art exhibition in Dover, Delaware with my mother, Laura Sutherland, President of the Delaware Arts Society which she founded. The exhibition was to honor Frank E. Schoonover, the Dean of Delaware Artists, in his 92nd year. The Delaware Arts Society took great pride in having Mr. Schoonover as one of its directors. My mother acquired a signed print of the painting that was on the cover of the brochure, which we decided to give after all this time to one of the two principal art museums in the Brandywine Valley – the Brandywine Art Museum or the Delaware Art Museum, so they could continue to utilize and appreciate it. The painting is entitled *Beaver in Canoe*, alternate title *Junction of the Yukon*, painted in 1913 for Jack London's famous work *White Fang*. He illustrated numerous notable works of literature. I decided upon the Brandywine Art Museum, one of the key art museums in the Brandywine Valley, housed in an old mill by Brandywine Creek, as I felt as though I remembered it as being quite magical from when I was a child. My mom would take us to those fine museums which we were fortunate to have nearby when I grew up in Wilmington, Delaware in elementary school to enrich us artistically.

Coincidentally, as it turns out, the Assistant Manager of Visitor Services, Admission & Retail of the Brandywine Art Museum turns out to be the gracious and helpful Regina Pfohl, who graduated with me from high school in Fairfax. She took the time to meet with us and examine our painting, and expertly concluded it could go in the archives of the museum where people go to study art, and could possibly be exhibited at some point, as they rotate their collections. I wanted to bring the painting home. Full circle.

We still had the original invitation to the exhibition and the original brochure in pristine condition, all of which we shared with the museum, along with several local newspaper articles describing my mom's work as an art critic for Delaware Today magazine with her Art Profiles series, as well as articles for the Delaware Arts Council. She wrote an article for Delaware Today Magazine in October of 1970 about Frank Schoonover entitled "*For Art's Sake: Label Him Consistent – And That's Not All Bad.*" We also included several photographs of my mom with Frank Schoonover and another of me with Frank Schoonover, where I'm so little that my feet don't even touch the



ground from where I'm sitting in the chair. I still remember that day like he was a kindly grandfather. I couldn't have really understood that he was a renowned artist and rugged adventurer at that time. We also gifted a book called Frank E. Schoonover – Painter-Illustrator – A Bibliography, of which they made 500 copies, which detailed his life and his vast contributions of art to literature.

When he was younger, he considered becoming a reverend and even later designed sixteen stained glass windows for Immanuel Episcopal Church in Wilmington among others, but he then had the great fortune of winning a scholarship to study art under Howard Pyle, the noted artist and illustrator of *The Golden Age of American Illustration*, (1880-1920,) which proved to be instrumental in his art career. Pyle really taught him to live his art, and actually go to and experience firsthand the places he was to paint – to immerse himself deeply in the scene and feel the emotions of the subjects.

Schoonover was a prolific artist who created an astonishing 5,000 works in his lifetime, even continuing to paint and teach into his later years.

Brandywine Art Museum

Pass through picturesque covered bridges on your way through rolling hills and bucolic countryside to the Brandywine Art Museum in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Set idyllically beside the gently flowing Brandywine Creek, the Brandywine Art Museum, partly built in a former mill, is combined with the modern architecture of a curving glass hallway. Be sure to arrive on time to take the guided shuttle tours to the N.C. Wyeth house and studio and the Andrew Wyeth studio, located just minutes from the museum.

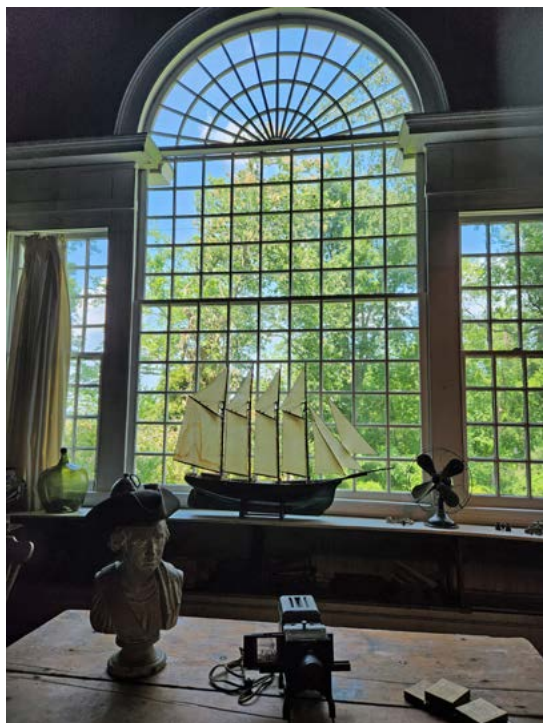
According to the museum website, “In 1911, with the proceeds from his illustrations for *Treasure Island*, the artist N.C. Wyeth purchased 18 acres of land near the village of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Possessed, he described it as the most glorious sight in the township. He built his home and studio on a hill overlooking the valley – setting down roots which have nourished a family of extraordinary creativity for more than a century.



Brandywine Art Museum



Brandywine Art Museum



Palladian-style north window of N.C. Wyeth's main studio



Allison Chase Sutherland in N.C. Wyeth's studio

The main studio, with its spectacular Palladian-style north window, still contains many of the props that were essential to the work of an illustrator, including a birch-bark canoe and a collection of firearms. A full-size mural painting, displayed in a soaring 1923 addition, helps tell the story of Wyeth's career. The N.C. Wyeth House and Studio is a National Historic Landmark and a member of the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation."

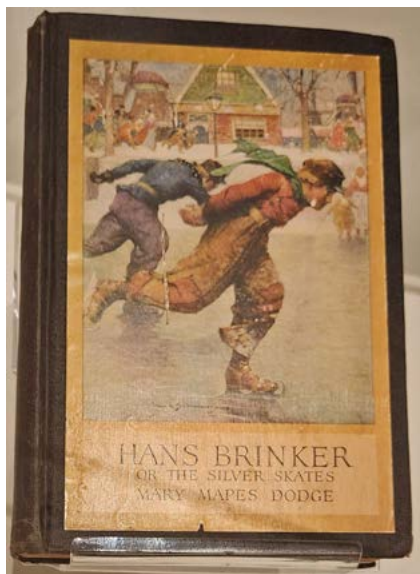
Next is a visit via a curvy, hilly rustic gravel road through greenery and fields to Andrew Wyeth's more intimate studio, converted from an 1875 schoolhouse. N.C. was a family man and liked to keep his family close. "Andrew Wyeth, one of America's best-known twentieth-century artists, painted many of his most important works of art in his Chadds Ford studio. Thousands of paintings and drawings were created there, inspired by the people, architecture and landscapes of Chadds Ford. The Andrew Wyeth Studio is a National Historic Landmark and a member site of the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation."

