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weekly nightlife section in 

# the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in WINDY CITY TIMES

## SAVOR

### Lowcountry; Osteria Langhe truffle dinner

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Be prepared to have a messy meal at Wrigleyville's **Lowcountry** (3343 N. Clark St.; LowcountryChicago.com). That's a good thing, by the way.

The culinary centerpiece of this place is the lowcountry boil, a melange of Southern goodness that incorporates seafood, spices and "add-ons" (corn on the cob, red potatoes and/or andouille sausage). Co-owner Pan Hompluem, who's married to co-owner/hostess Dana, told Windy City



Grilled culotte steak with sunchokes, creamy polenta and truffle at Osteria Langhe. Photos by Andrew Davis

Times that he used to visit the Lowcountry area in South Carolina when he was growing up, and wanted to bring that vibe to Chicago.

Taking over the former Blokes & Birds space, the Hompluem have made a concerted effort to bring the atmosphere here—although there are other influences here as well, such as the tasty banh mi (although that sandwich is, sadly, on its way out—to be replaced by boil accessories like cole slaw and biscuits).

As for that boil, it's absolutely delicious—and

so is the honey butter jalapeno cornbread. The garlic beignets didn't seem as magical to me, but my dining companion loved them. However, be sure to finish with the deep-fried Oreos (something I feel everyone should try at least once). And after all that Southern goodness, be sure to wash your hands in the trough at the center of the restaurant.

#### Osteria's truffle dinner

**Osteria Langhe** (2824 W. Armitage Ave.; OsteriaLanghe) is a recently opened spot that faces the unenviable task of distinguishing itself from the approximately 72,000 other Italian restaurants in Chicago. (OK: That number may be a slight exaggeration.)

However, Aldo Zaninotto (who owns the space along with Chef Cameron Grant) correctly and emphatically pointed out that northern Italian cuisine is different from that of the rest of Italy. (Think of the differences between Southern and West Coast items in the United States.)

To that end, I recently went to a media event that showcased Osteria's truffle-inspired items—and, judging from what I had, I'll be returning. There were sunny egg, tajarin, grilled piemontese culotte steak and panna cotta, each topped with white truffle goodness. (Also, for those

needing a quick truffle fix atop any favorite dish at Osteria Langhe, the restaurant will shave truffles table side for \$15 per gram.)

Note: Restaurant profiles are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.



## SIDETRACK

Maximum hold at the viewing party for Hairspray! Live, Wed., December 7. Photos by Jed Dulanias



## BIG CHICKS

The community turns out for Michelle Fire and Big Chicks' 30h anniversary, Sat., December 10. Photos by Ed Negron

## BERLIN

33rd anniversary glam, Tuesday, November 29. Photos by Erik Michael Kommer



"Why is it so hard to find a sexy, charismatic, hunky, non-girlie Link?"—A notable **Hairspray** alum, after seeing the live telecast. We have two filmed versions of this show where Link oozes all the raw masculinity of a young Tatum O'Neal. Strike that: Tatum had more testosterone than **Zac Efron** and **Garrett Clayton** combined.

Some people felt it was too soon to do a new version of *Hairspray*—after all, the **John Travolta** film was made in 2007. But this "live" version was much closer to the Broadway musical, due in no small part to the extraordinary talents of the show's original choreographer, **Jerry Mitchell**. Since he was not involved in the film version, his vision went unseen ... until now. When he introduced me to **Maddie Baillio** after the live telecast, he said, "Billy's known every great Tracy"—and, I daresay, some of the lesser ones!

I'd put Maddie near the top. (Nobody can touch my **Marissa**.) Her vocals were incredible, and her acting really touched me. I would have liked to have seen more exuberance and joy, but when your first major role is carrying a three-hour live television event, you've got a lot on your plate! There was plenty of joy on the screen once the two original Tracys appeared. **Ricki Lake** and **Marissa Jaret Winokur** showed up in "Welcome To The '60s" as the two lead Hefty Hideaway girls. I wondered where **Nikki Blonsky**—the Tracy from the musical film—was. All anyone would say was a "financial issue" kept her away. I've always loved *The Dynamites*—the girl group that comes to life from a poster. The live telecast reunited the original Broadway trio: **Kamilah Marshall**, **Shayna Steele** and **Judine Richard Somerville**. And I'm sure most of you caught the sly nods to the *Hairspray* history, most notably the names of storefronts. I particularly liked *Divine Pet Food*, with the flashing neon pink flamingo.

