

# CHESTER COUNTY CUISINE & NIGHTLIFE

JANUARY 25,  
2012

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**MAGAZINE**  
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## MARY'S MESSAGE:

Winter is here, and it's time to warm up with your favorite comfort foods. In this issue, we'll share our staff favorites, and learn out how to eat seasonably in our SustainaBITES column. And, one of our readers shares her recipe for the ultimate comfort food: Chicken & Dumplings.

We'll also recap a couple of events that paired beer with something sweet and something savory. Victory's "Girls Just Wanna Have Suds: Beer + Chocolate Night" brought together the sweet taste of chocolate with malty brews, while Iron Hill's "Beer & Cheese Experience" gave participants chance to pair their favorite beer with locally-made cheeses.

Read about my cure for winter doldrums, Taste of Phoenixville, with its combination of food, wine and beer from the best local restaurants & caterers.



**Cheers!**  
Mary Bigham  
*Contributing Editor*  
[www.wcdish.com](http://www.wcdish.com)



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## Portabello's of Kennett Square Offers Gourmet Gluten-Free Family Friendly Menu!

Portabello's Restaurant, a quaint 65 seat BYO located at 115 West State Street in the heart of the mushroom capital of the world, is making life easier and tastier for those that need or want a gluten free menu.

"It can be difficult and dangerous when you are dining out if you cannot find the right foods for a specific diet like those that have Celiac disease or need a gluten-free menu," explains Chef and Owner of Portabello's Restaurant Brett Hulbert.

"We have had many people come in to the restaurant with special dietary requests and as the chef as well as the owner, I am more than happy to oblige. But I think that dining should be an experience and that no matter what restrictions one has, the dish

has to be delicious which is why we are rolling out a new menu of gluten-free items," Hulbert said. "Most people think a Mediterranean inspired restaurant with gluten-free – how can that be when so many of the dishes are pasta-based? Well, I have been researching to find the best options out there and what I can do to make sure these dishes are wanted not only by those with restrictions, but by diners in general," he added

Hulbert, whose philosophy is it takes a village to make a village, incorporates many of the area businesses and products into his own menu. "We are working with The Mushroom Cap and Flickerwood Winery, both across the street and we feature Mrs. Robinson's Teas including a special blend created just for Porto-

bello's," he said adding, "We are working with Sweet Christine's bakery in Kennett Square. Christine is an amazing baker and her products are awesome. Sandra (my restaurant and life partner) and I ate one of her muffins the first day we were in Kennett Square and at the time did not realize it was gluten free. We were blown away when we found out her bakery (which is on the same block) is in fact gluten free. Our guests are shocked at the quality of her products. Just last night a father of a guest with Celiac smelled one of Christine's dinner rolls and commented "Amazing," he said.

Celiac disease is an inherited autoimmune disease in which the lining of the small intestine is damaged from eating gluten and other pro-

teins found in wheat, barley, rye and possibly oats.

Portabello's now offers a full range of gluten free items which include but are not limited to: breads, soups, sandwiches, pastas and desserts. "I personally visit every guest with special dietary requirements and take great pride in caring for their needs," Hulbert said adding, "One of my favorite things to do is offer a child who is gluten intolerant a grilled cheese sandwich or mac and cheese. Their eyes light up. Most people take these two items for granted. I do not," he said.

For more information about Portabello's 115 West State Street, Kennett Square 610.925.4984 or on the web at [portabello-sofkennettsquare.com](http://portabello-sofkennettsquare.com)



## How much of a Chocoholic can you be, and have it Pay off?



Anyone who knows me, knows that I love chocolate. A lot. So when the news started coming out that chocolate actually has health benefits....oh boy was I glad! But it raises questions...how much is too much? What kind of chocolate? How often? Well, let's look at what

the truth about chocolate really is.

First the bad news: no more than 1 ounce a day. And 1 ounce is the absolute maximum. Benefits have been proven at just a quarter of an ounce. An ounce of chocolate is about 6 Hershey kisses,

5 mini bars, or 2 squares of a big chocolate bar, again, maximum. And it needs to be chocolate in as pure a form as you can get it. 70% or more cocoa is the best choice. You could count your pure cocoa in hot chocolate, but definitely not chocolate cake, brownies, white chocolate or

any other very processed heavenly delight. They are highly delicious, but the added sugar, fat and flour just negate any health benefits you might get, and place you at higher risk of obesity. And we all know that increased BMI, (body mass index), increases your risk of all of the diseases we'd like to avoid, like cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's and hypertension...just to name a few.

So what are the benefits of chocolate? There are many.