Delaware Art Museum

The Delaware Art Museum is a stately, world-class museum in a charming neighborhood in Wilmington, Delaware with a variety of breathtaking exhibits. Thursdays 4:00 to 8:00 from April through December, the museum is open for free, and during certain seasons they have food trucks and music outside.

Many paintings by the prolific artist and illustrator Howard Pyle, founder of the Brandywine School, can be found throughout the museum, which convey an almost impossible attention to detail, particularly in the faces of the subjects. In fact, the museum was ultimately founded by his friends and students, such as Schoonover, to house his many works.

Schoonover also illustrated more than two hundred classics and children's books, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Robin Hood*, and *Gulliver's Travels*, and created the cover of *Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates*, of which the actual book with its color cover and the original painting are on display in the museum.



Cover of *Hans Brinker or the Silver Skates* by Schoonover

As Pyle had inspired his students to live their art, Schoonover traveled to the Black Feet dwellings in Montana and was admitted into the sacrosanct lodge, represented in yet another painting displayed there. He also traveled by snowshoe and dogsled in Canada's Hudson's Bay, sharing the arduous existence of the indigenous Cree and Objibwa trappers, the latter of which he was made a blood member.

Finally, head outside and stroll along the magnolia-lined path beside the sculpture garden. Walk in meditation slowly for calm and quickly for concentration on the contemplative labyrinth for a Zen experience. After an inspiring afternoon of immersing yourself in exquisite art – what can I say – it's just a lovely way to end the day. ❖

Photos credit: Allison Chase Sutherland

The Inn at Montchanin Village & Spa
528 Montchanin Road
Wilmington, DE 19710
montchanin.com

Columbus Inn
2216 Pennsylvania Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19806
columbusinn.net

Brandywine Art Museum
1 Hoffman's Mill Rd
Chadds Ford, PA 19317
www.brandywine.org/museum

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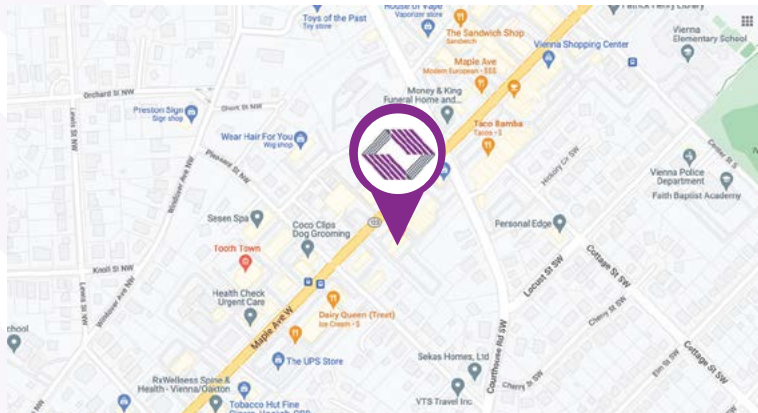
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Mocha: The Legacy Behind the Name

Mocha, a historic port city in Yemen, was the global center of the coffee trade from the 16th to the 19th century. Though coffee didn't grow there, beans from Ethiopia and Yemen passed through its port, making Mocha a symbol of premium coffee. The name lives on in "mocha latte," the "Moka pot," and even in Germany's word for Turkish coffee: *Mokka*.

European powers once had factories in Mocha, and all trade on the Red Sea passed through its gates. Jewish and Banyan merchants led its coffee trade, relying on Ethiopian beans delivered by Somali traders. Eventually, Aden took over the trade, and Mocha's influence declined.

Bayt Al Mocha honors this rich heritage. We offer expertly sourced beans and artisan-crafted drinks that celebrate the origin, flavor, and culture of coffee. Whether you're looking for exceptional coffee or a trusted supplier, Bayt Al Mocha is your gateway to a timeless tradition—one cup at a time.

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Presque Isle State Park

Photos by Linda Barrett



Tucked along the shoreline of Lake Erie, Erie, Pennsylvania offers a perfect blend of small-town charm and scenic beauty. Whether you're drawn in by the lake, the vineyards or the simple joy of wandering through a lively waterfront town, Erie invites you to connect with local stories, soak up the flavors, sights and spirit, and explore at your own pace. Here's why Erie belongs on your summer travel list.

Lake Erie Wine Country

About eight hours from Northern Virginia, Lake Erie Wine Country stretches roughly 50 miles along the lakefront. It's the largest contiguous grape-growing region east of the Rockies, with more than 21 wineries and 35,000 acres of vines within two miles of the lake.

This area is known for its sweet wines, including Niagara, Concord and Catawba, with 80% of the grapes being Concord, grown for the nearby Welch's plant. Tastings start at just \$4.00—a refreshing change from other wine regions. Here is a sampling of some of the winery options:

Since 1972, the Mazza family has been producing wines inspired and influenced by a diverse lineage from across the globe. Now in its second generation, and with three locations, the flagship **Mazza Vineyards** showcases the distinct effects

of Lake Erie's climate with notable wines including its Pinot Grigio, Moscato, Bare Bones Rose, sweet wines and award-winning ice wine.

South Shore Winery, another Mazza property, is housed in a restored Civil War-era stone cavern and was the site of Erie County's first commercial winery from 1869 to 1922. Sample the Carmine, Grüner Veltliner Austrian varietal and Sparkling Chardonnay produced in *méthode champenoise*—a winner in a recent PA Wine Excellence competition.

