

nightspots

weekly nightlife section in

WINDY
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the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Filini Bar & Restaurant

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Believe it or not, there was a time when people generally avoided hotel restaurants in big cities—with people getting gussied up to go out for a night on the town. At the most, people would treat hotel eateries like greasy-spoon diners, grabbing a quick meal.

However, hotels—eager to hold onto their guests as well as attract other customers—have stepped it up in recent years. The Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel's bilevel **Filini Bar & Restaurant** (FiliniChicago.com; 221 N. Columbus Dr.) is a prime example of how those establishments have become places where people go to see and be seen—as well as to enjoy some tasty fare.

Upon seeing the restaurant (which is accessible through a separate, street-level entrance from the hotel), the first word that popped into my mind was "sleek," thanks to a combination of steel and glass that's artfully used. The second floor (more formal) is also a study in silver—although there's substantially more there, including angled tiles in



Seafood salad (left) and **burger with fries** at Filini Bar & Restaurant.
Photos by Andrew Davis

the ceiling as well as some booths that conjure a feeling of royalty (tall, purple seats).

A recent lunchtime stop at Filini revealed a bustling atmosphere (courtesy of nearby company employees as well as hotel guests). It also unveiled a menu full of menu items that, while not life-changing, are certainly more than satisfying—as well as the fact that this restaurant has expanded far beyond its Italian roots.

My dining companions and I started with a chopped salad that consisted of a tantalizing mix of chopped Romaine, ditalini pasta, chicken, bacon, tomatoes, gorgonzola, green onions and sweet mustard dressing. We also tried the solid fritto misto—calamari, shrimp, monkfish, peppers and garlic aioli.

I continued with the Lakeshore East Cheeseburger (with cheddar, mushroom and tomato), one of the better sandwiches of that genre that I've had lately. My dining partners seemed similarly satisfied with their selections: the pasta dishes

garganelli (with creamy cheese sauce, prosciutto, radicchio and white truffle oil) and gnocchi (with homemade potato dumplings and braised pork cheeks).

However, that's just the tip of the iceberg regarding the lunchtime menu—and the dinner one is even more extensive. (Among some of the other lunch offerings are chicken wings, various pizzas, loaded fries (with braised short rib, white cheddar, avocado crema and scallions) and desserts such as chocolate lava cake and cannoli, not to mention various cocktails.)

Filini definitely warrants a visit—and a return.

By the way: Filini will be offering a four-course Valentine's Day special (\$75; \$90 with wine); some of the items will include a seafood platter, linguine, filet, lamb and panna cotta. In addition, Filini will be one of the many places taking part in Chicago Restaurant Week, which takes place Jan. 22-Feb. 4 (three-course lunch for \$22; three-course dinner for \$33 each, sans tax or gratuity).

nightspots

the big TO-DO

OUR WEEKLY PICKS TO PLAN YOUR NIGHTLIFE CALENDAR

Mr. Chicago Leather 2016 (MCL 2016)

Fri., Jan. 22- Sun., Jan. 24

A weekend full of events, all to choose Chicago's official representative at this year's International Mr. Leather competition, taking place over Memorial Day weekend.

Fri., Jan. 22, 10 pm

Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.
Meet the contestants and judges at the **MCL 2016 Welcome Party**. Stick around until midnight for the roast of Mr. Chicago Leather 2015 Luis Tipantasing (pictured, left) by roastmaster Mr. Santa Clara County Leather 2012 Thib Guichard-Callin.

Sat., Jan. 23

Leather Archives & Museum, 6418 N. Greenview St.
A full day of leather/kink activities includes **Kink U**, presented by Titans of the Midwest from 1-5 pm at Touche; **Healthy Kink: Pre- and Post-Care For the Active Kinkster** at 3 pm; the **Fetish Flea Market** from noon-5 pm; and culminates in the **Mr. Chicago Leather 2016 contest** (doors open at 7 pm, contest at 8). After the contest, follow the kinksters to Touche for the **Pure Victory Dance**.