Chocolate is derived from the cocoa plant, and therefore contains chemicals that cannot be mimicked synthetically. Flavanoids are one of them, and they act as antioxidants in the body. This is huge. That alone reduces levels of inflammation, which predispose arteries to plaque formation. Flavanoids also prevent oxidation of LDL (low density lipoproteins), better known as your bad cholesterol. The British Medical Journal reported in August 2011 that

with the proper consumption of chocolate LDL and inflammation lowers, blood pressure lowers, stroke risk decreases by 29% and risk of heart attack decreases by 37%. Isn't that reason enough to enjoy just a little bit everyday?

Most importantly, for the many of us who just can't live without it, it makes you feel good. Really! It increases levels of dopamine in the brain, which is a known pleasure hormone. It also increases serotonin, a vital player in mood, PMS and anxiety.

So, in addition to your 30 grams of fiber a day, 6 – 8 fruits and veggies a day, 8 – 10 glasses of water a day, whole grains, healthy protein and 30 minutes of exercise a day that are all recommended for healthy living... don't forget your chocolate!

Isn't it great when they finally tell you to eat something that is actually delicious?

Angela Davis Brown, M.D.

This is a message from The Center for Physical Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine at The Chester County Hospital and Health System.



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# STAFF PICKS: COMFORT FOODS of Chester County

In The Town Dish's first installment of "Staff Picks," we line up our ever-dedicated staff of food writers and ask them to reveal what foods they turn to for comfort in Chester County. Do they opt for classic stick-to-your-ribs dishes to get them through these cold-weathered months, like juicy, all-beef burgers and cheesy mac and cheese? Or, are their choices cutting-edge, a riff on age-old, culinary mainstays that reinvent the way we define comfort food?

Find below our staffers' favorites – many of which they would openly fight through any hungry crowd for just one bite.

I've never met a baked pasta dish I didn't like, but there is something really special when hints of cinnamon and allspice shine through a meaty tomato sauce within three layers of cozy goodness. The place for my #1 comfort food? **Hank's Place** (1625 Baltimore Pike, Chadds Ford), a laid-back, wholesome spot where anything you order will feel like a big old delicious hug. My preferred comfort dish is their **Moussaka**. This Greek dish ditches the pasta and layers sliced eggplant, sautéed ground beef (seasoned with a savory blend of onion, garlic, tomatoes cinnamon and allspice) and sliced potatoes, and is topped with a pillow of creamy Bechamel sauce. It always lifts my mood, but doesn't weigh me down because it's served with a fresh Greek Salad – and, of course, a smile. –*Mary Bigham*



Being raised a full-blown PA Dutch gal who clocked hours as a teenager at an apple butter factory, I go gaga over any

## old-fashioned apple treat.

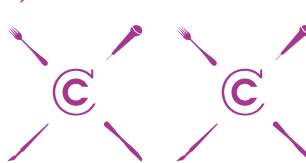
But, it's baker Maryellen Bowers of **Cakes and Candies by Maryellen** (1332B West Chester Pike, West Chester) who always gets it right. Her apple dumplings are a beautiful thing. The fresh-out-of-the-oven stuffed pastry is like your own personal apple pie, and her ratio of apples to dough is pitch-perfect, ensuring that within each beautiful bite, you'll receive the crisp and the crunch, the chewy and the doughy. And, I can't skip the best part: the generous swirls of house-made, gooey caramel. (If the dumplings are sold-out, opt for her Bailey's Bread Pudding – equally as impressive and crush-worthy.) –*Amy Strauss*



My comfort food is one that I only have when my family is out for the night. When dining alone at home, I typically get takeout from **Don Gabriel's** (611 West Strasburg Road, West Chester). I always get the

## chicken tinga burrito and chips.

–*Jim Breslin*



A comfort food is as much about the people with whom I dine as it is about the munchie. With that in mind, I recommend grabbing your sweetie (or best friend or whomever) and heading down to **Victory Brewing Company** (420 Acorn Lane, Downingtown) for the

**Hand Tossed Pretzel**, something Hubs and I do often this time of year. At just \$5, it's a piping hot, freshly made giant twisted pretzel served with Dusseldorf mustard and cheese sauce. And while the menu says it goes well with a Victory Lager, I prefer the more wintry (and hopefully smoky) mix, such as seasonal offerings Smokin' Oats, Baltic Thunder or (hint, hint to Victory) Scarlet Fire. –*Nina Malone*



This one's easy.