If you're lucky enough to catch him on site, Randy Graham, owner and winemaker at **Courtyard Winery**, is a font of facts about the Lake Erie Wine Country. He explained that the area is 400 feet above the lake level between a small mountain range and Lake Erie, which creates a bowl that traps the lake effect. This helps control



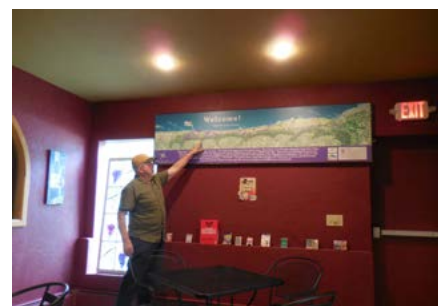
Mazza Vineyards



Mazza Vineyards



South Shore Winery



Randy Graham, Courtyard Winery

temperatures for excellent grape growing. In addition to local varietals, Graham brings in root stock from European countries to create unique flavors. Sample his Chardonel, Saperavi, Twisted Red, Teroldego and MeChant wines.

Arundel Cellars & Brewing Company offers a wide variety of handcrafted wine & craft beer, sparkling cider, and even “slushy”-style drinks. Its “Wild Child” blush earned “Best Rosé” in the American Wine Society Commercial Competition.

A giant pink elephant marks **21 Brix Winery**. Surrounded by vineyards and cherry orchards, this winery has a spacious tasting room and a family atmosphere. Notable wines include its Brutella, estate-grown “Best of Class” winner Cabernet Sauvignon and Thirsty Elephant, a tri-grape blend of Niagara, Fredonia and Concord—the best seller, with flavors of jam, cotton candy and fresh strawberries.

While in wine country, **The Skunk & Goat Tavern** offers a fun dining experience for breakfast, lunch or dinner in a historic former bank. You can even dine in the vault! Try its American Tavern menu and prohibition-inspired cocktails from the fully-stocked bar.



Courtyard Winery



Arundel Cellars & Brewing Company



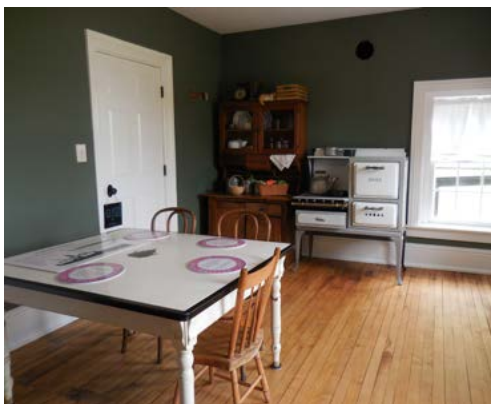
21 Brix Winery



The Skunk & Goat Tavern



Presque Isle Lighthouse



Presque Isle Lighthouse - compact living quarters



Sara's Restaurant



Presque Isle Lighthouse - gift shop

What to Do in Erie

Presque Isle State Park

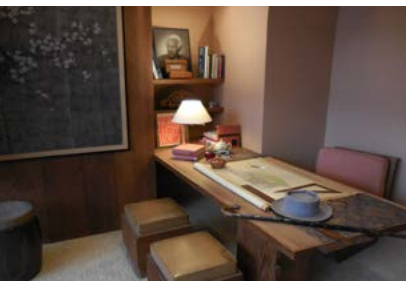
Presque Isle State Park is a 3,200-acre peninsula with sweeping views of Lake Erie and Presque Isle Bay. It's ideal for hiking, biking, boating, fishing, birdwatching—and in summer, swimming at sandy beaches.

The Presque Isle Lighthouse (open May–October), built in 1872, still operates today. Take a tour of its compact living quarters, then climb to the top for lake views and visit the gift shop. Nearby, the **Tom Ridge Environmental Center** features interactive exhibits and a glass-enclosed observation tower. Also explore **Misery Bay** and the **Perry Monument**, commemorating the Battle of Lake Erie.

Sara's Restaurant is a “must stop,” colorful “fun food place” located at the gateway to Presque Isle State Park. It is a funky, 50s-style diner experience featuring summertime food like Erie-made Smith's hot dogs, burgers and homemade onion rings, and famed for its orange sherbet/vanilla twist soft serve ice cream.



San Francisco office drafting room



Original private office



Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit



Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit

Hagen History Center/Frank Lloyd Wright Exhibit

Visitors come from world-wide to view the **Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit** housed here at the Hagen History Center. Step inside Wright's San Francisco office drafting room, recreated exactly as if the staff were to arrive at any moment and containing his memorabilia, drawings and more, with sensory details like typing and street noise. Then, feel Wright's presence in his original private office, rescued from storage in Arizona. Other Wright-owned items and interactive exhibits line the display rooms. A Wright-designed doghouse and a model of Wright's Butterfly Bridge, featured in *Die Hard*, are fun surprises.

"There are numerous places to see the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright; our goal is to create the first museum dedicated to the man himself," explained Executive Director Cal Pifer. There are plans to expand the exhibit as more items arrive.

Another expected addition is one of the largest personal collections commemorating U.S. Naval Officer **Commodore Matthew C. Perry**, an American hero at the Battle of Lake Erie. It will join Perry's telescope and sword in a new exhibition. Upstairs, explore Erie County's history through engaging displays.



Hagen History Center



Watson-Curtze Mansion



Watson-Curtze Mansion



Photo courtesy of Your Sailing Adventure



Photo courtesy of Erie Food Tours

Also found on campus is the **Watson-Curtze Mansion**, an 1891 Romanesque-style home on the National Register of Historic Places, containing 24 rooms. The house was built for Watson, then purchased by Curtze, a bank president, who lived there with his family until his death, when the home was donated. Tour the first-floor house museum and rotating exhibits on the upper floors.

Your Sailing Adventure

Continue your wine adventure with a chartered cruise on the 33-foot Sotto Voce sailboat, docked near the Sheraton. Reserve the **Sommelier & Sail Experience** for wine and food pairings with a trained wine expert or opt for another curated **Your Sailing Adventure** cruise including a sunrise & sound bath, daytime or relaxing sunset sail. Sailing lessons also available.

Erie Food Tours

Taste your way through Erie's food scene with a 2-hour walking tour of locally-owned restaurants, bakeries and specialty shops. Meet owners and chefs and taste delicious offerings. Three seasonal **Erie Food Tour** routes run June through August: Downtown Erie, North East, and the Happy-Appy Food Tour. Private tours also available.

