

 /nightspots

 @nightspotschicago



nightspots

weekly nightlife section in



the DISH

Weekly Dining Guide in
WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Veggie Grill; Baptiste & Bottle brunch

BY ANDREW DAVIS

Fast-casual chain **Veggie Grill** (various locations; <https://www.veggiegrill.com/chicago.html>) may become the new Starbucks.

While a friend and I recently went to the Lake View location at 614 W. Diversey Pkwy., at least three more sites are slated to open by the end of the year, including one that debuted this week in the Loop at 204 W. Lake St. (Overall, it's the brand's 30th location throughout the country.) Other restaurants are also scheduled to open in the River North area (629 N. Wells St.) and the restaurant corridor in the West Loop (911 W. Randolph St.).

And just like Starbucks, Veggie Grill has its devoted fans—and deservedly so.



Masala bowl at Veggie Grill.
PR photo

I'm not personally a vegetarian or vegan—although I'm beyond declaring the lettuce on a traditional burger as the extent of my consuming of greens. Thankfully, vegan/vegetarian food has evolved in taste over the years, and Veggie Grill is a prime example of that.

At the Lake View location (where we witnessed a constant stream of people entering and ordering items, even during the mid-afternoon), there is an impressive variety of burgers, sandwiches, bowls, tacos and, of course, salads.

Regarding burgers, we tried the very popular VG Beyond Burger and the Buffalo Bomber. Although no one's going to confuse Beyond with, say, a Big

Mac, this sandwich is pretty tasty on its own; I would order it again. As for the Buffalo Bomber (crispy "chickin" tossed with spicy Buffalo sauce, tomato, red onion, lettuce and creamy ranch dressing on a wheat roll), my friend ate it with relish (no pun intended).

Other items also hit high spots while simultaneously convincing me that vegetarian/vegan items might be the way to go—at least occasionally. The tempura green beans are practically addictive, as are the Southeast Asian lettuce wraps (which come unassembled, just so you know). As someone who was raised in the South, Veggie Grill's mac 'n' cheese is not exactly up to snuff—but it still tasted better than I thought it would.

And, believe it or not, manager Denis Luebke said that desserts are particularly popular—and after sampling the carrot cake, I believe him.

Luebke (who's so dedicated to veganism that he has the word "vegan" tattooed on a wrist) also said, "We don't cater to vegetarians and vegans, specifically. We cater to people who want more veggies in their diet." And with the offerings at Veggie Grill, people will certainly want to do so.

And Veggie Grill is closer than you think, as it's on several delivery apps. Enjoy!

Baptiste & Bottle brunch

Recently, Windy City Times had an opportunity to sample the new brunch items at **Baptiste &**

Bottle, in the Conrad Chicago hotel (85 E. Upper Wacker Dr.; <https://www.baptisteandbottle.com/>)—and the offerings are enticing, indeed. Among the items served were one of the best patty melts this writer has ever had (practically up there with the truffle patty melt at 20 East), along with sweet and savory waffles, biscuits and gravy and other treats.

However, the centerpiece has to be the \$50 chef-driven Bloody Mary, made with Baptiste's new private-label Maker's Mark Bourbon. Reflecting hotel chef Tommy Hines' New Orleans heritage, the drink was served in a large hurricane glass, with toppings like shrimp, caperberries, okra, spicy beans and hush puppies. It's a drink—and a meal.



Brunch dish at Baptiste & Bottle.
Photos by Andrew Davis



Far left: Marvin Ausby. Above: 2loose. Left: Anthony Genera. Photos from Facebook; Ausby photo by Evgeni Lilyanov



FULL KIT GEAR

Happy third anniversary! Thursday, January 25.

Photos by Kirk Williamson

Touche' presents Bear All 8.0

Four sensuous men singing steamy, sweaty songs!

Touché, 6412 N. Clark St. presents Bear All, a night of live music and song, featuring the talent of local gay singers/songwriters on Saturday, March 24. Produced by Scott Free—host of the long running Homolatte music series—Bear All focuses on the passions, lives and sometimes politics of the gay male experience, all in an acoustic setting.

