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weekly nightlife section in



the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Joy District

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Ever heard of a “clubstaurant?”

Well, that portmanteau perfectly describes **Joy District** (112 W. Hubbard St.; <https://www.joychicago.com/>), which offers everything from inviting eats to multiple spaces to explore.

Housed in what was formerly Epic, Chef Matthew Wilde has unveiled a new menu that Windy City Times was privileged to try as part of a media event—and while there was torrential rain outside, there was nothing but “joy” inside.

The menu involves a mix of influences, with nearly everything having a twist. Tuna poke cones came in crispy waffle cones (that were savory, as opposed to sweet, Wilde exclusively told WCT) while the local burrata salad featured roasted baby beets, fig jam and sesame brittle. Even the grilled edamame offered a little spice (literally), courtesy of yuzu salt and yukari.

The hits kept coming, thanks to a kinky citrus salmon roll with cucumber, jalapeno, avocado,



Interior of Joy District.
PR photo

lemon and cilantro. A tasty roasted chicken coll came with roasted puree and chimichurri and even the butter burger skirted the usual, as it came with black garlic and miso aioli.

However, the food is only part of the reason to visit Joy District. The venue contains various bars as well as club and lounge spaces that sport signs, couches, photos, intriguing lights and other items. Aside from the first floor, there are the chandelier room, first-floor mezzanine, second floor, second-floor mezzanine—and the 3,000-square-foot rooftop that can allow for even more dancing.

So, whatever your pleasure is—people-watching or dancing—be sure to indulge while sampling some of the more impressive menu selections I’ve tried this year.

Turn to page 19

Chicago BearFest weekend announced

For many years, bears and their fans from across the country—and even around the world—have gathered in Chicago over the Memorial Day weekend for fellowship and fun. This year will be no exception.

A group of local businesses—**Touché**, home of the Great Lakes Bears; **The Call**; **Hamburger Mary’s**; **Mary’s Attic** and **The Andersonville Brewing Company**—have joined forces to present Chicago BearFest, which plans to be unique in its approach, in that the weekend of events will be presented fee-free.

Register for free for Chicago BearFest and you will receive a wristband that will entitle you to special offers and discounts at the organizing venues and many more locations over the holiday weekend. You may register online through the Chicago BearFest Facebook page or at any event all weekend. Even if you are unable to join the party till Sunday, you can still get in on the fun and deals through Monday.

Nightly parties are planned, from Thursday, May 25, through Sunday, May 29, wrapping up on Memorial Day with a Farewell Brunch and afternoon cookout. Dances, cocktail parties and the premiere of the Mr. Chicago Bear and Chicago Cub Contest are just a part of the weekend’s events.

Follow Chicago BearFest or Twitter as more details are announced and for any last-minute additions to the lineup of events.



‘Rent’ leaves a legacy of love

BY JERRY NUNN

Many cast members of the Rent 20th Anniversary Tour were in Chicago on May 8 and stopped by Musical Monday at **Sidetrack** for a benefit concert titled A Season Of Love. The cast performed cabaret-style renditions of a variety of songs to raise money for The Legacy Project Chicago. Among the songs were Sting’s “All This Time,” jazz standard “All of Me,” and “It All Fades Away” from the musical version of Bridges of Madison County.

The host of the variety show, Sammy Ferber, kept things moving along for over an hour with rotating performers and jokes in between.

A trio sang a Spelling Bee song, then the two leads from Rent, Danny Harris Kornfeld, and Katie Lamark, drew song choices out of a cup to muddle through. Some random tracks they chose were from hit musicals like Aladdin, Little Shop of Horrors and Phantom of the Opera. They had a special request to sing “For Good” from Wicked to hearty applause.

Natalie Lipin brought the house down with her



Jasmine Easler.
Photo by Jerry Nunn

hilarious version of Spamalot’s “Diva’s Lament (Whatever Happened to My Part?).”

Jasmine Easler opened the night, and then closed it down by singing “Maybe This Time” from Cabaret.

The night spoke volumes about a cast that used their day off from the tour to support the community instead of staying on vocal rest.

The \$20 suggested donations from attendees were put to good use for The Legacy Project, who is “dedicated to combating anti-gay bullying by celebrating LGBT contributions in history.”

For more on The Legacy Project, see www.LegacyProjectChicago.org.

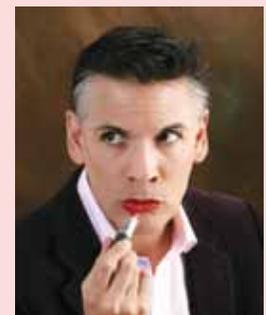
Cerda to receive special Jeff Award

More than 200 members of the Chicago theatre community signed a recommendation that the 2017 Non-Equity Special Jeff Award be bestowed on David Cerda, the co-founder and artistic director of Hell in a Handbag Productions, for his theatrical and charitable contributions.

The Jeff Awards Committee concurred. Cerda will receive the award at the 44th Annual Non-Equity Awards ceremony on Monday, June 5, at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport Ave..

Cerda was elected to the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 2016 for both theatrical achievements and philanthropic efforts. Also, Hell In A Handbag has raised more than \$58,000 for local and national causes, ranging from the American Cancer Society to The Wounded Warrior Project to Hams 4 Hams, an organization he co-founded with Lori Cannon that provides holiday staples for clients of Groceryland, which feeds those who are HIV positive and living with AIDS.

The public is invited to attend; visit JeffAwards.org.



David Cerda.
Rick Aguilar Studios

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BILLY Masters

"I don't think about it. It's not a thing. I go to work. I manage a lot of people. I cover the news. I deal with holy hell around me. I go home to the man I'm in love with."—And with that, Fox News anchor **Shepard Smith** comes out.