Shopping & Sweets

Make your own pottery in a class with professional master potter Vickie Allen Shea or purchase unique and handmade ceramics and gift items at **Allen Stoneware Gallery**.

Marvel at stunning beach glass creations made by owner and accomplished metalsmith Jennifer Read and others at her **Relish Studio & Gallery**. Take home a necklace, earrings, ring or beach glass sculpture as a lasting memory of your Erie visit. Offering jewelry, gifts and home décor.

View the chocolate-making process and sip a hot cocoa at **Romolo Chocolates**, a 25,000 square foot chocolate lover's paradise. Watch the chocolate-making process and try the famous sponge candy. Nearby, **Pulakos Chocolates** offers old world-style chocolates since 1889 using only the freshest ingredients.



Allen Stoneware Gallery



Relish Studio & Gallery



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Waterfront view- Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel

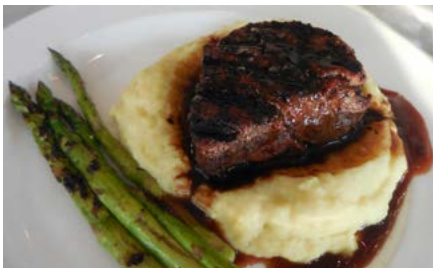
Where to Stay and Dine

Book a room at the **Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel** for waterfront views and easy access to the Bayfront Connector Trail and Bicentennial Tower. Enjoy breakfast, lunch or dinner with waterfront dining at the hotel's newly-revamped **Two45 Waterfront Grille**, offering upscale cuisine with a focus on seafood.

In downtown Erie, **Cloud 9 Wine Bar** blends fine French-influenced cuisine with casual elegance. The steamed mussels made an ideal starter and the Duck Myrtille in a blueberry marsala demi-glace was cooked to perfection.

The Cork 1794's menu features American classics and premium chophouse selections using seasonal ingredients, and an impressive wine list. Enjoy its outdoor patio for lunch, dinner or Sunday brunch. Another area dining spot is **Oliver's Rooftop Bar and Restaurant**, located on the top floor of the nearby Hampton Inn, an upscale restaurant with panoramic views and standout dishes like parmesan-crusted Lake Erie Walleye.

I only wish I'd had more time to explore this inviting region. Erie, Pennsylvania offers wine, water, history and hospitality—plus just enough surprises to bring you back. For more information, visit VisitErie.com. ♦



Grille Barrel-Cut Filet Mignon - Two45 Waterfront Grille



Crispy Calamari - Two45 Waterfront Grille



Steamed Mussels - Cloud 9 Wine Bar



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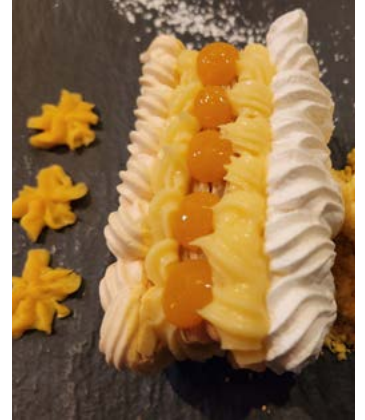




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nostosrestaurant.com

Clarity – The Latest Iteration

by Allison Chase Sutherland



Chef Matthew Cockrell was born and raised in Vienna before he embarked on his career to become a chef. He worked in numerous restaurants along the way, which gave him a solid foundation in addition to his culinary studies. His first professional restaurant job after that was working with Chef Patrick Orange at La Chaumière, for which he is extremely grateful and which was instrumental in his formation as a chef. He continued to hone his craft at the renowned Le Diplomate. He has a degree in English and a degree in philosophy, in addition to following a career in music on his circuitous journey to finally arrive back to the culinary world – and back to Vienna. And as of March of this year, they handed the keys of Clarity into his capable hands.

At Clarity, you can choose to dine in the Main Dining Room, al fresco, or at the Chef's Table and get an up close and personal view of the bustling talent in action.

Charming and clever Master Bartender Victor Walton with his well-stocked bar will whip you up a creative mocktail with ginger-lime shrub, lime juice, fresh squeezed orange juice, grenadine topped off with Sprite, or toss in a little vodka for a unique cocktail. The establishment also offers an extensive wine and whiskey list, which can accompany the tasting menu. They are also the purveyors of an impressive selection of Scotch and bourbon.

At Clarity, they make all their bread in-house, always including a baguette and others in rotation, such as one with herbes de Provence – crunchy on the outside, soft on the inside, accompanied by olive oil for dipping. And all their ingredients are sourced from local farmers.

The amuse-bouche was one of the most exquisite I've ever seen, adorned with delicate flowers and caviar over a tiny pie crust. I would almost call it an amuse-yeux – a true feast for the eyes.

As a first course, start off with the Beet Carpaccio with burrata, blood orange, hazelnuts, lemon ricotta, beet gastrique, and basil oil. Also try the English Pea and Mint Soup with whipped crème fraîche and lemon zest. The presentation tableside is most entertaining.

Lamb and Beef Bolognese is a hearty, flavorful combination of housemade pasta, San Marzano tomatoes, and 24-month Parmesan.

Fish entrées include a spring-inspired Western Ross Scottish Salmon or Branzino with fiddlehead ferns, garlic scapes, ramps, snap peas, green and white asparagus, gremolata, and petit pois velouté; a Wild Alaskan Halibut with braised black lentils, sunchoke and fennel ragout, truffle chips, and a mustard-lemon beurre blanc; and a Seared Yellowfin Tuna and U-12 Black Tiger Shrimp with white asparagus, spiced Thumbelina carrots, zucchini, yellow squash, and sauce puttanesca.

For beef entrées, you might check out the 20 oz. USDA Prime NY Strip for Two with wilted spinach, broccoli rabe, shiitake cream, whipped potatoes, and red wine sauce; or an 8 oz. Prime Hanger Steak or 8 oz. Filet Mignon with a shiitake truffle emulsion, twice-baked fingerling potato, blue cheese, trumpet mushrooms, pearl onions, and red wine sauce.

Desserts include a luscious, velvety chocolate Pot de Crème with its Chantilly crème and chocolate nibs, and a tart and sweet Mango Pavlova bursting with flavor with its crunchy, chewy meringue accompanied by mango sorbet, which would best be described as a party in your mouth.

