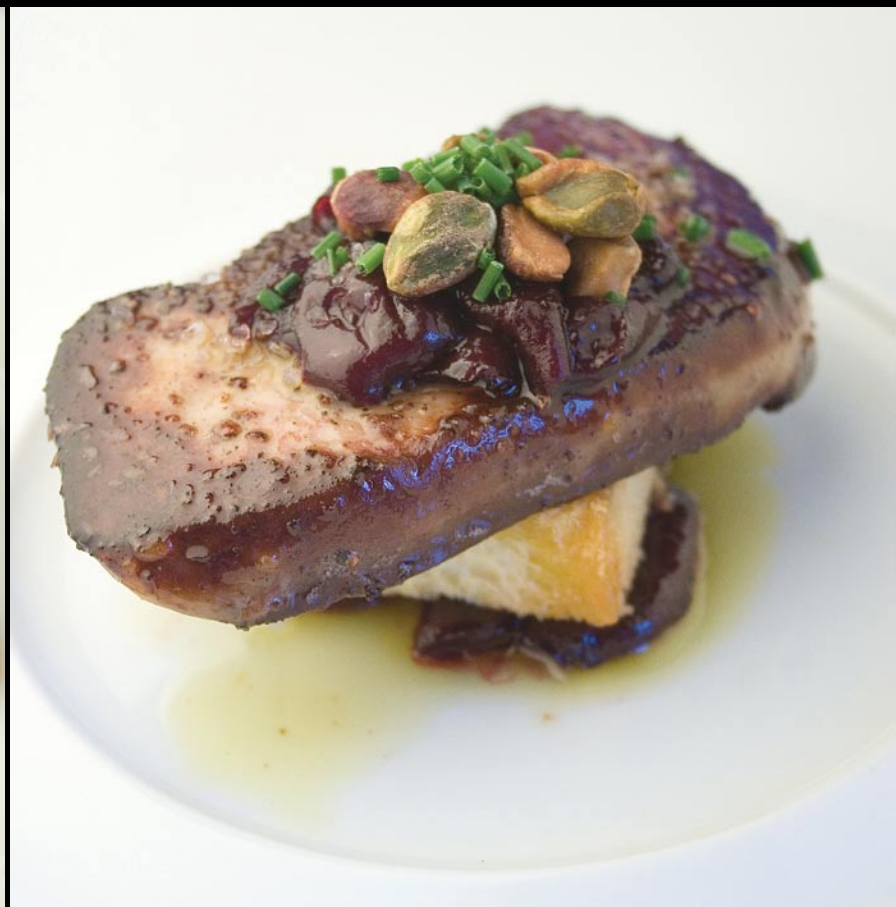


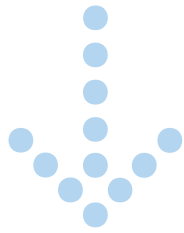


Sautéed Filet of Tilapia (above): Presented on a bed of soft polenta with a delicate tomato sauce. Golden chanterelles and little crisps of smoked bacon add a robust note that highlights the taste. Finished with paper-thin wafers of domestic Oregon truffles.

Pan-seared Filet Mignon (below left): Served with cippollini onions, fingerling potatoes and a ginger-caramel emulsion. Topped with crisp-tender baby asparagus.

Hudson Valley Foie Gras (below right): Set atop toasted brioche with black cherry marmalade and garnished with salted pistachios.





Dining Out

Welcome to the Next Level

Dans Restaurant

Raises the Bar for Fine Dining in Reading

By Lenora Dannelke | Photos by Heidi Reuter

My personal restaurant rating system – which will never replace the Michelin Guide – is pretty simple. It depends on how many friends I feel compelled to call after trying a new dining spot.

The morning after an initial visit to Dans Restaurant, I couldn't wait to start dialing and raving, encouraging fellow gastronomes to drive up to an hour and a half to visit this Reading dining treasure. It's that good!

Anyone with an affinity for impeccable, sophisticated cuisine – think truffles, foie gras and caviar – should become acquainted with this tiny gem of a restaurant, which offers plenty of options. In addition to the seasonally-driven a la carte menu that features choice steaks, premium seafood and top-quality poultry, fun and adventurous four- and five-course tasting menus are available, and brunch is served both Saturday and Sunday.



William "Bill" Woolworth III, chef Jason Hook and MD. Monir



Under its previous ownership, when an actual Dan or two was in residence, the center city 40-seat walk-down had earned a considerable reputation. Partners William "Bill" Woolworth III and MD. Monir, who re-opened Dans on Valentine's Day 2006, were ready to not only match, but exceed past expectations. They also plan to eventually expand into the upper portion of the building.

The first thing the partners did was lighten, brighten and simplify the décor. "Less is more," Woolworth notes.

Crisp white linens dress the tables, and elegant floral arrangements grace the windows. "I'm the floral designer – that's my eight part-time job," jokes Woolworth, an attorney for a Baltimore brokerage firm who also teaches part-time.

