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SAVOR

Esquire Champagne Room; Honey Butter Fried Chicken

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Accessible luxury may be closer than you think.

At least, that's the stated goal of **Esquire Champagne Room** (58 E. Oak St.; <http://esquirechampagneroom.com/>), a 1,400-square-foot space on the third floor of Del Frisco's Double Eagle that's named after the movie theater that once occupied that address.



Lamb lollipops at Esquire Champagne Room. PR photo

The luxurious part is felt upon entering the spot (which opened New Year's Eve 2017). You'll find plush furniture, bubble-shaped lighting/chandeliers, prop champagne bottles, and seductive nooks and crannies throughout the area.

As for the drinks themselves, there are more than a dozen Champagnes/sparkling wines available by the glass (ranging from \$14 to \$115), as well as red and white wines. Order

by the bottle, and the number of Champagnes/sparkling wines jumps to 50.

The room's menu is different from Del Frisco's—and those in one space can't order from the other. However, the culinary options will sate any Esquire Champagne Room patron. Caviar (classic white sturgeon, Galilee Prime osetra and/or Royal Belgium osetra) is served with gaufrette potato chips. However, if that's not to your liking, a variety of other offerings awaits, including king crab spring roll (with macadamia nuts and ginger dipping sauce), scallop crudo, foie-gras mousse, smoked salmon and absolutely succulent lamb lollipops.

Again, luxury abounds here—but no one should be intimidated. According to director/certified sommelier Mandy Sparacino, Esquire "has a sophisticated, sexy vibe—but it's all-inclusive." So take a date there; that person will be more than impressed—and you will be, too.

Honey Butter Fried Chicken

A place that is vastly different—but is no less wonderful—is **Honey Butter Fried Chicken** (3361 N. Elston Ave.; HoneyButter.com).

Yes, the name comes from the fact that patrons can put butter on the chicken (courtesy of antibiotic-free chickens from Indiana). (It's a very tasty option, but be forewarned that there are no cardiologists in sight.)

However, there's far more at this spot than two-, four- and eight-piece meals. Sandwiches include varieties such as the very delicious Camchi (fried-chicken strips with kimchi and spicy honey mayo) and Honey Buffalo (which comes with blue cheese, and carrot and celery giardiniera). (Note: For vegetarians, fried tofu strips can be substituted in any sandwich.)

And HBFC, as the place calls itself, also has mouth-watering specials. For instance, Thursdays as when the restaurant has fried-chicken nachos, while Tuesdays allows customers to purchase two fried-chicken tacos, a can of Tecate and a shot of Corazon tequila for \$12.

I initially visited this place during weekend brunch, and was instantly smitten. Items like fried chicken and French toast as well as the popular biscuits and gravy will leave you simultaneously sated and wanting (to come back for more).



SIDETRACK

Oscar gold.
Photos by Jed Dulanias

Flesh Hungry Dog Show returns April 6

After a six-year hiatus, Gary Airedale's queer, alternative, rock 'n' roll variety event The Flesh Hungry Dog Show will return Friday, April 6, with "The Party" at 9 p.m. at Jackhammer, 6406 N. Clark St.

This reunion extravaganza includes Chicago's favorite Joan Crawford-inspired party band The Joans, pop/porno-punk marvels Super-8 Cum Shot and purveyors of the forgotten B-side Bric-A-Brac.

Airedale will host, with DJ Mercedes Ben spinning before and between the bands. Go-Go dancing troupe The Revelettes and burlesque artist Bold Hilaire (aka the artist FKA Ms Bea Haven) will be special guests.

Tickets are \$15 at the door, or \$12 at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3342818.



Host Gary Airedale at The Flesh Hungry Dog Show in 2007.

Photo by Kirk Williamson



CENTER ON HALSTED

A Night With Oscar, March 4, at Park West Chicago, to benefit Center on Halsted, presented by Comcast NBC Universal.

Photos by Jerry Nunn



BILLY Masters

"The universe has a way of taking care of the good people, you know what I mean?"—**Taraji P. Henson** to **Ryan Seacrest** on the Oscars red carpet. Was it a slam to Seacrest or a message of support? I thought she was being sweet, but people online think otherwise.

By now you've all seen it—Bonnie and Clyde returned to the scene of the crime. **Faye** and **Warren** once again gave out the Best Picture Oscar. Looking somewhat embalmed, Faye managed the impossible—she made **Eva Marie Saint** appear positively youthful! The duo kept the witty repartee to a minimum, which is probably all for the best. Needless to say, envelopes were triple-checked before the couple went on stage—and by the winner. God willing, this will be Dunaway and Beatty's final Academy Awards appearance until they turn up "In Memoriam."