Diner Christi Chambers noted, “Each dish had a unique flair to it and a beautiful presentation, and all the flavors melded together nicely. I will definitely come back.”

Fortunately for those who live a bit further afield, the owners are planning to open a second location of this highly regarded New American restaurant in Reston, probably set to open within the next few months. Either way, with the signature artistry and innovation of this RAMMY-Award-winning restaurant, we can only expect the new place to carry on the dedication to excellence and convivial atmosphere that have made Clarity a reliable standout in Vienna. ♦

Clarity

442 Maple Avenue, East
Vienna, VA 22180

www.clarityvienna.com

Photos credit: Allison Chase Sutherland





▲ **ELLIE BIRD**
Falls Church | New American | \$\$\$

Ellie Bird, the creation of Michelin-starred chefs Carey and Yuan Tang, is an upscale-casual dining location in the new development across from Meridian High School. Just established in April of this year at Founders Row, it has already been recognized as one of the 50 best restaurants in the United States by the New York Times.

125 Founder's Ave | 703.454.8894
www.elliebirdva.com



▲ **CAFE RENAISSANCE**
Vienna | French | \$\$

Touted as the most romantic dinner in Northern Virginia, Cafe Renaissance is an elegant restaurant in the true sense of Parisian tradition and is Vienna's most sophisticated dining experience. An old-world destination with an enormous wine list and ornate, gilded rooms, its cuisine is classic French with a modern twist and an Italian accent.

163 Glyndon St SE | 703.938.3311
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▲ **RISTORANTE BONAROTI**
Vienna | Italian | \$\$

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▲ **NOSTOS**
Vienna | Greek | \$\$

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8100 Boone Blvd. | 703.760.0690
www.nostosrestaurant.com



▲ **PATSY'S AMERICAN**
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Great beer and cocktail selections. The blue crab and shrimp fritters come highly recommended. French dip sandwiches, shoestring fries. You can't go wrong with this family chain by Great American Restaurants.

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www.patsysamerican.com



▲ ZEFFIRELLI RISTORANTE ITALIANO

Herndon | Italian | \$\$

This upscale, white-tablecloth Tuscan-Italian restaurant serves pasta, seafood and popular veal chops. If you are looking for a quiet Italian dinner in Herndon, this is the place. They have great food, amazing service and make a wonderful cappuccino.

728 Pine St, Herndon, VA | 703.318.7000

www.zeffirelliva.com



▲ ARIAKE

Reston | Japanese | \$\$

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12184 Glade Drive | 703.391.9006

www.ariakerestaurant.com



▲ BEAR BRANCH TAVERN

Vienna | New American | \$\$

Bear Branch Tavern serves up hearty portions of classic bar food as well as interesting menu selections that cross cultures. For example, alongside the menu's standard nachos with black beans, cheese, and jalapenos on tortilla chips are tuna poke nachos with seared yellowfin ahi, seaweed salad, poke sauce, and sriracha aioli over light and crispy wontons.

133 Maple Avenue East | 571.669.3663

www.bearbranchtavern.com



▲ DOLCE VITA

Fairfax | Italian | \$

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10824 Fairfax Boulevard | 703.385.1530

www.dolcevitaitaliankitchenandwinebar.com



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Great Falls | French | \$\$\$

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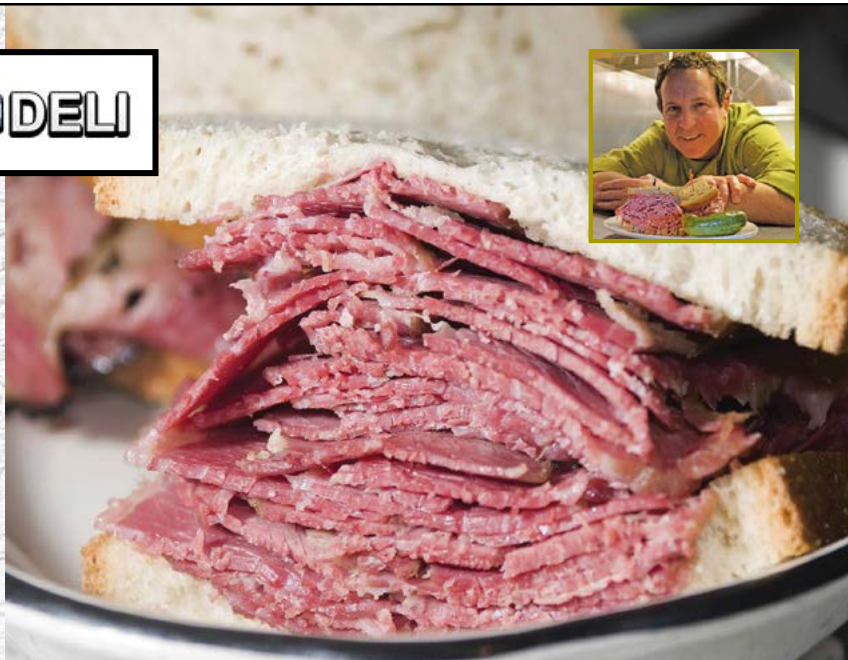
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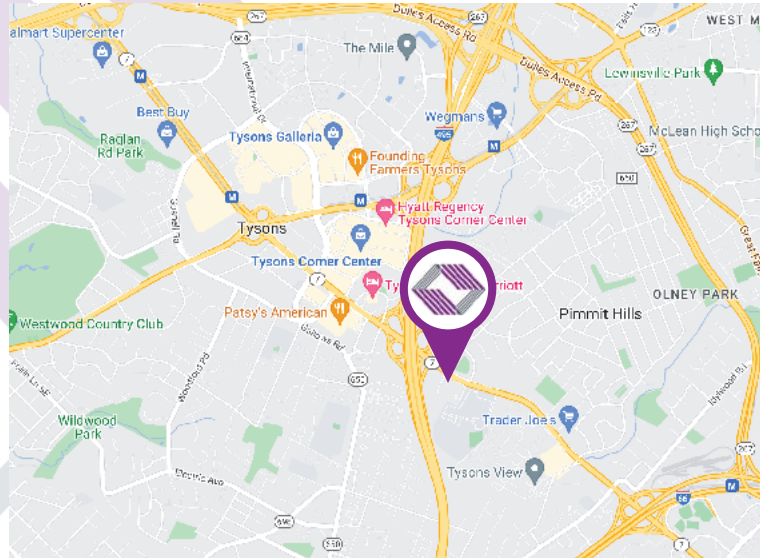
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STEP IN JOYS DANCE STUDIO



Where Passion Finds Its Footing

In the quiet aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, while much of the world was still standing still, Ballroom Asia Dance Studio began to move—literally. Established in 2020 as a private space for practice sessions only, the studio was managed by Ballroom Asia Inc. It offered dancers a safe, focused environment to keep their passion alive during uncertain times. Later, it stepped into a new chapter, rebranding itself as Step In Joys Dance Studio.