Monir, who worked at such notable New York restaurants as Jean George and The Monkey Bar, ensures that table service is flawless.

Ultimately, though, it's all about the food. And executive chef Jason Hook, an energetic 28-year-old with impressive credentials, has an extraordinary talent for marrying flavors and highlighting natural tastes. His elegant and unfussy presentation style really showcases the outstanding ingredients.

A graduate of Wilson High School and the Northampton Community College culinary program, Hook found his passion for French cuisine working at Le Bec Fin in Philadelphia. He was soon recruited by The Four Seasons in New York, then sent to France to hone his skills.

Returning to New York, Hook was employed by French culinary superstar Alain Ducasse.

Dining | Out

"That was the best thing I ever did," he says. "It was a pinnacle experience. I'm inspired by his techniques." Hook then moved on to restaurant Jean George, another top venue that strongly influenced the young chef.

After relocating to his native area last year, Hook considered commuting to Philadelphia before connecting with Woolworth and Monir. "Dans is perfect for me. I have an opportunity to do whatever I want, food-wise, using quality ingredients," Hook says. "I don't have to hold back because it's Berks County."

Even bowing to requests for a traditional item like the crab cake doesn't mean stooping to the ordinary: Hook re-envisioned this humble dish as a delicate crab galette with remoulade sauce. "Last week we sold more foie gras than crab cakes, so people are responding well," says Hook. "The message we're trying to get across is that you don't have to go to The Main Line for fine food."

Indeed, the cuisine stands up to the most vaunted comparisons. Dr. Stan and Johanna Grabiun, frequent patrons of Dans, liken the quality of Hook's food to that of Le Bec Fin. "But it's not nearly as expensive," Stan says. "I hand out prescriptions for people to eat here!"

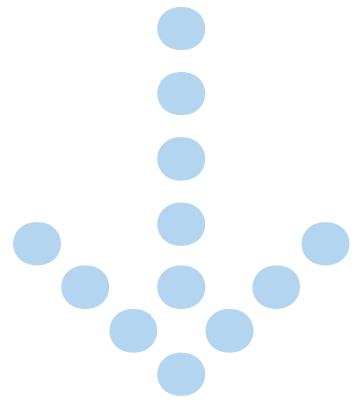


Hook's masterful treatment of foie gras re-set my standards for excellence – a benchmark that had previously been attained by Wolfgang Puck's new restaurant at The Borgata in Atlantic City. At Dans, a tender, sautéed slice of Hudson Valley foie gras, sets atop toasted brioche with black cherry marmalade and is garnished with salted pistachios for an amazing amalgam of flavors and textures. Savory and sweet, salty, crunchy and silky, this obscenely rich poultry liver appetizer played my palate like a pinball game, lighting up every taste bud in my mouth.

And every other dish I sampled proved equally exquisite, from creamy cauliflower soup complemented with country bread croutons and crisp-tender baby asparagus to perfectly pan-seared filet mignon served with cippollini onions, teensy fingerling potatoes and a remarkable ginger-caramel emulsion.

"We spend as much on produce as we do on protein," says Woolworth. "And that's pretty unusual." The investment, however, is incredibly worthwhile. Hook takes his inspiration from seasonal fare, and vine-ripened heirloom tomatoes, paired with green basil, fresh mozzarella, imported prosciutto and extra-virgin olive oil, create an explosively flavorful spin on the classic BLT.

Look for tasty twists on squash, beets and other root vegetables in fall. When imported black truffles arrive in November – white truffles follow in January – they will be receive VIP (Very Important Produce) treatment by Hook.



Dining Guide

The Insider's Guide To Local Flavor

KEY TO SYMBOLS

B Breakfast	☺ Children's menu
L Lunch	♿ Handicapped Accessible
D Dinner	🎵 Entertainment
LN Late Night	🚭 Smoke Free
CC Major Credit Cards	🚗 Valet Parking
📞 Reservations Required	★ AAA Rating
📱 Reservations Accepted Online	BYOB Bring Your Own Alcohol Served

Average dinner entrée prices:

\$ under \$15	\$\$ \$15-\$25	\$\$\$ \$25 and above
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Listed Restaurants:
To update your "Key to Symbols", please contact us at 610-898-1928 Fax: 610-898-1933 or email FineDining@BerksCountyLiving.com

Ethnic

- Aashiyana Indian Cuisine** • Wide variety from mild to spicy, including vegetarian dishes. Lunch buffet, Sunday brunch. Closed Monday. 610-736-0847. 16 South 4th St., Reading. CC, ☺, BYOB, L-\$, D-\$
- Alebrije Mexican Grille** • Authentic Mexican cuisine. Extensive menu. Open 7 days. Three locations available. ☺, CC, BYOB, L-\$, D-\$
- Alpenhof Restaurant** • European décor, smoke free dining room. Large selection of German draft beers. 610-373-1624. 903 Morgantown Rd., Reading. ☺, CC, ☺, ★, D-\$-\$\$