**Homemade spaghetti** from **Rino's** (327 East Lancaster Avenue, Exton) is my favorite Chester County comfort food. My family has been getting takeout from Rino's for years, so their food tastes like home and is always a hit. –*Chelsea Sproul*

Bone-sucking bliss can be had at **The Station Bistro** (1300 Hares Hill Road, Kimberton) thanks to co-owner Craig Miller's unbounded talents with his on-site smoker, along with those generous slathers of house-made BBQ sauce. Forget sub par baby

back-boasting chains and instead, visit the Bistro for the best **pork ribs** west of the Schuylkill, especially during its all-you-can-eat Monday night pig-out. –*Ken Alan*

My favorite comfort food in CC has to be the **sweet potato fries** from **Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant**. I have daydreams about them and simply can't pass them up. They are sweet and savory with the best dipping sauce I've ever had – the vanilla bourbon sauce! A simply divine dish that's built for sharing... if I'm feeling particularly generous. –*LeeAnne Mullins-Hudak*

Is there anything better than a tasty, filling meal after a long day of work? Certainly not. So naturally I associate comfort food with the **staff meal** I used to eat at **Nudy's Cafe** (450 Bridge St., Phoenixville) after a shift hostessing. Splitting a massive Breakfast Burrito (ham, eggs, beans, peppers, guac and more) alongside a stack of Gingerbread Pancakes with a coworker always hit the spot. –*Melissa Woodley*

At Italian restaurants, without fail, I order sautéed calamari in spicy red sauce. A huge plate of squid, salad and crusty bread = the perfect meal. I've had Chef Vito's

**calamari saltati al pomodoro** at **Trattoria San Nicola** (4 Manor Road, Paoli) dozens of times, as well as Frankie's version at **Fellini Café** (678 Lancaster Ave., Berwyn). And for dessert, it's got to be chocolate-covered pretzels from **Nancy's Candy Corner at**

**Wayne's Lancaster County Farmer's Market** (389 West Lancaster Ave.). You'll need to hide them from yourself! –*Laura Koster*

Can I say any...Bourbon? If not, my favorite dish is the **chipped beef** at **Market Street Grill** (6 West Market St., West Chester). I also always order the **Royal Sampler** at **Green Papaya** (290 East Lincoln Highway, Exton) – there is enough for the whole family. Best dessert? **Iron Hill's Double**

**Chocolate Hill**, an impressive confection of moist chocolate cake with a warm peanut butter center. –*Jeff Schaller*

Almost every day after school, my grandmother would have a warm bowl of homemade **chicken soup** waiting for me. Whenever I crave her warmth, I head over to **Penn's Table** (100 W Gay St., West Chester; 268 Eagleview Blvd., Exton), where everyone is treated like family. –*Leslie Weinberg*

When I think about comfort food, I've got to go with my weekend staple – the **"Hangover Sammy"** from **Teresa's Next Door** (124 North Wayne Ave., Wayne). Hangover Sammy piles up ham, bacon, egg, avocado, queso fresco, fried potato pancake, hot sauce and steak sauce, all piled on a round roll. –*Chris Grimmig*

**Peanut Butter Banana French Toast** with star anise-infused honey – more PB than one should eat in the day, and the fluffiest french toast around town. With a side of well-done slab bacon, it is **Classic Diner's** (352 Lancaster Ave., Malvern) portrayal of the real meaning of breakfast! That's Chester County comfort food to me. Oh, and I never miss out on at least one bite of their grilled potatoes. –*Aly Debbas*

As winter's cold creeps in, I find no better comfort than in sitting down to a large serving of **mac and four cheeses**. This is my childhood favorite updated for my adult gastronomic tastes. Most often a riff on Lynne Rosetto Kasper's recipe, the cheese-laced bechamel sauce warms my body while the toothsome pasta promises my body continued fuel for another winter's day's work. Without hesitation, it is my opinion that the best place to find this mac and four cheeses in Chester County is at **my house**, cooked side by side with my wife. –*Doug Essinger-Hileman*

The dish that signals comfort food for me in the winter is a **hearty split-pea soup**. This soup is so easy I was surprised when our kids asked me for the recipe, after watching me make it dozens of times. A bag of split peas, chopped onion and carrot, a smoked ham hock, bay leaf and five whole cloves, with water to cover. Put it in the trusty slow-cooker in the morning and you'll have dinner when you get home. –*Sandy Essinger-Hileman*

What's your go-to comfort food dish in Chester County? Share online at [Downingtowndish.com](http://Downingtowndish.com)!



Chicken &amp; Flat Dumplings

# READER RECIPES

## Kimmie's CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS



When Kim Mogano is at the rink, she's "Trauma Queen," a fierce skater for the Brandywine Roller Girls. When she's at home in West Chester, she's a wife and mom. Food brings her two worlds together. For this week's Reader Recipe, she shares her take rendition of the comfort food classic, Chicken and Dumplings. Follow the lean, mean, skating machine through her future edible adventures online at [cookinskates.com](http://cookinskates.com).