In 2024, the studio expanded into a larger, open-concept space—free of columns and visual barriers—making it especially beloved by American Smooth dancers, who thrive in wide, uninterrupted movement. The thoughtful design reflects the studio's commitment to meeting the needs of serious dancers while creating an environment that feels inspiring and unrestricted.

Today, Step In Joys provides high-quality ballroom dance training for both adults and children. It specializes in *competitive sports dance*—teaching not only elegance and rhythm but also discipline, confidence, and perseverance. Young dancers are encouraged to participate in competitions, and many have earned awards, bringing pride to their families and recognition to the studio.

But the impact goes far beyond trophies. Step In Joys has become a cultural ambassador, promoting the rich traditions behind ballroom dance and sharing its mental and physical health benefits with the broader community. Each class is more than just training—it's a step toward personal growth, cultural awareness, and community spirit.

By investing in the next generation of dancers and helping adults rediscover joy through movement, Step In Joys contributes meaningfully to the spiritual and cultural development of the local community.

No Spotlight needed—your steps shine on their own—Wherever there is dance, there is joy!

Step In Joys Dance Studio

🌟 Founded in 2020

🏆 Award-winning youth training programs

🚪 Now in our expanded 2024 open-floor space (a hit with American Smooth dancers!)

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Tyson's Home and Design

One Name Says It All!

by Johnny Hanna

Michael Nash Design, Build & Homes has been reshaping houses across Vienna and greater Fairfax County for more than three decades. What began as a focus on kitchens and baths has grown into a full-service design-build studio that handles whole-house renovations, additions, basements, outdoor living and new home work – and the trophy case shows it. Michael Nash consistently racks up regional and national honors (NARI/CotY, PRO Remodeler, Chrysalis, NAHB Best in American Living, and more), which is why many local editors and trade groups point to the firm as the most awarded remodeler in the Washington, D.C. suburbs.

Why so many awards? It's not just quantity – it's the variety and consistency. Michael Nash projects have won in categories from kitchens and baths to entire-house remodels, basements, exterior renovations, and landscape/outdoor living. Judges across different competitions reward design problem-solving, technical craftsmanship, and thoughtful client-driven solutions; Michael Nash's entries often reflect all three. For example, their NARI Contractor of the Year (CotY) and Regional "Remodeler of the Year" wins recognize both aesthetic design and execution on projects that ranged from modest kitchen updates to

six-figure exterior transformations. These wins are documented in the firm's awards gallery and by NARI's Regional CotY pages

A few features that keep the awards coming:

Design that starts with the homeowner's lifestyle. Rather than showpiece makeovers only, Michael Nash emphasizes how people will use the space – open circulation for families, purposeful islands and storage for cooks, and indoor/outdoor connections for entertaining. That client-first clarity makes entries resonate with juries.

Technical problem-solving. Several award descriptions highlight structural work (removing load-bearing walls, bump-ups and second-floor additions), energy and systems upgrades, and complicated sequencing in lived-in homes – all executed without sacrificing finish quality. Those details are exactly what many award programs look for.

A broad portfolio. Winning across categories – kitchens, baths, basements, additions, and exterior/landscape – means the firm is not a one-trick pony. Panels reward companies that can consistently deliver at multiple scales, which Michael Nash has demonstrated over recent award cycles. Local recognition and press

have amplified the firm's award narrative. Washingtonian and Home & Design have featured Michael Nash projects in award write-ups and project profiles, pointing to specific "best kitchen" and "best whole-house" accolades from past CotY and Chrysalis competitions. That media attention helps reinforce the company's regional reputation — editors bring readers, and award wins bring editors.

What does an award-winning Michael Nash project look like in Vienna? Their recent local projects range from a Craftsman-style exterior overhaul with a wraparound porch and tapered columns to luminous, family-friendly kitchens where a former wall was removed to create open sightlines and big, functional islands. Their outdoor living work (pool decks, porches, integrated patios) has earned Finalist and Merit mentions in PRO Remodeler and Mid-Atlantic award programs. The images above show representative kitchen and exterior projects that won recognition for aesthetic clarity and construction quality.

A fair caveat: "Most awarded" depends on how you count awards (regional vs. national programs, trade vs. reader's choice, years considered). But in the DMV trades community Michael Nash is repeatedly singled out for having more CotY/Chrysalis/PRO/NAHB mentions than most local competitors over the last decade — a strong signal of sustained performance. Houzz and several industry listings note the firm's long streaks of recognition.

If you're considering a remodel in Vienna, Michael Nash's long experience, documented award history, and broad project gallery make them a logical contender. Their strengths are most visible on projects that require coordinating design intent with heavy construction work — whole-house remodels, substantial additions, and complicated outdoor transformations. If awards and proven problem-solving matter to you, their portfolio is worth reviewing in detail. ♦

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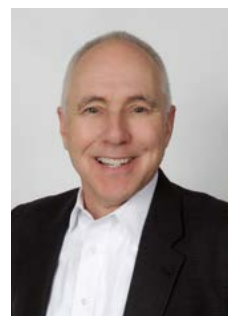
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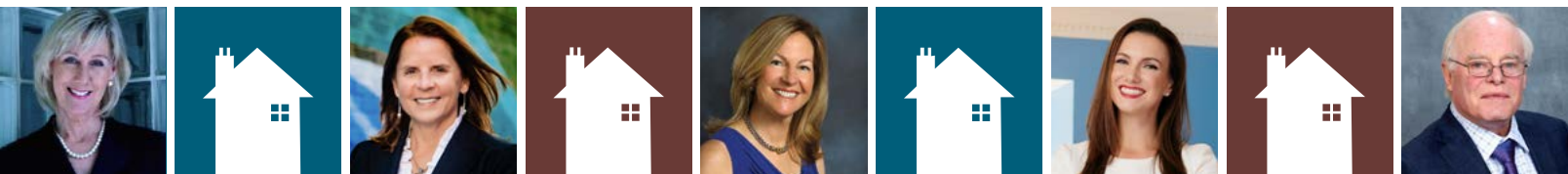