Sun., Jan. 24, 11 am

Andersonville Brewing Co., 5402 N. Clark St.
Join together in brotherhood and mimosas with the new Mr. Chicago Leather 2016 and friends at the **MCL 2016 Leather Brunch**.

Sun., Jan. 24, 4 pm

Touche, 6412 N. Clark St.
Dance the Sunday Funday away at the **MCL 2016 T-Dance & Beer Bust**, with DJ Freddie Bain. Club room open at 6 pm.

Mr. Chicago Leather 2016 weekend packages are available at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2477605, which includes drink tickets for cocktails at Touche each night, admission to the Leather Archives on Saturday, beverage service at the contest, Sunday's leather brunch, the MCL2016 T-shirt and more.

Photo of Mr. Chicago Leather 2015 Luis Tipantasing (left) and Mr. Chicago Leather 2014 Miguel Torres by Kirk Williamson



/nightspots

PROGRESS BAR

Meeting hip-hop artist Dad's New Boyfriend, Sun., January 17.
Photos by Kirk Williamson



SIDETRACK

All Things Beyoncé, Wed., January 13.
Photos by Kirk Williamson



"I'm just a gay guy from Indiana who doesn't play basketball."—CBS Entertainment president **Glenn Geller** talks to the press about diversity both in front of and behind the camera. And yet CBS is the only major network NOT doing a Broadway musical. What's up with that?

Did you hear about Shuttlegate? Because of increased security at the Golden Globes, everyone not in a limo had to park in a single garage about a mile away from the venue. The lines in the garage were endless, with celebs and civilians alike waiting more than two hours to go through a metal detector and board a shuttle. The trades quoted people as saying, "This is like waiting to get off the Titanic" or "It was like a prison camp." Such a First World problem. Meanwhile, there are people in Uzbekistan who don't even have cable!

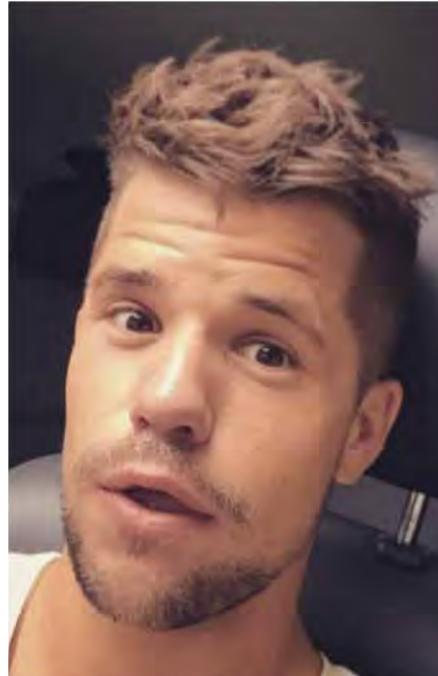
To avoid this, I found a parking spot nearby and walked to the hotel. Well, I attempted to walk to the hotel. A burly cop of undetermined gender stopped me and said I could not cross the street to the venue because it was a secured area. "Really? I don't think so," I said. The hand on the Taser told me I should think again. Undaunted, I walked down the block to the next corner. Again, I was stopped. But this time I said that the other security guard sent me there. Success.

I think **Ricky Gervais** is the perfect host. Everyone in Hollywood has a love/hate relationship with the Golden Globes. On one hand, it's a joke. On the other hand, it's an indicator of the Oscars since Academy ballots are due days later. You know who'd like to host next year? **Caitlyn Jenner**. The reality star was not thrilled when Ricky said she didn't help the image of women drivers. OK, perhaps mean. It may have been unintentional, but Cait did kill someone. So did Matthew Broderick. So did Brandy. And Laura Bush. Let's not even get into Teddy Kennedy—and I'm a Bostonian! Cait, lighten up—at least the charges were dropped.