Carini's Italian Restaurant • Gourmet Italian cuisine in a casual atmosphere. Closed Tuesday. 1600 Elizabeth Ave., Laureldale. 610-939-9255. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Casa Grande Ristorante • Finest Italian cooking in the area. Eat in or take out. Open Lunch & Dinner with Live Weekend Entertainment. 1101 Rocky Dr., West Lawn. 610-678-4060. ☎, CC, ¥, L-\$, D-\$

Cocina Mexicana • Great Mexican cuisine, plain and simple. 2942 Kutztown Rd., Hyde Park. 610-921-3037. ☎, CC, L-\$, D-\$

Cocina Mexicana II • Same menu as the original location. 107 W. Main St., Kutztown. 610-683-5131. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

The Coliseum Restaurant & Bar • Homemade Italian-American cuisine in a casual atmosphere. Private Banquet Rooms available. 610-926-3733. Route 222, Blandon. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Hong Thanh Restaurant • Vietnamese and Chinese cuisine. Closed Monday and Tuesday. 610-374-0434. 22 N. 6th St., Reading. ☎, BYOB, D-\$

Mom Chaffe's Cellarette • Intimate, known for "New York Italian" style cuisine. Closed Sunday. 610-374-5733. 148 Tulpehocken Ave., West Reading. ☎, CC, D-\$

Panda Heaven Chinese & Japanese Hibachi Steak House & Sushi Lounge • Hibachi steak house, sushi bar & fine dining Chinese restaurant. Try our special Mai Tai & more other cocktails. 610-685-7975. 350 North Park Rd., Wyomissing. ☎, CC, ¥, ☎, L-\$-\$, D-\$-\$

Santino's Family Restaurant • Casual, family dining. Something for everyone. 610-670-2052. 1 Wellington Blvd., Wyomissing. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Thai Cuisine • Thai cuisine, vegetarian offerings, great desserts. 610-929-6993. 502 Eisenbrown St., Reading. ☎, CC, BYOB, D-\$

Windsor Inn at Shillington • Regional Italian Cuisine, casual dress. 38 W. Lancaster Ave., Shillington. 610-777-6667. ☎, CC, D-\$

General

201 West Food & Spirit • American cuisine, casual dress. Closed Sunday. 201 W. Lancaster Ave., Shillington. 610-796-9070. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Austin's Restaurant and Bar • American fare, straightforward and well-prepared. 610-678-5500. 1101 Snyder Rd., West Lawn. ☎, ¥, ★★, D-\$

Beverly Hills Tavern • Fine food in a casual historic atmosphere-summer outdoor dining, cabana style with beach/bar, scenic grounds. 710 Fritztown Road, Sinking Spring. 610-777-4516. ☎, CC, D-\$, ¥, ♪

Bistecca • (In the Chat-a-While Inn) Berks County's only Prime Steak House. Featuring 21-day dry aged Prime steaks and chops, Kobe beef, Lobster tails and Dover Sole. Tues - Sat: 5 - 10pm. Sun & Mon: Private Parties. 237 Butter Lane, Reading. 610-779-9906. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ¥, D-\$-\$

Black Dog Café • Fine food in a casual atmosphere. 610-589-1602. 116 Main St., Stouchsburg. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Black Horse Restaurant & Tavern • Specializing in Prime aged Certified Angus Beef, fresh seafoods, and pasta. Classical or innovative cuisine according to your preference. 2170-2180 N. Reading Rd., Denver. 717-336-6555. ☎, CC, ¥, ★★, D-\$

Blue Orchid Inn • 1850's inn, chef owned. Known for fine cuisine and scenic grounds. 1565 State St., Mertztown. 610-682-6700. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

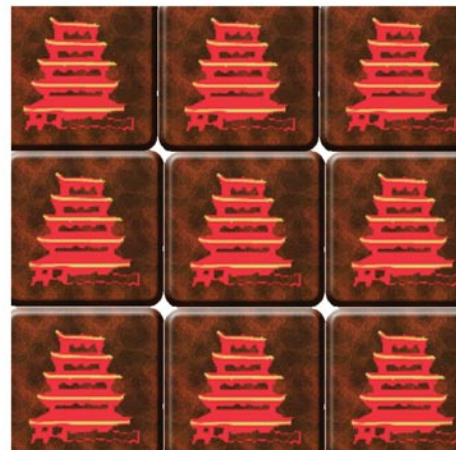
The Brass Lantern • Berks County's best original live music venue, casual dining and great beer. Come join the party! 1350 North 12th St., Reading. 610-372-9311. ☎, CC, ¥, ☎, ♪, D-\$

