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WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR Top spots of 2017

BY ANDREW DAVIS

In 2017, I had the opportunity to visit a lot of area restaurants, ranging from fast-food places to very upscale spots. Below are some of the ones that stood head and shoulders above the others (listed in no particular order).

—**The Barn** (Rear 1016 Church St.; TheBarnEvanston.com): This Evanston restaurant is called a “modern meaterie” for good reason, although there are options for vegetarians and vegans. Also, the decor is pretty cool; there’s a supper club/speakeasy vibe to the place.

—**Mr. Brown’s Lounge** (2301 W. Chicago Ave.; <https://www.mrbrownsloounge.com>): There is the spot in the Loop as well—but it takes a back seat to the big-brother West Town restaurant that’s been around for almost a decade. The Jamaican restaurant’s jerk chicken and rum-raisin ice cream (both made in house, of course) are fabulous—and weekends are full-on parties, complete with a dance floor.

—**Kal’ish Vegan** (1313 W. Wilson Ave.; KalishVegan.com): Being a hardcore carnivore, I had my suspicions about this place—but was more than satisfied when I left.

—**The Florentine** (151 W. Adams St.; TheFlorentine.net): I’ve been to this Italian restaurant (located inside the J.W. Marriott hotel) several times, and have always been impressed—even though Chef Zachary Walrath rarely brings back dishes once a new season’s in play.



Kal’ish Vegan’s avocado mash-up.
Photo by Bronson Pettitt

—**Maple & Ash** (8 W. Maple St.; MapleAndAsh.com): This Gold Coast spot probably had one of the most enjoyable brunches I had in 2017, thanks to top-notch food and a nonstop flow of ‘80s/‘90s dance music. (Yes, you read that correctly.)

—**Chromium** (2444 N. Elston Ave.; www.midtown.com/chicago): This restaurant is actually part of Midtown Athletic Club, and is only available to members. However, Executive

Chef Amanda Barnes is all about innovation and the use of every part of an animal—hence the addictive salmon-skin chicharrones and wagyu-and-beef heart meatballs.

—**Lawry’s the Prime Rib** (100 E. Ontario St.; LawrysOnline.com): Lawry’s is as old-school as it gets—and that’s a good thing. Prime rib with salad, mashed potatoes, Yorkshire pudding and whipped-cream horseradish? Yes, please.

—**Portsmith** (660 N. State St.; <https://www.portsmithchicago.com>): This River North restaurant—“named for the idea that seafood is common in most port towns and that a chef is a food ‘smith,’ or craftsman”—is delicious decadence as its best.



Portsmith’s fried oyster.
Photo by Andrew Davis



Heritage’s king crab with flying-fish roe.
Photo by Andrew Davis

—**Heritage Restaurant & Caviar Bar** (2700 W. Chicago Ave.; heritage-chicago.com): Those who may be intimidated by caviar shouldn’t be, thanks to the helpful staff and delicious offerings. (There’s even vegan caviar.) However, Heritage has much more than caviar, from baby-back ribs to baked Alaska.

—Runners-up: **Sable, Mesa Urbana, Italian Village Restaurants, Nick’s Pizza, Revival Social Club, State & Lake, Streeterville Social, Apogee.**

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



SIDETRACK

Happy New Year from Sidetrack!
Photos by Jed Dulanias



BILLY Masters

"Get ready for some pounding. Some of us could see 8 inches or more. That's too much—even for me."—Virginia Beach weatherman **Blaine Stewart** prepares residents for the blizzard with this Tweet. During a storm last year, he predicted that Virginia would get 10 inches—"and not Grindr inches." Might I suggest a liberal portion of lube?

I am by nature not a complainer—particularly when it comes to travel. I do so much of it, I've learned to just go with the flow. But last week, the flow was frozen and I was stuck in Boston during Grayson—which, alas, was the name of the blizzard and not some Brit I was bugging! Frankly, when I want a blizzard, I'll go to Dairy Queen. Normally, I would have taken the travel voucher AA was offering and flown back when the dust ... er, the snow settled. But, honey, I had to get to the Golden Globes. And not any Golden Globes—these were the 75th Golden Globes. It will also come as no surprise to you that I eschewed all this fake social activism and showed up in PLATINUM! Why? Obviously, because the 75th anniversary is the platinum one. And, far be it from me to cast aspersions (or, for that matter, dispersions) on the celebrities who claim to wear their hearts on their darkened sleeves, but since when is it unusual for people to wear black to an awards show? Solidarity, my ass!