I have an opinion on Chicken and Dumplings. I don't believe dumplings are of the "drop" nature, although the name does suggest it. While

drop dumplings are quick and easy, they are also dry, puffy, and tasteless. My first experience with chicken & dumplings was the drop dumpling sort. I thought the meal was really something, that was until I had flat or "slippery" dumplings. The kind you roll out, not those made from Bisquick.

Now that you've heard my rant on dumplings, here's how to make it. It really isn't much harder than a drop dumpling, the only extra step is rolling out the dough...and you'll be glad you did.

### Ingredients:

- 3 lb chicken (I bought 2 halves from Carlino's)
- 1 medium onion - quartered
- 2 lemon slices
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped carrot (or thyme will do)
- 1 bay leaf
- salt/pepper
- 1 TB of Herbes de Provence
- 4-5 cups water, depending on size of chicken
- Chicken broth (keep on hand in case you need some

at the end to make more liquid)

### Dumplings:

- 2 cups flour
- 3-4 tablespoons shortening
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup water (more if needed)



### Method:

In a large dutch oven, add chicken, onion, lemon, salt, pepper, bay leaf, celery, carrot, water, and herbs. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer for 1 hour.

Remove the chicken and discard the onion, lemon, and bay leaf. Let the chicken cool and remove the meat from the bones. Add meat back to the pot and keep on low while you make the dumplings.

In a large mixing bowl, add flour, salt and shortening. Using a pastry cutter or fork, incorporate the shortening into the flour until little beads

form. Add the water gradually, and mix until a soft dough forms. The dough should still be crumbly and dry, but able to form a ball.

Turn the ball onto a floured work surface and flour your rolling pin. Roll out the dough until thin, and cut into squares with a pizza cutter.

Turn the heat back up on the chicken mixture, and add the dumplings. Bring to a slow boil until the dumplings are cooked through, about 10 minutes.

**Serve!**



## Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant's BEER & CHEESE EXPERIMENT

By Amy Strauss  
[PhoenixvilleDish.com](http://PhoenixvilleDish.com)

One of the perks of living in Chester County, Pennsylvania is the access to top-notch food products, producers and purveyors right in our own backyard.

Each output – from craft brewers and cheese makers, to wine makers and farmers – has individually created a big splash in our local economy, encouraging other food-themed small businesses that the possibility of success is achievable in this community of the Keystone State.

Recently, I accepted an invitation to tackle Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant of Phoenixville's "Beer and Cheese Experience," a first-time event that vibrantly

highlighted the exceptional craft beers brewed right along Bridge Street.

Phoenixville IHB's Head Brewer Tim Stumpf and Sous Chef Tim Andrews sculpted one of the better beer and cheese pairing experiences of my life, celebrating the art of local food and drink companionship.

While the menu consisted of four well-thought courses, guests at the tasting session were welcomed with a surprise prelude – a one of a kind pairing of Hefeweizen jello and goat cheese brittle served with a nice pint of their signature Hefeweizen on tap.

The sweet and savory crunch of the brittle with the tartness of the jello primed my palate, stimulating my appetite for

what was to come. Soon, our next pour of the night, the Smokin' Blonde, arrived on the tabletop with its accompanying course – a colorful plate featuring the rich-and-nutty Idiazabal, Serrano Ham and toasted almonds.

Iron Hill's next door neighbor, Soltane Breads and Spreads, was also an active partner in the evening's first course, with their Roggenvolkbrot (a triple rye bread) a beautiful accessory to the cheese plate. The slightly sour flavor of the next-door-neighbor bread sliced through the lushness of the cheese and the smoked intensity of the bottled reserve beer.

Brewer Tim suggested along the way that the "experience" only featured Iron Hill's "best stuff" – which referred to his

bottle reserves that were aged for two to three years.

Dorset, a buttery, rich, washed-rind cheese, was the shining star of course two, coming to life with the sweetness of the raw honeycomb and the freshness of watercress. Fero, Iron Hill's tenth anniversary strong ale, appeared with this round, radiant in rich, dark fruits and heavy, caramelized malts.

I cherished course three the most. The cheese in question was Valdeon, an intense bleu that's a mashing of cow and sheep's milk cheese and a much saltier Stilton. The rough-and-tough Spanish cheese was cozy with a symphony of meaty flavors, including cured duck salami, shredded duck confit and Black Mission fig chutney. Brewer Tim continued to think

big on this mid-meal pairing, pouring the full-bodied English Barleywine for guests' pleasure. The beer, he revealed, was selected because of its sweetness, which breaks down the extra richness of the full-flavored course.