Bube's Brewery & the Catacombs Restaurant • A National Register historic brewery complex with 3 restaurants, a brewery, a hotel and a museum. Open year round. 102 N. Market St., Mount Joy. 717-653-2056. ☎, CC, ¥, ♪, ☎, ☎, L-\$; Bottling Works: ☎, D-\$; Catacombs: D-\$; Alois: D-\$

Cab Frye's Tavern • Swiss Continental and American cuisine served in a relaxed country atmosphere. Visit the new Gift Barn for a unique assortment of eclectic gifts and gourmet foods from around the globe. 914 Gravel Pk. (Rte. 29), Palm. 215-679-9935. ☎, CC, ¥, ★★, D-\$



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Dining | Guide

- Cafe Waldorf** • Full-service restaurant and bar. Serving lunch 7 days, dinner Monday–Saturday. Weekend seafood specials. Top selection of premium liquor and possibly the only English beer engine in town. Private parties welcome. Experience the romance of yesteryear in a restored 100-year-old Victorian. 658 N. 6th St., Reading. 610-373-7111. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$
- California Bar and Grill** • From light bites to prime rib, there's something for everyone. Featuring weekday special nights and weekend dinner specials. Live music Thursday–Saturday. Route 724 & Mountain View Rd., Shillington. 610-777-7224. ☎, (weekends), CC (\$10 min.), ☹, ★★, D-\$\$
- Canal Street Pub & Restaurant** • American cuisine in a “brewpub” atmosphere. Features brewery-fresh Legacy beer on draft (produced right below the pub). 535 Canal St., Reading. 610-376-4009. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$
- Caron's Mediterranean Grille** • Casual dining with a Mediterranean flair, specializing in Greek-inspired cuisine. Delicious daily lunch specials & evening fare. Special Theme Evenings. Private Party Room Available. 108 Love Rd., Reading. 610-685-7270. ☎, CC, BYOB, ★★, D-\$\$
- Charcoal Chef** • Casual dining, known for their “Dreamburgers”, steaks and fabulous Chef's salads. 10% Senior Citizen discount 1-5 pm. Open 7 days. 3223 Perkiomen Avenue, Reading. 610-370-0888. L-\$, D-\$\$
- Chef Alan's American Bistro** • Upbeat and casual atmosphere. Contemporary American and Caribbean cuisine. Eclectic décor. 555 Penn Ave., West Reading. 610-375-4012. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$
- Chef Alan's American Bistro** • See previous listing. Fairgrounds Square Mall, N. 5th St., Reading. 610-685-4000. CC, ☹, D-\$
- City Espresso** • Coffee house. Closed holidays. 124 South 5th St., Reading. 610-236-0687. ☎, ☹, ☎
- City Limits @ Sheraton** • Fine dining with elegant ambiance. “Berks' best kept dining secret.” Sunday brunch. Open 7 days. 1741 Paper Mill Rd., Wyomissing. 610-376-3811. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$\$
- The Crab Barn** • Crabs, served in a barn, of course, plus other seafoods and diverse menu. Huge, open-ceilinged main room with nautical theme. Both indoor and outdoor dining. Small to large full banquet gatherings welcome. Unique limo service available. 2613 Hampden Blvd., Reading. 610-921-8922. ☎, CC, ☹, ★, D-\$\$
- DANS Restaurant** • Serving Saturday and Sunday Brunch. Contemporary American cuisine. Fine dining with exceptional food and service. Extensive selection of wine and cocktails. Lunch/Brunch Th-Sun 11:00-2:00, Dinner Wed-Sun 5:00-9:30, Closed Monday & Tuesday. 11th & Penn Sts., Reading. 610-373-2075. ☎, CC, ☹, ☹, ☎, L-\$, D-\$\$\$
- Emily's** • Casual ‘fine’ dining in a country setting and historic site featuring the best outdoor dining experience. 3790 Morgantown Rd., Mohnton. 610-856-7887. ☎, CC, ☹, ☎, ☹, ☎, D-\$\$
- Exeter Family Restaurant** • Casual dining offering a variety of entree's. Famous for our fresh burgers and seafood. 4800 Perkiomen Ave., Exeter. 610-370-5131. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, LN, \$\$
- Frank & Diannah's Arbor Inn** • Restored American Bistro, bar and cabana. Closed Sunday. 47 S. Bingaman St., Saint Lawrence. 610-406-0126. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$