Of course, this production immortalized the original musical *Edna* of **Harvey Fierstein**. In many ways, **Jennifer Hudson** was miscast—she may have been blond and beautiful, but the only thing big about her is her voice ... and her breasts! She sang the role like nobody's business, so I got past her looking like *Seaweed's* sister. And how perfect was **Kristin Chenoweth** as *Velma*? Her arch, sardonic, laconic portrayal was impeccable. As **Andrea Martin** proved, there are no small roles. Every line reading had me howling. When she rolled over the bed to get to the window, I almost burst. She's a national treasure.

**Garrett Clayton** sang and danced the role great. But can we please get back to the archetype set by the unsurpassed **Matthew Morrison**, Broadway's original Link? Now, THAT was sex on a stick! And whose bright idea was it to have **Darren Criss** take us out of the show at every commercial? Wrong! There were some technical issues. Some were on the fly—like the giant *Ultra Clutch* can that rolled out with the door open. **Chenoweth** altered her lines asking what was in there, while trying gallantly to close the door with her foot. (The West Coast didn't see this since the dress rehearsal footage was dropped in there.) Many scenes were badly lit, and singers often sang in the dark—most notably while **Tracy's** walking to school during "Good Morning Baltimore."

I know this was live, but there must be some lights on the Universal backlot. At least give **Tracy** a flashlight! Ultimately, none of that mattered. The real star of the show was the show itself. **Marc Shaiman** and **Scott Wittman** wrote



**Billy Masters** has a thing or two to say about the recent NBC special *Hairspray Live!* Photo of **Garrett Clayton**, **Dove Cameron** and **Derek Hough** (from left, in front) by **Paul Drinkwater/NBC**

a musical that is as tuneful as it is relevant. It sounded great and proved that, as always, you can't stop the beat.

Ever since the election, talks have been under way for some new *Will & Grace* episodes. That project took a giant leap forward when the four stars tentatively agreed. While promoting the film *Why Him?*, **Megan Mullally** filled in some details: "All I can say is that there is a very good chance that that might happen. It's not happening right this second. I mean, we're not rehearsing or anything like that. But there is a very good chance that something is going to materialize. But I can't really talk about it or say anything ... because you know how it is."

**Shannen Doherty's** had a crappy year. She's battling cancer and found out her management let her health insurance lapse. But she's not letting anything slow her down. She was just cast in the TV Land series based on her hit 1988 film *Heathers*. Rumor has it she'll be playing one of the more wicked moms. But there's another reason to check out this new version. The role **Doherty** played, **Heather Duke**, will now be played by a male actor. His birth name is **Heath**, but he's a "self-identified gender-queer." Sigh, if only **Alexis Arquette** were still alive...

It's time for **Billy's** Holiday Gift Giving Suggestions. I love buying people calendars. Everyone needs one and nobody buys them for themselves. Our first choice is new to this column. The *Men of the Vet School* calendar features the hunky frat boys from Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine. If seeing a strapping shirtless stud carrying a goat doesn't turn you on, you're dead on the inside. You can find them on **Etsy.com**.

One of our perennials is the **Warwick Rowers**. The ripped rowers not only pose nude, but they raise money for **Sport Allies**, a group that fights homophobia in sports. "We're here with our boats, our oars and no clothes to show that your true identity is the best way to be," the group says. You might get a splinter on **WarwickRowers.org**.

I'm always amused by the annual calendar featuring erotic photos of Orthodox priests. Yes, hot nude (and semi-nude) priests! Now in its fifth year, the Romanian organizers have revealed that the models are not "necessarily" priests. I should have been tipped off by the new anagram they're using—**PILF** stands for "priests I'd like to fuck." The group says the calendar is "an artistic effort to creatively protest homophobia in the Orthodox Church." Have I mentioned these guys are **HOT**? Check out **Orthodox-Calendar.com**.

When *Hairspray* is opening with "Good Evening Baltimore," it's time to end yet another column. With the holidays upon us, it's the perfect time to check out **www.BillyMasters.com**, the site that always delivers gay apparel. If you have a question for yours truly, drop a note to **Billy@BillyMasters.com** and I promise to get back to you before I hook up with a Romanian priest! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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