As we reached the final pairing, our eyes grew wide. We could only expect to receive yet another impressive pairing from the tag-team of Tims.

The night's finale featured a flaky, forever-memorable 5-year gouda, as plated with apricot jam and smoked chanterelles. The last beer of the night, the Wee Heavy, is a strong scotch ale with candied malts that were able to blast through the hearty punch of the house-smoked 'shrooms.

Without a doubt, the Iron Hill Brewery's week-night hosts understand how beer works; how, if paired correctly, it makes you want to eat (and drink) more.

To conclude, I must quote the evening's handout, which highlighted Garrett Oliver, a beer pairing expert and brewmaster at Brooklyn Brewery. "The most wonderful thing about beer is that it has the ability to reset your palate. Beer does harmony best."

The evening was harmonious and I eagerly await for Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant to do it all over again.

Find Iron Hill of Phoenixville for the celebration at 130 East Bridge Street in Phoenixville or online at [ironhillbrewery.com/phoenixville](http://ironhillbrewery.com/phoenixville).





# ART & RESTAURANTS

## Talking with Diane Cirafesi

BY JEFF SCHALLER • WESTCHESTERDISH.COM

It's the New Year, so we are going to mix things up with artists and interviews... Road Trip! I headed to NYC with local artist Diane Cirafesi to see some art and eat. Little did I know how appropriate it was that Diane and I were going to see the De Kooning show at the Museum of Modern Art. After that we headed up-town to the Guggenheim to see the weird and awesome work of Maurizio Cattelan.

This isn't about a dead artist or one that plans to retire after his Guggenheim retrospective; this piece is about a West Chester local. Diane Cirafesi has lived in WC since she graduated from West Chester University. I won't divulge her year but she has seen the town grow and change. She believes that right now the town is the best it has ever been.

Diane once left Pennsylvania for a short time in an effort to "find herself" out west. While out there, she fell in love with the west and brought it back in her artwork, which resonates with blue skies, southwest colors and the magic that happens on the plateaus. Diane's art is the connection between her heart and her hand responding to that emotion. The build up of materials in her mixed media work combined with all the drawing marks clearly captures that connection.

After leaving the MoMa (Museum of Modern Art) we took a taxi uptown to Demarchelier Restaurant, a little French bistro on 86th Street, so I could ask her some questions, eat, drink and debate the vast career of De Kooning.

We ordered beer, wine, and the paté de maison to get things started. I ordered the daily special on Friday; Bouillabaisse. OMG! A beautiful presentation

of seafood with each mussel placed facing up creating an edible circle that encompassed scallops and a 1/2 lobster resting on top. I dined in pleasure while Diane was worried what questions I would ask. I assured her I was there to share my enthusiasm for her work with others.

### How did you get started making art?

When I was very young I used to go over to Bobby Straus' house and draw on his chalkboard. I would draw birds or dogs or whatever. The family there would encourage me, my family didn't. Angst...was my other encouragement.

### Did you receive any formal art training?

Yes, West Chester University. At that time they did not have a BFA. It was a finishing school. At that time you could get a BA in Humanities with a Fine Art major.

### Can you describe your work in general for the readers?

It is largely figurative. I would call it abstract realism. I like the idea of drawing, and reworking the paper.

### What is your favorite medium?

I tend to work on paper with charcoal, then paint, then back to charcoal. I do aspire to the idea of rubbing out and showing the marks of the work that is still there.

### How do you do choose your subject matter?

It's generally always women. I will see something that inspires me; it might be a book, a passage of a story, something that inspires me on the street, junk that I find.

### What are your thoughts on perfection?

I hate perfection.

### How do you decide when an artwork is done?

I never decide. I think it is always one huge painting, your whole life.

### Who has been the biggest influence on your life?

My daughter, because she really grounded me and if it weren't for her I probably would be in the gutter somewhere.

### What inspires you?

Everything visual. There is always something that is exciting, powerful, and worth looking at. The spiritualities of it, and of course the Catholic upbringing.

### Your work has a lot of religious overtones, why?

Because when you are raised Catholic, it is pounded into you somehow and it never leaves you. I was young at the point that it hit me that this was a lot of hocus pocus. How could that communion host be the body and blood of Christ? At that point, that is when I considered the philosophy of magic.

### What do you enjoy about the Southwest?

The iconography. The religious and spiritual aspects of it. It's just a mystery and its involved with the same thing that Catholicism is involved with. Same thing if you were in Italy. It stems from the primitive. It stems from the universal, and from what is within us. I am fascinated by how we come to the point of magic, religion, and voodoo and how it exists despite all logic.