- Funky Lil' Kitchen** • Funky Lil' Kitchen is a BYOB serving modern American cuisine in a fun, intimate atmosphere. Dinner Tues.-Sat. 5-9pm, Lunch Thurs.-Sat. 11:30am-2:30pm. 232 King St., Pottstown. 610-326-7400. ☎, CC, BYOB, ☎, L-\$, D-\$\$
- Ganly's Pub & Restaurant** • Casual, relaxed family dining. Summer-outdoor patio. 500 Brownsville Rd., Sinking Spring. 610-678-2000. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$
- The Restaurant at Golden Oaks** • Located at Golden Oaks Golf Club. Open to the public all year long; casual dining to weddings and other special occasions. Restored farmhouse for private parties and beautiful outdoor dining during the summer! ☎, ☎, CC, ☹, ☹, D-\$\$
- Gracie's 21st Century Cafe & Catering** • Fresh, natural gourmet dining in an outa' this world atmosphere, your own private oasis. Open year round. 1534 Manatawny Dr., Pine Forge. 610-323-4004. ☎, ☎, CC, ☹, ☎, ☎, ★★, ☎, D-\$\$\$ LN
- Green Hills Inn** • Chef-owned. Zagat Guide: “excellent.” Country French Inn atmosphere, international cuisine, extensive wine list. Closed Sunday. 2444 Morgantown Rd., Shillington. 610-777-9611. ☎, CC, ☹, ★★, D-\$\$\$

Green Hills Inn

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- Hauté Chocolate Café** • Your passport to a world of stylish and eclectic chocolate truffles, pastries and chocolate drinks. Now offering express lunch Mon-Sat. Open year round. 711 Penn Ave., West Reading. 610-373-4455. L, D-\$, CC, ☎
- Heidelberg Family Restaurant** • PA Dutch style cooking and baking, daily specials, homemade pastries. Banquet facilities for up to 100 people. 6 am to 8:30 pm, open 7 days. B, L, D-\$, CC
- Jimmie Kramer's Peanut Bar** • Popular downtown spot. American fare, casual to gourmet. 332 Penn St., Reading. 610-376-8500. ☎, CC, ☹, D-\$\$
- Judy's on Cherry** • Featuring freshly baked breads, seafood stews, gourmet pizzas and roasted Tuscan entrees from our hearth-fired oven. 332 Cherry St., Reading. Lunch T - F 11:30 - 2:00, Dinner T - S 5:00 - 10:00, Closed Sunday and Monday. 610-374-8511. ☎, CC, ☹, ★★, D-\$\$
- Katara Juice Bar & Eatery** • Fresh fruit or vegetable juice bar serving real fruit smoothies. We also have a light menu that includes salads, wraps and sandwiches. Mon.-Fri. 6am-3pm, Sat. 7am-noon, closed Sun. 1912 State Hill Rd., Wyomissing. 610-375-8800. ☎, all ☎, B-\$, L-\$

Dining | Out

Through early autumn, paper-thin wafers of more-than-adequate domestic Oregon truffles finish the sautéed filet of tilapia, presented on a bed of soft polenta with a delicate tomato sauce. Golden chanterelles and little crisps of smoked bacon add a robust note that highlights the taste of the firm fish without overwhelming it. (My mouth waters just thinking about this memorable and compelling combination.)

Another dish that will linger lovingly in my gastronomic memory is the lemon risotto with rock shrimp. The bright and lively punch of the sumptuous rice is an exemplary foil for the toothsome shrimp, which rivals its crustacean cousin, lobster, in taste and texture.

Dessert, I feared, would be total overindulgence. However, a football-shaped “quenelle” of premise-made vanilla bean ice cream, placed over fat, ripe raspberries – and adorned with refreshing sprigs of mint – is a light and invigorating conclusion to dinner. I would trust Hook to concoct a fitting finish to dinner in any season.



Of course, appropriate wines enhance any meal, and the staff at Dans will recommend suitable pairings by the bottle or glass. The New Zealand Nobilo sauvignon blanc I sampled is one of my new favorites. It's also worth noting that this is one of the few restaurants to offer champagne by the glass.

Hook, Woolworth and Monir review wine selections regularly to ensure that the beverages pair optimally with the evolving menu. For an ultimate wine-and-food pairing experience, reserve a table for the next nine-course wine tasting dinner. Your mouth, your stomach and your friends will all thank. ■BCL

Dans Restaurant
1049 Penn St. (at the corner of 11th St.)
Reading, PA
610-373-2075 • www.dansrestaurant.com
Lunch/brunch, Thurs. – Sun, 11:00 – 2:00
Dinner, Wed. – Sun., 5:00 – 9:30.
Available for private functions;
wine tasting dinners offered periodically.
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Kutztown Family Restaurant • Family owned Italian restaurant, homemade food, friendly atmosphere, glad to be there. 14949 Kutztown Rd., Kutztown. 610-894-9694. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, ☎, ★★, D-\$\$

Kutztown Tavern • Brewpub. American pub grub, simple and well-prepared. 272 W. Main St., rear, Kutztown. 610-683-9600. ☎, CC, ☎, ★★, D-\$\$

Lou ees • Carry out, delivery, limited eat-in, pizza, subs, salads and other pizza sub items. 500 Hawk Ridge Dr., Hamburg. 610-562-7700. CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, L-\$, D-\$\$, LN

Max Crema's Espresso & Coffee Bar • The comfy coffee house with artisan roasted coffees, teas, specialty drinks, pastries, smoothies and more! Open year round. 3130 Princetown Rd. (The Shoppes at Woodside), Alsace Township. 610-898-9001. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, ☎, D-\$