Featured performers in this edition of Bear All include:

—2loose, a solo producer of cyberpunk dance and electric boogie-woogie. He calls his music "grungelectric punk," which combines often quasi-pornographic lyrics with synth-grunge and large doses of humor.

—Marvin Ausby, a multi-disciplinary artist who combines music, spoken word, and dance to tell stories of relationships and intimacy.

—Anthony Gerena, who writes thoughtful and pointed songs using pop, dance and R&B genres. His belting voice propels his songs to highest impact.

Hosting the night's musical program will be local bear comic Bryan Dowling.

A \$10 donation will be requested at the door with all proceeds divided among the featured artists. Showtime is 10 pm and open to all 21 or over.

—From a press release



BILLY Masters

"Fuck off Caitlyn—you had your chance."—**Kathy Griffin** responds to **Caitlyn Jenner's** sudden realization that "As far as trans issues, this administration has been the worst ever. They've set our community back 20 years, easily." And special kudos to Kathy Griffin—her Carnegie Hall concert sold out in 24 hours! She's back!

According to a recent study, the number-one retirement city in the United States for LGBT seniors is Fort Lauderdale! And I can tell you why. Prior to the '90s, Fort Lauderdale was THE gay vacation spot. Even when South Beach became popular, Ft. Laud never completely lost its appeal. After the motels on the beach were demolished (including the fabled Marlin Beach Resort), the gays moved inland, and Wilton Manors was born. Those people who were partying are now close to being seniors, and they want to live someplace warm. I once read that Fort Lauderdale has more gay businesses per capita than any other U.S. city. All those businessmen and retirees might explain how the city just elected an openly gay mayor! Congrats, Dean Trantalis!

Meanwhile near my other home, **RuPaul** got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The gayla event was hosted by Miss **Jane Fonda!** Ru was also joined by his hubby, Georges LeBar, just days after explaining how their open relationship works: "I know that for him the person he loves the most on this planet is me. I know that; there's no doubt in my mind. So if he needs to do something else somewhere else, I'm fine with that. He would never turn it into something that would make me feel uncomfortable, and I wouldn't do that to him either."

Everyone wants a piece of **Adam Rippon**. When **Justin Sylvester** was interviewing Adam on live TV, the E! host put Adam on the spot and asked him out on a date the next time he's in LA. Of course, Adam said yes ... but not with any enthusiasm. Days later, Rippon finally met Sam Greisman—**Sally Field's** son. It was a chance encounter at the HRC gala where Adam was presenting the Visibility Award. Judging from the pic, I don't believe sparks flew. But they met and I'm sure Sam's happy. It should be noted that the gala took place in LA—sorry Justin!

It was quite a week for **Anderson Cooper**. First, CNN announced that it was slashing his show in half to make room for the inestimable talents of **Chris Cuomo**—who we enjoyed so much during those hurricanes! Days later, Cooper made an announcement: "Benjamin and I separated as boy-friends some time ago. We are still family to each other, and love each other very much. We remain the best of friends, and will continue to share much of our lives together." Before you shed a tear for the Cooper/Maisani breakup, fear not. We hear that Coop is dating a dashing dude from Dallas named Victor Lopez, who is a 33-year-old radiologist. This should not surprise anyone who remembers when Anderson was a guest on Andy Cohen's show in July. When playing a game, Andy was asked what was Anderson's biggest turn-on.



Adam Rippon has been the apple of at least two guys' eyes.

PR photo

The answer? "Latinos!"

Last week, I had the great fortune to see **Leslie Jordan** at the Catalina Bar & Grill in Hollywood doing his new show, *Exposed*. In it, he tells tall tales and dishes everyone he's ever met! The show is an absolute delight from beginning to end, and the capacity crowd ate him up. Bravo to producer **Chris Isaacson** for putting together such a swell event. Should you ever get the chance to see Leslie Jordan in person, GO!