### When do you paint?

Eleven years ago I went part-time with my job so that I could

devote my time to painting. A very dear friend of mine died and I thought, "I am not going to die before I have done what I wanted to do." Now, I paint Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. During the week I paint 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

### Do you have a tip for artists that are just getting started?

Be honest.

### What are you eating right now?

I have the onion soup and a simple arugula salad.

### What is your favorite food?

Hamburger

### What does home mean to you?

Nest

### Your proudest moment?

My daughter

### Strangest possession?

Dirt from a church in Mexico. It's healing dirt that I have had for probably 25 years.

### Money is OK, but it isn't what life is about?

Enjoyment.

### Where did you grow up?

Outside Norristown in a suburb



called East Norriton.

### What is the last book you read?

Communion by Whitley Strieber; its about aliens.

### You collect?

Junk and crosses

### Favorite time of the day?

Late evening.

### At your best, you are most like this famous person?

Francis Bacon

### Your best birthday?

When I turned 50 and they had a surprise party for me on the rooftop of Vincent's, lots and lots of people came. I sang "Summertime," which I regret till this day.

With all my questions answered and still much more to eat, drink, see and discuss; we taxied over to the Guggenheim.

Upon entering, our jaw dropped as we looked at Cattelan's entire body of work suspended from the ceiling. Everything from a few stuffed horses, a statue of the pope hit by a meteor, to a life like replica of Hitler as a youth praying. If you have no idea what I'm talking about, you have until January 22nd to find out, then the show comes down.

As artists, we were overwhelmed and walked away with a glazed look, but had a deep desire to create something just as powerful. We needed to decompress and see some more "friendly" art so we headed to the Bemelmans Bar at the Carlyle—a timeless New York watering hole decorated with interior paintings by Ludwig Bemelmans, the illustrator of the children's book, Madeline. I had the "La Poire and ginger" cocktail consisting of Grey Goose, La Poire ginger liquor, fresh lemon juice and simple syrup. Diane kept it simple with a Miller Light. Both came with NYC prices, \$21.00 and \$10.00 respectively.

By the end of the day I realized how appropriate it was to see De Kooning's work with Diane. I was attracted to De Kooning's woman series, a series he worked back and forth on for the majority of his career. The layering of paint and sketchy marks used to define his subject accumulated until he knew he had to stop for it to be complete. I'm not sure if he ever could have stopped working on these. This is the same excitement I see in Diane's work. I guess it is the connection between the heart and hand. There is never rest. After that pontificating moment and a few cocktails and beers, I cornered Diane into answering my speed questions in the lobby of the Carlyle. Check out the video on my blog at jeffschaller.blogspot.com.



# The 10th Annual Taste of Phoenixville

took place on **Thursday, January 19, from 6 to 10 p.m.**, at the Franklin Commons (400 Franklin Blvd., Phoenixville). The food- and drink-themed event has successfully doubled in size over the past few years, hosted annually to benefit the Good Samaritan Shelter. Party guests filled their plates with edible delights from Montesano Bros., Becca's Restaurant, Robert Ryan Catering, Hill's Quality Seafood, Tony's Family Restaurant, Molly Maguire's, FreshaPeel Hummus, MomPops, Dia Doce, Marly's, Majolica, and other local restaurant and food vendors. More scenes from the charitable affair are available on [PhoenixvilleDish.com](http://PhoenixvilleDish.com). *Photographs by Amy Strauss, PhoenixvilleDish.com*



## COMING SOON: *Belgium Comes to West Chester 2012* at Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant

Spend Saturday, January 28, 2012 from 1 to 5 p.m., praising the best of Belgian beers all in one space. Head over to Iron Hill Brewery & Restaurant of West Chester for their annual, not-to-miss "Belgium Comes to West Chester" event where guests will be able to taste 29 Belgian-styled beers from country-wide breweries. There also is a special preview for Mug Club members, which will begin at noon.

Curious what regional breweries will showcase their best locally craft-brewed, belgian-style beers? The following are set to participate and lug their fine-tuned beers to the downtown West Chester brewpub: Devil's Backbone, Dogfish Head, Earth Bread

+ Brewery, Flying Fish, Harpoon, Inn At Turkey Hill, Manayunk, New Holland, Nodding Head, Ommegang, Peekskill Brewery, Philadelphia Brew Co., Sly Fox, Southampton, Springhouse, Stewart's, Stoudt's, Victory, Weyerbacher, and Yards. Of course, select pours from all of the Iron Hill's locations will additionally be part of the festivities.

The event is pay-as-you-go and if you're thinking ahead, consider the Restaurant Valet for safe, affordable, comfortable transportation (more info at [restaurantvalet.com](http://restaurantvalet.com)).