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Andy Boone

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A native Virginian, Andy has grown up loving the area, the people, and the community his entire life and is an Oakton High school and George Mason Alum. He is a fully devoted Realtor who loves doing his job everyday. Out of work he enjoys sports, and training children with disabilities and high school athletes, instilling in them the tools to be better athletes and people. Andy feels that in real estate he has found another way to give back to my community by helping his clients achieve the dream of owning a home. He is a determined agent, and will do whatever it takes to get you exactly what you are looking for.

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Richie is an award winning sales professional that has worked in the sales/customer service industry his entire adult career. Over 20 years of sales experience perfected his skills needed to not only achieve his client's expectations but exceed them! Acquiring knowledge of schools, commute, surrounding amenities, and indispensable business relationships supplies him with the ability to help you buy or sell with the utmost confidence. If you are looking for a Real Estate Customer Service Expert that sets their expectations high, is totally up front with you, thrives on customer satisfaction, and is a fearless yet effective negotiator then "Real Estate Richie" is the right agent for you. Richie takes great pride in the relationships he builds and always works relentlessly to ensure his clients best interest!

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Missy Whittington

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Missy Whittington has lived in Vienna for 50+ years and is trusted and respected within the community.

Her finance and accounting background led her to real estate in the fall of 2019, and within that short period of time, she has sold over \$5 Million of homes. She received the "Fastest Growing Agent Award" earlier this year and plans to continue this upward trajectory into 2022. She attributes TRUST as the number one reason for her success saying, "when you hire a realtor to take on the sale of your home or to purchase a new one, you have to trust that this person will get you to settlement in a timely manner without drama and will continue to serve the client well after the transaction has closed."

Missy has grit and perseverance in her DNA and learned this about herself on the softball field as a youth. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going" and I've taken that to heart from the softball diamond to the real estate arena."

Let Missy be the one you can count on in Northern Virginia when it comes to your real estate needs. Seize the Day!

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Ahmed Gomaa

MCGILICUDDY COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, VICE PRESIDENT

Virginia has been Ahmed's home since 1998 which gave him exceptional knowledge of the DMV market and community. He has always loved real estate and received his REALTOR® license in 2016. To further his mission to provide top-quality service and provide expert advice to his clients, he continued his education and completed ABR® designation, PSA certification, and SFR® certification. Ahmd Gomaa has a Bachelor degree in Accounting and Marketing, equipping him with the skills needed to engage in outstanding marketing and effective negotiation, always striving to get his buyers and sellers the best price on the best terms with as little stress as possible. He is always available to help you achieve your homeownership dreams and looks forward to connecting with you!


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Greg McGillicuddy

MCGILICUDDY COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, PRESIDENT

Greg has more than 35 years of experience in real estate, and has managed over a million and a half square feet of properties in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area. Mr. McGillicuddy is a licensed broker in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. He specializes in Industrial, Land, Office, Retail, Flex, Specialty, Multi-Family property types. Greg volunteers as the chair of the Annandale "Revitalization Committee," and is a member of the Annandale Chamber of Commerce. He is an active advocate for change in Annandale and other Revitalization Districts in greater Fairfax.

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The Buzz About Mead

by Linda Barrett

Photos by Linda Barrett

Once a reminder of Renaissance fairs and fantasy fiction, mead is making a welcome return to the modern palate. With roots in ancient civilizations and a growing following among craft beverage enthusiasts, this honey-based drink is blurring the lines between wine, beer and something entirely its own. Across Virginia, new and heritage meaderies are championing its revival and bringing an age-old drink into the spotlight.

What is Mead and How is it Made?

Though often labeled “honey wine,” mead isn’t technically wine. It’s made by fermenting honey with water rather than grapes or grains. This alone gives it a category all its own. It can be dry or sweet, still or sparkling, and flavored with everything from fruit (melomels), spices (metheglins) or even hops (braggots). Some meads resemble white wine, while others read more like cider or light beer.

Its alcohol content typically ranges from 6% to 14%, overlapping with both wine and stronger craft beers. A dry mead might register 10%, while a rich, dessert-style mead can push towards 15% or higher. The sweetness, mouth feel, and even aroma depend not only on how the mead was made, but on the type of honey used.

“Mead is the oldest fermented beverage known to man, and predates the wheel,” Copeland says.


Clover honey is widely used for its neutral profile. It creates a balanced base that lets added flavors shine. Orange blossom honey delivers a flora-citrus perfume. Buckwheat honey is dark and malty, and produces meads with a richness not unlike molasses or toasted brown sugar.

Wildflower honey is a catchall term for honey sourced from mixed blooms, and its flavor changes with the seasons and the bees’ environment, giving each batch a distinct sense of terroir.


Mead’s production begins with combining honey with water into a mixture called “must.”


Yeast is added, which converts the sugars into alcohol, just like wine. Fermentation can last a few weeks or a few months, depending on the style. After that, it can be bottled, or aged for complexity, sometimes in stainless steel or oak barrels.

Mead Pairing Suggestions

 Spicy Cuisine >>> Dry Meads

 Cheese Boards >>> Semi-sweet or Floral Meads

 Charcuterie or Roasted Meats >>> Bold, Barrel-aged Meads

 Desserts >>> Sweet or Spiced Meads

A Global Heritage

Mead's origins stretch back more than 9,000 years. Archaeological evidence shows that honey-based fermented drinks were consumed in Neolithic China, Viking-era Scandinavia and ancient Ethiopia. In Greek mythology, mead was considered the “drink of the Gods,” and in early England, served as a staple of feasts and ceremonies. The term “honeymoon” is even thought to come from a tradition of gifting newlyweds a month's supply of honey wine to ensure fertility and happiness.