As I'm sure you know, **Lorna Luft** recently collapsed backstage in London and has since been diagnosed with a brain tumor. I was told that she's in good shape and has flown back to LA for more tests. I thought back to when Liza had encephalitis and Lorna was pushing her in a wheelchair. Now Lorna's down, and **Liza** (who has moved to LA) might be the one helping out. Who would have ever pegged Liza as the healthy sister?

Speaking of Miss Minelli, she's auctioning off some memorabilia next month. The auction, called "Love, Liza," will include more than 1,000 lots, including the costume and infamous bowler hat she wore in the film *Cabaret*, her 1971 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow and several items that belonged to her parents. Profiles in History is organizing the auction, and it will take place in Calabasas sometime in late May. In the meantime, Liza is displaying her treasures at the Paley Center in Beverly Hills on April 4-29.

I also went to Rockwell Table & Stage last week to see the divine **Charles Busch** in his intimate cabaret show called *My Kinda 60s*. Accompanied by the solicitous Tom Judson, this pairing works beautifully because the audience loves them both. In fact, love was the theme of the evening—from the songs, to the touching stories Charles shares. Those stories especially stood out. Above all, Charles is a raconteur, so this format works well, and you get just a glimpse of the genius he has to the tips of his glamorous fingers. Speaking of glamour, I was quite taken with Busch's fitted emerald green brocade pant suit, which he described to me as "very Helen Lawson"—and it is!

SIDETRACK PRESENTS

DRAGAPALOOZA

LEAD WITH LOVE

TO BENEFIT
EQUALITY ILLINOIS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21

ALEX KAY ALEXIS BEVELS BAMBI BANKS BLONDE BENÉT COCO IMAN COCO SHO-NELL CORVETTA DEVILLE DEBBIE FOX DIDA RITZ DYMOND C. CALLOWAY EVA STYLES JADE JERFAY JO MCQUEEN JODNAGE À TROIS KAYLA POLANCO KHLOE KRISSY FEETFACE THE LADY IVORY MIKKI MIRAJ O'LAYSIA PRIME OPHELIA BULLETT SASHA LOVE SAVANNAH WESTBROOKE SAYA NAOMI TENDERONI AND MORE...

HOSTED BY DIXIE LYNN CARTWRIGHT

9PM SHOWTIME

ABSOLUT.

3349 N HALSTED SIDETRACKCHICAGO.COM @SIDETRACKBAR NO COVER 21+ W/ID

PREMIERING THURSDAY MARCH 22 7PM/NO COVER

RuPaul's DRAG RACE

SEASON 10 WATCH & WIN!

WITH DIXIE LYNN CARTWRIGHT & DIDA RITZ

CHICAGO'S OFFICIAL VH1 VIEWING PARTY

This is a particularly prosperous period for Charles Busch. It was just announced that a film is being made of his Broadway smash *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife*. In a bit of luxury casting, the two female roles will be played by **Bette Midler** and **Sharon Stone**—because when I think of comedy, I think of that wacky Sharon Stone!

In our quick "Ask Billy" question, Kevin in Rhode Island asks, "Who is the hot guy who married Fallon on *Dynasty* last week? He looks like a model."

Because he is a model! His name is **Adam Huber** and he's known for showing off quite a bit of skin, as you'll see on BillyMasters.com.

When Sharon Stone's next project involves a Busch, it's definitely time to end yet another column. As I always say, stick with your strengths! For more than just the bush, check out BillyMasters.com—the site that's certainly not allergic to nudity! Send your questions along to Billy@BillyMasters.com, and I promise to get back to you before Rippon calls E! to arrange that date! Until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

WE'RE CHICAGO'S BEST SOURCE FOR HAND-MADE & CUSTOM LEATHER CLOTHING

WE KNOW LEATHER

CUSTOM LEATHER CUSTOM REPAIR FURNITURE RESTORATION

OPEN LATE

LEATHER64TEN
CHICAGO

6410 N. Clark, Chicago, IL 773.508.0900
WWW.LEATHER64TEN.COM