*Find Iron Hill of West Chester at 3 West Gay Street, or online at [www.ironhill-brewery.com](http://www.ironhill-brewery.com).*



# Celebrate Chinese New Year with Susanna Foo

By Laura Koster  
MainLineDish.com

You may think the holiday celebrations are over, but for over a billion people around the world, it's just about to start. Chinese New Year, the longest and most important festivity in Chinese culture, just debuted on January 23 and will run for two weeks.

The traditions of this holiday –

hanging auspicious decorations, exchanging lai see packets of money, and gathering for feasts with family – are particularly meaningful to me. Twenty-five years ago my family moved to Hong Kong and we've been embracing Chinese customs ever since.

So I was honored to have the opportunity to interview James Beard award-winning Chef Susanna Foo and chat about the

New Year plans for her Radnor restaurant, Susanna Foo's Gourmet Kitchen.

"Chinese New Year is akin to Thanksgiving or Christmas here in the United States," Chef Foo explained. "It's one of the most exciting events of the year for families."

Food, of course, is woven throughout the celebrations and plays a starring role. Chef Foo shared her childhood memories: "My mother and grandma would spend several days beforehand preparing the food and curing sausages. We'd eat lots of dumplings on New Year's Eve and Day, and spend the days after visiting each other."

The eve of the New Year, as well as the first day, is the most important time of the festivities, spent visiting family and elders, feasting and celebrating. With this in mind, Chef Foo is planning a special Grand New Year's Brunch on Sunday, January 29 for families, complete with traditional lion dancing and Chinese musicians (call the restaurant for details).

Chef Foo also gave us a preview taste of the four-course menu that Gourmet Kitchen will feature January 23 through February 19 (except V-day weekend). Some dishes are a nod to the year of the dragon – the most legendary of the Chinese animal symbols, known for its energy, talent, robust health and success. Like the Red Dragon Maki, comprised of spicy tuna and avocado inside, yellowtail and salmon outside, with a red caviar topping. The color red symbolizes prosperity and can be found everywhere during Chinese New Year.

Other highlights of the four-course menu include a lobster spring roll with papaya and mint salad. Grilled five spice beef tenderloin is complemented by coconut polenta and veg-

etables. Chef Foo also offers a poached lemon sole with squash-quinoa risotto and Shanghai baby bok choy. Choose from desserts like a panna cotta trio with mango, adzuki bean and ginger, served with a rock sugar kumquat. The four course menu is priced at \$45 per person, exclusive of tax and gratuity.

"Creative Asian cuisine with a European influence" is how Chef Foo describes her culinary approach. "I don't limit myself. I use ingredients like jalapenos, olive oil and artichokes." Part of the reason, she shared, is because you don't always have access to the best Chinese ingredients here in the U.S., like fermented black vinegar.

But choosing not to set culinary boundaries, as many of us know, is what propelled Chef

Foo to international acclaim over the past few decades. By melding traditional Chinese foods with classical French techniques, she brought Chinese food into the modern realm.

Today, her focus is on Susanna Foo Gourmet Kitchen, which is managed by her son Gabriel. They take several trips a year to China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other destinations around Asia, which influences the restaurant's ever-changing menu.

The handcrafted dumplings, inspired by the dumplings Chef

Foo loved to eat growing up in Shaanxi, are one of my favorite bites at Gourmet Kitchen. I'll gladly order them any time of year, but as it turns out they're an especially auspicious meal to have during Chinese New Year. Dumplings symbolize wealth, because their shape resembles ancient Chinese money. Now isn't that something to raise your chopsticks for?

Visit Susanna Foo Gourmet Kitchen at 555 East Lancaster Ave. in Radnor. For more info call 610.688.8055 or visit [www.susannafoo.com](http://www.susannafoo.com).



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# A Victory for your taste: Beer, Chocolate, 'Nuff Said

By Nina Malone  
DowningtowntownDish.com

With apologies to Starbucks, which coined the phrase "When coffee dreams, it dreams of chocolate," I have a news flash: when chocolate dreams, it dreams of craft beer.

Yes, chocolate is good with a rich, dark cup o' joe, but if that's all you've tried, you are really missing something special. In particular, if you've not sampled Éclat Chocolate's signature inventions paired with a Victory Brewing Company libation,

you're simply cheating yourself.

Éclat's manager Dana Boyes and Victory's quality assurance manager Whitney Thompson put their creative heads together and matched four exquisite chocolate bites with four craft beer standouts. What made each pairing work so well was the play between key tastes in each delight.

The nearly 100 women who attended "Girls Just Wanna Have Suds: Beer + Chocolate Night" used handy Food and Beer Pairing charts to rate each taste, from

sweet to earthy to silky and beyond, and to link the chocolate and beer with descriptors such as blooms, highlights, refreshes, etc. No beer-snob tasting here: the interactive event featured Dana and Whitney's remarks and analysis, making each morsel and sip both filling and fulfilling.