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The Old Mill Inn • The Old Mill has a very casual, yet unique atmosphere. Wonderful dining experience for everyone! Open year round. 1250 Green Hills Rd., Birdsboro. 610-582-8150. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, ☎, D-\$\$

Oley Valley Inn • 1881 inn featuring Victorian elegance. Slower-paced, romantic dining. Emphasis on healthy, fresh, straightforward preparation. Closed Monday. Main & Freidensburg Rd., Oley. 610-987-6400. ☎, CC, ☎, L-\$, D-\$\$

Ozgood's Neighborhood Grill & Bar • American fare. Wings judged "Best In Berks." Open 7 days. 319 E. Penn Ave., Robesonia. 610-693-6685. ☎, CC, ☎, D-\$\$

Porch • An intimate lively atmosphere featuring modern american cuisine, using the best local

ingredients, fresh seafood and aged meats. 890 Tulpehocken Road, Myerstown, PA 17067. 717-866-2200. L-\$, D-\$\$

Riveredge • Fine dining in a casual atmosphere. Entertainment most Friday and Saturday nights. Banquet rooms available. 2017 Bernville Rd., Reading. 610-376-6711. ☎, CC, ☎, D-\$\$\$

Savory Grille • A fine dining restaurant with unique presentations in a comfortable setting. Open Wed. through Sat. 4:30pm to 10pm, Sunday 1pm to 8pm. 2934 Seisholtzville Rd., Macungie, PA. 610-845-2010. ☎, CC, ☎, D-\$\$\$

Simpatico • "by Chat-a-While" Chef David Brennan's newest creation featuring Northern Italian cuisine, 10 homemade pastas daily. Signature dishes include Osso Bucco, Grilled Bronzino with fregola. Tues - Sat: 5 - 10pm. Sun & Mon: Private Parties. 237 Butter Lane, Reading. 610-779-9906. ☎, CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, D-\$\$

Smokey Bones • Best waitstaff in a long time. Always there for you. Not only great ribs, awesome apps. and other dinner entrees. Highly recommend!! Meridian Rd., Wyomissing. 610-914-3540. CC, ☎, ☎, ☎, D-\$

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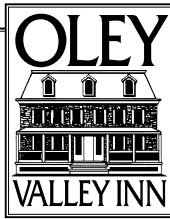
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Stouch Tavern • Historic register. Fine dining, casual attire. Closed Tuesday. Lunch buffet Monday, Wednesday, Friday. Crab soup a specialty. 138 W. High St., Womelsdorf. 610-589-4577. ☎, CC, ¥, ★★, D-\$\$\$

Stoudt's Black Angus Restaurant & Brew Pub • Fine Dining and Pub menu, featuring aged beef, famous raw bar, tapas, great wine list and microbrews. Rt. 272, Adamstown. 717-484-4385. ☎, CC, ¥, ★★, D-\$\$\$

TC's Food & Spirits • General Menu, casual attire. Open 7 days. RD 4, Richmond Township. 610-683-6299. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

T.G.I. Friday's • Casual, fun family dining... appetizers, steaks, sandwiches, burgers, Jack Daniel's® signature entrees. "Ultimate" cocktails. Open daily from 11:00am. 305 N. Park Rd., Wyomissing. 610-376-3829. CC, ¥, ☺, ☻, ☼, L-\$, D-\$

The Inn at Moselem Springs • Best Sunday brunch in Berks County-9:30AM-2PM. Live entertainment every Fri in The Springs Lounge. Mon-Wed: Chef's Specials; Thurs: Seafood Night; Fri-Sun: Weekend Specials. Rt. 222 & 662, Fleetwood. 610-944-8213. CC, ¥, ☺, L, D-\$\$

The Tiki Bar • Pennsylvania's finest island and very first "cook your own". Tucked in the woods of southern Berks County, just off Route 422 on the Ragin' Manatawny. The Tiki Bar is absolutely the most fun an adult can have while dining out. May thru Sept. open 7 days 4 - midnight; open weekends all winter. 610-689-4707. Manatawny Rd., Boyertown. CC, ¥, D-\$\$

Ugly Oyster Drafthaus • Guinness IRISH Pub Program affiliate, the first in the state of PA. Authentic Irish atmosphere. 21 S. 5th St., Reading. 610-286-0200. ☎, CC, ¥, ★★, ☺, L-\$, D-\$\$

UNO Chicago Grill • Authentic Chicago grill famous for its steaks, burgers, pastas and Chicago-style deep dish pizza. Open daily from 11:00am. 2713 N. Meridian Blvd., Wyomissing. 610-376-6720. CC, ¥, ☺, ☻, ☼, L-\$, D-\$, LN

West Reading Tavern • Near VF Outlet Village. Tudor setting, creative, innovative entrees. 606 Penn Ave., West Reading. 610-376-9232. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$\$