Since the Oscars actually happened as we went to press, I'm not going to go into lots of detail. But here are some random thoughts about this year's ceremony. I loved the set. I noticed velvet tuxes are back in vogue. (It was pretty chilly here.) I would have given the shortest speech in history if **Dame Helen** came with the jet ski. I felt so bad for that poor filmmaker who risked life and limb getting out of Aleppo to attend the Oscars for nothing. You know some big queen is the one who planned for the orchestra to play "Besame Mucho" when **Rita Moreno** came out. And speaking of Rita, how fabulous that she showed up wearing the same dress she wore when she won in 1962! Please, let **Tiffany Haddish** and **Maya Rudolph** host a show someday. Lastly, did **Jane Fonda** get caught in the Santa Ana winds on her way to the Oscars? For a second, I thought **Dina Merrill** had come back from the dead!

Over the years, I have wormed my way into some of the biggest events in Hollywood—including the Oscars. Usually, I'm invited; many times, I'm not. But I don't let things like credentials stop me. Worming my way through underground tunnels, using the service elevator, even climbing up the side of a mountain are just some of the tricks of the trade. But I have to tip my hat to **Diana Ellis** (or, we should say for legal reasons, a person associated with **Miss Ellis**). Someone made up a Gmail account in the name of **Armie Hammer's** wife, **Elizabeth Chambers**. An email was sent from this account to the people running the **Vanity Fair** party. The person posing as **Chambers** asked if the couple could bring a guest to the party. The guest's name? **Diana Ellis**. The person then made an unusual request—since **Miss Ellis** would be arriving on her own, could she have a separate invitation sent to her home? This sounded suspicious, so the party planners



Actor Lee Pace had an intriguing interview with W Magazine, Billy says.

Photo from Pace's official Facebook account

got in touch with the **Hammers**. Not surprisingly, they never heard of **Miss Ellis** and had no intention of bringing a guest! Here's the twist—**Mrs. Hammer** is suing **Miss Ellis** for "misappropriating her name and personal information and violating her privacy."

Any gay who wasn't in Hollywood was on the other side of the world celebrating the 40th annual **Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras** in **Sydney**, where the headliner was **Cher**. Leave it to the **Dark Lady** to surprise people by showing up on the street in an orange wig to watch the parade! The situation got even more surreal when the **Qantas** float turned up playing "If I Could Turn Back Time," featuring dozens of **Cher impersonators** and hot boys dressed like sailors! **Cher**, known for being able to pick up a cue, joined the group on the float to thunderous cheers from the crowd. Later in the night, **Cher** donned a white wig and gown for the show—at least to start. Because, you know, you can't have a **Cher** show without a costume change. For her encore of "If I Could Turn Back Time," she changed into a more modest version of the infamous thrashed black bodysuit from the music video and sported a large black curly wig. You can watch her entire performance on **BillyMasters.com**.

What do you do if you're a gay actor playing a high-profile gay role on **Broadway**? These days, it's hard not to talk about it. So, after years of avoiding the topic, **Lee Pace** found himself in a pickle. The **Pushing Daisies** star was widely known to be gay in the industry but had never talked about it publicly—even when he appeared in **The Normal Heart** on **Broadway** in 2011. However, with his joining the cast of the **London transfer of Angels in America** on **Broadway**, the folks at **W Magazine** felt it was fair game to ask about his sexual orientation.

Here's how they describe the encounter: "Pace added that he feels it's important for gay actors to play the gay roles in both plays, but stopped short of labeling himself. He seemed a bit flustered and surprised by the question. 'I've dated men. I've dated women,' he explained. 'I don't

know why anyone would care. I'm an actor and I play roles. To be honest, I don't know what to say—I find your question intrusive." Intrusive, perhaps. But once you've said you think gay actors should play gay roles and you're playing a gay role, the question kinda writes itself.

Remember when those nasty photos of **Tom Daley** on all fours were leaked? At the time, we heard there were more photos floating around, and now we've got the flip side. While his face is not visible, the locale, the bed, the linens and the body all seem to line up perfectly. You can do your own forensic exam on **BillyMasters.com**.

When I'm supposed to believe **Mrs. Armie Hammer** said, "Call me by your name," it's definitely time to end yet another column. Since I have parties to get to, let me quickly remind you to check out **BillyMasters.com**—the site that's always invited to the best events! If you have question, send it along to **Billy@BillyMasters.com**, and I promise to get back to you before **Helen Mirren** gets a job on **The Price is Right!** Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.



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