No time for idle chit-chat. I've got twice as many stories as I have room for in print, so we're gonna dive right in. **Patti LuPone**—the First Lady of Broadway—had some choice words to share when **Andy Cohen** asked her what she thought of **Madonna's** performance as Evita. (Actually, a call-in question got the ball rolling.)

Patti implied she has never seen the entire film but did see "Buenos Aires" "back when MTV used to show videos" and thought it was "a piece of shit." But she didn't stop there, adding, "Madonna is a movie killer. She's dead behind the eyes. She couldn't act her way out of a paper bag. She should not be on film or on stage. She's a wonderful performer for what she does, but she is not an actress." How refreshing! When was the last time someone was asked for an opinion and actually gave one? None of that politically correct crap we usually get.

Needless to say, this started a holy war on social media, with sides being drawn. Many people felt Patti's comments were sour grapes over not getting the Evita film. I disagree—Patti always speaks her mind. Earlier in the same episode of Watch What Happens Live, Cohen showed guest **Christopher Meloni** a scene from Law & Order: SVU in which Real Housewife Countess LuAnn had a small role. They came back from the clip, and the first thing out of LuPone's mouth was, "Wow, she SURE can't act!" Look, Patti calls 'em as she sees 'em.

It's that time of year when the networks choose which shows will come back next season and which ones won't. It's with mixed feelings I report the cancellation of **The Real O'Neals**. Created by our own Dan Savage, the show was lucky to survive this long after the outrageous interview star **Noah Galvin** gave to Vulture in a pathetic attempt to distance himself from his somewhat-sanitized character and garner Emmy buzz. It made Noah look bad, the network look bad, the show look bad—it was just bad! The brass came thisclose to canceling the second season, but gave it a half-hearted shot. But, methinks the damage was done. Good work, Galvin.

I already told you that The CW would be bringing a new version of **Dynasty** to the screen. While we have a new Blake, Fallon and Cristal (note the spelling), there is no Alexis—who, as you'll recall, didn't join the original show until the second season. I'm sure they'd love to bag **Joan Collins**, but I'm not sure how she could fit into this new series where characters who were Alexis' contemporaries are played by actors roughly the square root of her age! But if we dispense with mythology, perhaps Alexis could come back as Blake's mother. That might be too cruel.

Don't call him Fiona! That's what **Richard Simmons** has to say in response to a National Enquirer cover story which proclaimed him embarking on gender reassignment surgery. Simmons is so pissed off about the story—which came out last June—



Richard Simmons is fighting back, Billy says.
Photo by Andrew Davis

that he's suing the publication. His contention is that the rag chose to accuse him of such a hot-button topic to ensure that he wouldn't sue—because if he did, it might be construed as being against gender reassignment surgery. This is kinda like suing for defamation over being called gay—as if being gay is a bad thing. Wording of the complaint is quite clear: "Mr. Simmons, like every person in this nation, has a legal right to insist that he not be portrayed as someone he is not. Even the most ardent supporter of sexual autonomy and LGBTQ rights is entitled to be portrayed in a manner that is truthful." Pundits have declared that this is the first-ever defamation lawsuit over published reports about gender transition. The only other case I can think of is Caitlyn Jenner—who never sued, for obvious reasons.

The complaint also describes the mag's chief source, Mauro Oliveira, as "an individual who has blackmailed, extorted and stalked Mr. Simmons for several years with the intent of destroying the career and reputation of Mr. Simmons." Two days after the Enquirer cover story ran, Oliveira allegedly emailed Simmons, saying that if Richard paid him off, he would "go on record to discredit the story and defend Richard Simmons." Did you follow that? Oliveira tries to blackmail Simmons for money. It doesn't work. He tells the Enquirer he has a story. They pay him for it. Then he goes back to Simmons asking for more money, at which point he'd tell the "Enquirer" that the story they paid him for was a lie? This is not someone I'd consider a credible source! According to Simmons' attorneys, they sent the "Enquirer" the e-mailed offer to recant and deny the story if he got paid—surely thinking they'd issue a retraction. Nope. That's why it's now going to court. And I say, good for you, Fiona ... er, Richard.

So, it's down to this: I've got an "Ask Billy" question, and I've got a nude. But I only have room for one. Which one do I tackle? I think the nude—the question would take too long to answer. Italian soccer heartthrob **Federico Varano** took some dick pics which have gone viral. Viral in that you can see them—not viral as if you'll catch anything from them! He's quite a BIG thing in Italy, as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

When we're featuring soccer stars playing with their balls, it's definitely time to end yet another column. This was such a whirlwind, I barely have time to remind you to check out www.BillyMasters.com—the site even Patti LuPone enjoys! Whether I answer your question in print or not, I'm always here for you. So send your queries along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before Richard Simmons hires Tom Cruise's lawyer! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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DETAILS AVAILABLE AT WWW.SIDETRACKCHICAGO.COM

DISH from page 18

Upcoming wine walk

Andersonville Wine Walk will once again invite guests to walk, sip and shop their way through the district on Sunday, May 21, 3-6 p.m.

The Wine Walk will feature 26 of Andersonville's businesses, including Candyality, Kru Strength + Fitness, Jerry's, Martha Mae Art Supplies & Beautiful Things, Andersonville Galleria, Notice, Orange Shoe Personal Fitness, TrueNorth Cafe, and Revive Massage Therapy and Spa.

Tickets to Andersonville Wine Walk include admission, wine tastings and a one-of-a-kind commemorative wine glass. Check-in for the walk will begin at 1 p.m. at the Swedish American Museum, 5211 N. Clark St., on May 21. To purchase tickets or for more information, visit Andersonville.org.

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

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