The Works • The region's premier restaurant and entertainment destination. Upscale cuisine, includes seafood, steaks, pastas, hearth-fired pizzas, raw bar specialties and freshly baked desserts. 1109 Bern Road, Wyomissing. 610-375-2700. CC, ¥, D-\$\$

— Country Hotel Restaurants —

Bowers Hotel • Country hotel setting, casual dining. Seventy-five item menu and specials. Bowers. 610-682-2900. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Deitsh Eck Restaurant • Large portions of genuine Pa. Dutch cooking, authentic hex sign décor. Old Rt. 22 & 143, Lenhartsville. 610-562-8520. ☎, CC, D-\$\$

Dryville Hotel • Authentic country hotel atmosphere, good food, well-prepared. Good selection of beers. 110 Lyons Rd., Mertztown. 610-682-2466. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$\$

Historic Pleasantville Inn • Full menu featuring famous crab cakes and hand-cut flame-broiled steaks. "Smart casual attire." Open 7 days. Rt. 73 & Covered Bridge Rd., Oley. 610-689-5818. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Kempton Hotel • PA Dutch cooking. Known for potato filling. Casual attire, closed Tuesday. 9910 Kistler Valley Rd., Kempton. 610-756-6588. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$\$

Krumsville Inn • Homemade food, casual attire. Open 7 days. 1538 Krumsville Rd., Lenhartsville. 610-756-6252. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Landis Store Hotel • Known for crab cakes, among other fare. Draws clientele from long distances. 4 Baldy Hill Rd., Boyertown. 610-845-2324. CC, ¥, D-\$\$\$

Shanesville Hotel • We offer quantity & quality food at a moderate price in a casual country setting. Closed major holidays. Mon.-Fri. 3-11pm; Sat. 12-11pm; Sun. 12-9pm. 1636 W. Philadelphia Ave., Boyertown. 610-367-9100. ☎, CC, ¥, ☺, ☻, ☼, L-\$, D-\$\$

Shanesville HOTEL
 FINE FOOD IN A CASUAL ATMOSPHERE

Daily Specials

Mon. • 35¢ Wings	Thur. • All you can eat
Tues. • Steak Night	Snow Crabs \$19.95
Wed. • Shepherd's Pie	Fri./Sat. • Prime Rib

1636 W. Philadelphia Ave., Boyertown
 5 miles West of Boyertown on Rt. 73
610-367-9100 Under New Management

Topton House • Diverse menu featuring salmon dishes, chicken cordon bleu, duck and crab items. New ownership. 5 Centre Ave., Topton. 610-682-4536. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$\$

Virginville Hotel • Genuine country hotel ambiance and straightforward Pennsylvania-Dutch cooking. Virginville. 610-562-7072. ☎, CC, ¥, D-\$

Yellow House Hotel • Casual country. Victorian charm, ghosts, candlelight. Known for Dolly's ribs and Yellow House crabcakes. Open 7 days. 6743 Boyertown Pike, Douglassville. 610-689-9410. ☎, CC, ¥, L-\$, D-\$\$

Mommy Diaries

Continued from page 11

to see a group of 10 children all following the dance teacher's instructions to hop like a bunny when ours has decided to hang from the ballet bar.

This is not a child born with obvious problems or some diagnosed issues. But at times I think my husband and I struggle with seeing her teeter on the edge of acceptable.

My sister-in-law slipped me her well-used copy of *Raising a Spirited Child* a few years ago. I've read a little of it but have since set it aside with all the other books. I've admittedly never been good at following instructions or manuals or well-intentioned advice. I tend to follow my heart, my gut, my "je ne sais crois." I have always let my emotions be my guide.

I don't think there is anything wrong with our daughter, but I think she is a free spirit, prone to listen to her own primal reactions to the world. Her spirit is strong; her will is even stronger. She is stubborn to a fault and will undeniably be her own worst enemy.

She is a physical child, aggressively expressing her feelings sometimes more than we'd like. I knew this when she was an infant and pounded her tiny clenched fist on my chest as she nursed. At two she would clench her fists, grit her teeth and grunt with a bright red face. We thought her head might explode, bobbing with frustration. We took to making fun of it, mimicking her to show her how funny she looked. Eventually she stopped that. Now at three, she lets out a shrill scream to let us know she's unhappy. While we know much of this is normal, when is it not?

I try to remind myself and my husband that Gracie is just being herself and it's our job to try and teach her boundaries and to help channel her spirit into positive behavior. As one of my favorite writers put to prose a few years ago, "Raising children is more about letting them be who they are and not imposing ourselves on them while we try to teach them to navigate the world. We are just spectators."

There is a comfort in watching her follow other children, blending in with the crowd and knowing that she is fitting in. Isn't that what we're all trying to do, fit in? But somehow this validates me, even just a little bit. I'm relieved when it's someone else's child leaving circle time or disrupting pin the tail on the donkey. I give those moms knowing glances.