Two days later, I was at a very different awards show—the Cybersocket Awards. If you want to feel old, try walking through a room filled with scantily dressed gay porn stars in their 20s. **Chi Chi LaRue** hosted the event with aplomb. And Frenchie Davis blew the roof off the joint (while the "talent" was blowing other things). After Davis left, the Best Sex Scene was awarded to Two Americans For One Frenchie. And I thought I was versatile!

Before we change topics, NBC has announced its next live musical will be *Hairspray*. Kinda soon for a new version of that great show, but anything to get the taste of Travolta out of my mouth, so to speak. I hear that there is already a Link on board—**Nick Jonas** is all guaranteed to reprise the role he played at the Hollywood Bowl in 2011. And it's a no-brainer that **Harvey Fierstein** should get the chance to immortalize his inimitable Edna for posterity—to say nothing of posterior! Plus, he's already got an in with the producers—he revamped the book for *The Wiz: LIVE!*

While we'd all love to see the original Tracy from the musical play the role, **Marissa Jaret Winokur** has made it clear via Facebook that won't happen: "Thank you all for your delusional support that I could play a 16-year-old! We are all VERY excited for 'Hairspray' on NBC, but 'Mamma I'm an OLD girl now...welcome to my 40s!' That said, she make a formidable Miss Baltimore Crabs or Mrs. Pingleton ... or the gym teacher! Lastly, I think it's obvious that Motormouth Mabel should be played by Black-ish breakout star **Jenifer Lewis**. After all, the part was written for her, she did the original demos



Charlie Carver comes out, comes out, wherever he is.
Twitter photo

and workshop, and eventually starred in the Broadway production. DUH!

Last week, **Charlie Carver** (one of the hot twins from *Desperate Housewives* and *Teen Wolf*) came out. He did this via Instagram—as the kids are wont to do. It's an extensive coming-out essay—five parts in all. It all boils down to a handful of quotes: "I hadn't really ever been 'in,'" "I've lived 'out,' not feeling the need to announce so. I was comfortably out in my private life" and "Let the record show this—I self-identified as gay. Does that really matter anymore? As a young man, I needed a young man in Hollywood to say that—and without being a dick about it, I owed it to myself, more than anything, to be who I needed when I was younger." With a tip of a hat to his equally hot brother Max, he said, "And let the record show my twin brother is just as cool for being straight."

Our "Ask Billy" question comes from Gary in Sacramento: "Do you watch *Undateable*? Last week, **Chris D'Elia** was in his underwear and it sure looked like he has a huge penis."

Not so much a question as a statement, but one I'd question. Let me say how thrilled I am that anyone is watching *Undateable*—perhaps the best sitcom on TV. Once they decided to go live every week, the show has been on fire—everywhere except in the ratings. They do the show live twice on Fridays—once for the East and once for the West. And this explains Gary's statement. In the West Coast feed, D'Elia's undies were about to burst. Let's just say they went in a different direction for the East Coast. I'll post both versions on [BillyMasters.com](#).

When we're analyzing bulges, it's definitely time to end yet another column. But before I wrap, let me take a moment to apologize to Project Runway alum **Blake Patterson**. You know how you watch people on TV and you think you know them? When I saw Blake at the Cybersocket Awards, I knew I knew him—I just couldn't place him. I figured he couldn't place me when I greeted him a tad too familiarly, while taking inventory of his thread and bobbin. Once I got home, it hit me—I've never met him before! Oops, sorry. But perhaps he'll now be a fan of [www.BillyMasters.com](#), the site that has a whole lotta bobbin' goin' on!

If you have a question, send it off to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Ricky Gervais replaces Chi Chi LaRue as host of the Cybersocket Awards ... and nobody can tell the difference! Strike that—before Caitlyn Jenner replaces Chi Chi LaRue as host of the Cybersocket Awards ... and nobody can tell the difference! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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