Yet despite its global and mythic past, mead fell out of fashion for centuries. The rise of beer and wine eclipsed it in many parts of the world. But now, thanks to the craft beverage boom, mead is making a serious comeback. And in Virginia, a new generation of meadmakers is redefining what this ancient drink can be.

Visit These Two Meaderies

To get a taste of the mead culture in Virginia ourselves, we ventured out to two meaderies.

Negus Winery & Meadery

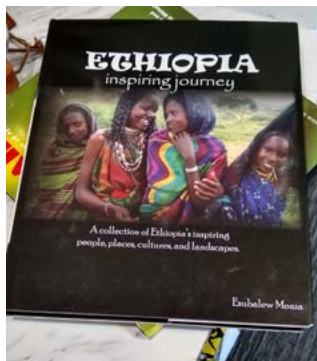
Negus Winery & Meadery is an urban tasting room in Alexandria founded by Gize Negussie in 2023. Born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Negussie wanted to recreate the flavors of his childhood—

particularly Tej, a traditional Ethiopian honey wine. At Negus, he uses wildflower honey and ferments his meads on site. The result is Mama's Honey Wine, a smooth, golden mead available in semi-sweet and semi-dry versions.

With a moderate 10% ABV, Tej is approachable for wine drinkers and refreshingly unique for anyone looking for a tasting experience. Visitors can enjoy a glass or a guided flight in elegant wine glasses or opt for Ethiopian-style berele glassware—a nod to tradition.

As a former tour and travel company owner, Negussie got to know principals in the California wine country who encouraged him to bring Tej to the United States. “Negus is the Ethiopian word for ‘King’, and Tej was formerly a drink made for royalty, but is now commonplace in Ethiopian households,” Negussie explains. “My recipe comes from my mother, which is why we call it Mama's Honey Wine.”

The tasting room, located in an industrial stretch of Vine Street, is warm and welcoming, and filled with Ethiopian art, music and small bites or local food trucks. Negus Meadery is a celebration of cultural heritage, a neighborhood gathering space, and a small business with big ambitions. Notably, it was the first meadery in the U.S. dedicated specifically to Ethiopian-style honey wine.



Misty Mountain Meadworks

An hour and a half away, on farmland outside of Winchester, lies **Misty Mountain Meadworks**, Virginia's oldest commercial meadery. Founded by Richard "Rick" Copeland after decades of experimentation, Misty Mountain began selling to the public in 2004. Operating as a true farm winery, Misty Mountain maintains its own bees and fruit orchards and handcrafts small-batch meads that celebrate local honey varietals.

Misty Mountain embraces mead in all its variety. Its flagship Wildflower Mead is a rich, sweet offering with about 11% ABV and 6% residual sugar—a perfect match for a dessert course or cheese board. But the real fun comes in the flavored meads like the Sip-A-Delic, a strawberry-kiwi blend; LITHA, made with blueberry and lemon; and Wildfire, a limited-edition smoked mead with a savory edge, among others. Seasonal and experimental batches are common, so you'll have to visit often to taste them all. Their medieval-decorated tasting room is open Friday through Sunday, and you are welcome to bring along a picnic.

"I have a degree in medieval history and noted that mead was mentioned in Beowulf at least 100 times. That sparked my original interest, but I was self-taught," Copeland said. "I found a 1945 English recipe book that had a recipe for mead, and I started making mead in my basement about 1983."

Enjoy Virginia's Meaderies

Meadmakers are committed to preserving the integrity of their key ingredient, using minimal additives and focusing on balance, character and craft. Buzz on into one of Virginia's meaderies, give mead a try, and learn more about its fascinating history. ❖

Negus Winery & Meadery

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Expert Q&A:

Sitting Down With a Pediatric Laser Dentist to Learn the Benefits of Lasers for Kids



As parents, we want the most comfortable, efficient and safe dental care for our children. So when you hear about using lasers, you might wonder what they are and if they are better than standard methods. We asked Dr. Rishita Jaju of Smile Wonders in Reston VA to tell us how this advanced technology is changing the way kids experience dental care, whether for dental fillings, gum disease or frenectomies.

Q: What does it mean to get a laser filling?

Dr. Jaju: A laser filling means using a special dental laser instead of a traditional drill to treat cavities. At Smile Wonders, we use the Waterlase by Biolase, an all-tissue laser that works on both hard tissue-like teeth and bone, and soft tissue like gums, lips and tongues. Since it is super-precise, only the decayed portion of the tooth gets removed rather than extra tooth structure as with a conventional drill. It's quick, precise and more comfortable than what we might remember from our own childhood dental visits.

We also often don't need to use needles or numbing shots. That means no numb lips and no drooling afterward, and kids can go straight back to their school or activities. And fillings can be completed in different regions on the same visit.

Q: Are there different types of lasers?

Dr. Jaju: Yes, there are several laser types. Ask your dentist to explain what they use, how it works and whether it is good for teeth as well as gums or not. Some practices use basic diode lasers which work by building up heat. These may be useful for soft tissue procedures but may cause charring or a slight smell. Other offices use CO2 lasers, which also treat soft tissue. Some CO2 lasers can handle teeth too, but not all can. Here at Smile Wonders, we chose the Waterlase. It is gentle and biocompatible with mouth tissues with its mild cooling mist so that it does not cause heat buildup or damage to the surrounding structures.

Q: Can lasers really help with gum disease or inflammation?

Dr. Jaju: Absolutely. Lasers can gently reduce bacteria under the gums and treat inflammation, especially in kids with braces or medical conditions that make brushing more difficult. If food gets trapped near erupting teeth and causes swelling or discomfort, the laser can quickly and painlessly resolve it.

Q: Are lasers better for frenectomies, or is that just hype?

Dr. Jaju: Lasers—especially the Waterlase—can make frenectomies safer and more precise. Unlike scissors, which rely on estimation, the laser removes tiny layers at a time. That precision helps avoid cutting too deep or too shallow.

Q: Why doesn't every dentist use lasers?

Dr. Jaju: Laser dentistry does require specialized training and is not routinely taught in dental schools. Dentists must invest in equipment and take additional training on their own. The good news is that more dental schools are starting to offer Laser Dentistry electives, so the field is growing.

Dr. Rishita Jaju

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