I think these traits in our little girl will serve her well, someday. As an adult, I hope her strength and stubbornness will perhaps get her through life's rollercoaster ride. I expect we'll fondly recall her non-participative circle days and her bobbing red face with humor and a certain understanding. Maybe even she will learn to laugh at these childhood nuances, and it will somehow all make sense.

Ahhh, yes, now that she's graduating with honors from medical school, working on a cure for cancer and writing her thesis on world peace, we understand why she hit Anna over the head with that plastic wheel barrow when she was three.

Someone did tell me four was easier.

He Said, She Said

A Restaurant Review of Marital Proportions

By Jeff & Betsy Woytovich

Trooper Thorn's Irish Beef House

451 Morgantown Rd., Reading
www.irishbeefhouse.com



He said: My Irish drink of choice, of course, was (you guessed it) Killian's for \$1. You know what the Irish say, "Eat, drink, and be merry," which is exactly what we did at Trooper Thorn's Irish Beef House.

She said: Hope to see you there next time we get a babysitter!!

He said: If anyone would like to sit for us, we have four wonderful little girls, ages 9, 8, 5 and 2. Please call us. Only 2 of them have conspired to embezzle baby-sitting money for gummy bears on the black market online. OK, one of them did cause an international incident, not in this country though. The Baby is cute and says "Mama" non stop, which is kind of adorable. On vacation she said it 4,760,124 times in just 7 days -- we are very proud.

Featured Burgers

Monday: Buffalo (hot sauce & blue cheese crumbles)

Tuesday: Trooper (blue cheese, ranch and hot sauce mixed) with provolone cheese

Wednesday: Mexi (salsa, cheese and onion)

Thursday: Mushroom (sautéed mushrooms and provolone)

Friday: American (lettuce, tomato, onion, cheese)

Saturday: Western (BBQ sauce, cheese, bacon)

Sunday: Chili Cheese

Specials

Monday: 15¢ wings, 20¢ shrimp (6 - 9:30 pm)

Tuesday: \$3 Carlsberg

Wednesday: \$3 Corona and Corona Light

Thursday: \$2 Well Drinks and \$3 featured Import Drafts (10 - 12 pm)

Friday: \$1.50 Coors and Coors Light Bottles

Saturday: \$2.50 Mike's Hard Lemonade Bottles

Sunday: \$3 Bluemoon

He said: And remember, \$1 Killian's all day every day!

He said: If you ever frequented the Paradise Café, you probably haven't told many people. I may (or may not) have ended up there a few times in my younger days, usually for the purpose of cheap beer. Not to worry, the only thing Trooper Thorn's shares with the former Paradise Café is its address. Mike and Jackie Trappe, owners of Trooper Thorn's, updated the building with a whole new look while keeping an old and rustic ambiance. I wonder how they did that.

She said: But even better, they added a patio deck with outdoor seating and a cabana bar. There was an acoustic guitarist playing, which added to the fun atmosphere.

He said: Let's talk about the food! I always knew the Irish could drink (and you can do so pretty inexpensively at Trooper Thorn's with \$1 Killian's every night!), but we ate like an Irish king and queen that night, no boiled potatoes for us!

She said: We started with the Trooper Salad, which is a field green salad tossed with tomatoes and cucumbers in their house dressing (which is a secret recipe), topped with sautéed (still warm) asparagus and mushrooms. It is truly like no other salad I've ever had. I can't wait to go back for more.

He said: Well, get a sitter and let's go! I have to say that I am not a salad guy, but their salad is exceptional. That is fancy talk for "fantabulistic!" And they will top it with beef, pork or ham. So you don't have to be a salad guy to try it. Speaking of meat, for an appetizer we had sausage rolls. They were like upgraded pigs in a blanket on steroids, not really, but big. Awesome! And they give you this HP Steak sauce, and let's just say any sauce that's labeled "Baste for Meat" has got to be good!

She said: Next we got two more appetizers: crab-stuffed shrimp and Oysters O'Malley, which were both superb if you're a seafood lover, which I am!

He said: I thought Oyster O'Malley was an Irish bookie, but since I am not a betting man, O'Malley was going to get in my belly. Not to mention, I am allergic to shrimp (once broke out in hives everywhere, I mean everywhere), but I couldn't resist these crab-stuffed shrimp. Betsy, am I talking with an accent yet?

She said: I could have called it a meal then, but who can resist fish n' chips when dining at an Irish pub? And they were worth stuffing ourselves for.

He said: It was classic pub food. Actually, I got fish and fries. I still don't understand why the Irish call French fries chips.

She said: We could barely find room for the scrumptious blueberry and cinnamon scones with warm blackberry jam. After a few bites, we packed them up, and they were delicious the next morning with our coffee. I would have loved to have them with an Irish coffee though. I'll have to save that for next time.