By now you all know who won the awards. So I will move along to my random impressions. Maybe it's just me, but when the long tribute to **Kirk Douglas** started, I thought perhaps it was the "In Memoriam" segment. It turns out they brought the legendary actor onstage—with daughter-in-law **Catherine Zeta Douglas Spartacus Jones**. While I appreciate the sentiment, it was a spooky sight—and I'm talking about Catherine!

HBO's after party never disappoints. Premier party planner **Billy Butchkavitz** put on quite a sumptuous soiree. I walked in as **Kathy and Rick Hilton** were leaving. (**Paris** and fiancé **Chris Zylka** showed up shortly thereafter.) I was catching up with **Carmen Electra** while **Jack McBrayer**, who played **Kenneth** on *30 Rock*, was animatedly chatting with **Alexander Skarsgard**—at one point holding the *Big Little Lies* star's Golden Globe. The place was buzzing when **Ricky Martin** strolled in with his *American Crime Story* co-star **Edgar Ramirez**.

Across the room, **Nicole Kidman** appeared trapped in conversation with **Buzz Aldrin**. At a certain point, a desperate-looking Kidman dragged in hubby **Keith Urban**. The trio posed for some photos and then Nicole deftly disappeared, leaving Urban to chat with the famed astronaut and former *Dancing with the Stars* competitor. This brings up an unrelated point: Does Kidman even remember that she adopted two children with Tom Cruise? She's always thanking her girls with Urban and never even mentions Connor and Isabella. Just strange.

Then, the most bizarre thing happened. As I was about to leave the HBO party, in walked



Tom Daley has gotten even more exposure on the internet, **Billy** says.

Image from Daley's Instagram account

Mariah Carey. It took me a moment to realize it was her, as my companion kept saying, "Mimi. It's Mimi." I had no idea what he meant. Then he said, "Butterfly," and I knew. She had beau **Bryan Tanaka** in tow, along with a coterie of goons to keep the songstress away from the crowd—or so I thought. After a bit, she was posing with fans and holding court on the side of the dance floor. Her visit was short-lived. As she left, I managed to catch her attention and say I was about to bring her some hot tea, to which she said, "Darling, I could have used some hot tea!" Perhaps. But I think if Mimi took even a sip of water, that skin-tight dress may have burst and taken out everyone's eyes. All in all, it was a fun night.

Apparently, romance was in the air over the holidays. My dear pals writer/producer **Gary Janetti** and stylist **Brad Goreski** were married aboard the *Seabourn Sojourn* by the captain—how very *Love Boat* of them. And **Ellen Page** married **Emma Portner** after dating for only six months. How very ... eh, forget it.

And then there were the celebrities who rang in the New Year wearing precious little. **Ryan Philpette** tweeted a pic of himself in a snowstorm, wearing only a hat and shorts. Why? Who knows? Who cares—he looks great, as you'll see on our website. Hockey bad boy **Sean Avery** posted an Instagram shot with him naked (full backside) inside a tropical outdoor shower. His buddy **Andy Cohen** commented, "I'm on my way." **Gus Kenworthy** posted an outtake from his ESPN "Body Issue" pictorial, which was him trudging in the snow, naked, wearing only a pair of boots and carrying his skis and poles (the skiing poles, silly). You can see all on BillyMasters.com.

There are Olympians, and then there's **Tom Daley**. In the past, we've heard of nude photos and a video exchanged with various men during his "break" with **Dustin Lance Black**. There have been bits and pieces that have circulated, but now he's apparently in "anguish" over the lat-

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est leak. One unnamed friend (note to all of my friends—should you ever be quoted, you are allowed to be named) said, "These are SO old—from 2016!" 2016 is "SO old"? We're barely out of 2017! Perhaps more damning than the photos themselves are how he is posing. A British tabloid writes the following: "One of the pictures shows the 23-year-old Olympian diver naked with his bum sticking in the air suggestively." Oh, dear—he's assuming the "position!" Now, we all know DLB's sexual proclivities. With this new information, I can't help but wonder—do you think they simply order in?

When we're seeing Gus' pole and Tom's hole, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Oh, I know—so graphic. Why, you'd think I forced them to pose for these pics! But nobody will force you to check out each and every one of them on www.BillyMasters.com, the site where bottoms are tops! If you've got a question for me, send it along to Billy@BillyMasters.com and I promise to get back to you before I thaw out! Until next time, remember, one man's filth is another man's bible.

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