After noshing on light snacks and a Prima Pils welcome beer, we got down to business. First up: Aleppo Chile Truffle paired with Festbier. The Syrian spice finish – wait for it, ah, yes, feel the burn – came after the dark

chocolate ganache melted away. Our hosts advised sipping the beer first, then taking a nibble of the chocolate, then back to the beer, which allowed the caramel, nutty and slightly sweet lager to cut through the spice. Sweet-tooths around the room were smiling.

The recently tapped Ranch S, a double IPA featuring Yakima Valley hops from the award-winning Segal Hop Ranch, had a bitter, grapefruit and lemon tartness that cut lovingly through the Ginger Caramel Chocolate. A unique caramel, it's "liquid gold" with an edgy hint of fresh ginger and topped with Hawaiian sea salt. These two wrestled, but in the end it was a delicious draw.

Next up: Passionfruit Chocolate paired with Baltic Thunder. This duo was selected to complement, each one hearty in its own right. The French-style square of just-bitter dark chocolate encased a milk chocolate ganache mixed with passionfruit puree, offering an unbelievable cascade of sweet-tart flavors. It's partner was a seasonal Baltic porter, a dark, malty lager that gets its roasty, almost chocolaty muster from fermentation magic (think special yeast and warmer temps). If they could have, these two would have nodded to each other with a knowing glance: well done, my friend, well done.

Of all the marriages put forth during "Suds," the one destined to last also was star-crossed: Fortunato No. 4 Traditional Truffle and Dark Intrigue. The exquisitely simple combination of cacao rolled in powdered cocoa, however rare, was perfectly highlighted by the complex flavors of the bourbon-kissed imperial stout. And while the once-thought extinct cacao's first harvest is being used exclusively by Éclat to create this nutty-bitter-silky jewel, it's partner, the oaky-bourbon-vanilla Dark In-



trigue, has come and gone once again, perhaps for the last time (hence the intrigue). Will it return to pair again with its truffle love? Only Whitney knows ....

More information on Victory Brewing Company is available at [victorybeer.com](http://victorybeer.com). More details on Éclat Chocolate may be found at [eclatchocolate.com](http://eclatchocolate.com).





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MOONFLOWER SPEC

# Brandywine Polar Plunge

## organizers predict frosty conditions

The Brandywine Valley Association (BVA) will host its 5th Annual Brandywine Polar Plunge, February 11, 2012 at the Brandywine Picnic Park in West Chester to get outdoors and raise awareness about their conservation work in the 330 square mile Brandywine Creek Watershed. Participants collect at least \$35.00 in donations from friends and family in exchange for braving the chilly Brandywine Creek in the middle of winter. The first 200 participants to register are guaranteed an official 2012 long sleeve t-shirt to commemorate the event. Team participation is encouraged. Prizes are awarded to: top individual fundraiser, largest group, group raising the most funds and best costume!

**DATE:**  
**SATURDAY,**  
**FEBRUARY 11**  
**10:00AM Registration**  
**11:30AM Plunge**

**LOCATION:**  
**BRANDYWINE**  
**PICNIC PARK**  
**690 South Creek Road**  
**West Chester, PA 19382**

"With plenty of snow over the last two years, we are prepared for ideal plunge conditions this year" says Jim Jordan, BVA's Ex-

ecutive Director and veteran plunger. Since 2008, over 750 people have taken the plunge and raised nearly \$56,000 to protect and conserve our region's natural resources. Organizers appreciate loyal community supporters and hope to grow event participation this year. Event info and registration is available at [www.brandywine-watershed.org](http://www.brandywine-watershed.org).

Generous support for this event is being provided by The North Face, Brandywine Valley Heating & Air Conditioning, HCP Sports, Superior Home Mortgage, WSFS Bank, Dansko, Kyle's Auto Tags & Insurance, Long-

wood Rotary/UHS Interact, Más Mexicali Cantina, Aztec Printing, Bernardon Haber Holloway Architects PC, Brandywine Picnic Park, Champion Specialty Advertising, DuPont Clear into the Future, Solitude Lake Management, Hickory House Catering, The Kennett Paper, Landmark Automotive Services Co., Starbucks Coffee Company, TIKARO Interactive and Trail Creek Outfitters.

### Brandywine Valley Association

Over the past six decades, BVA has pioneered innovative programs to improve and protect



the water in the Brandywine Valley. Your leader in local watershed conservation & education, BVA offers programs for all ages and conducts environmen-

tal studies and projects to promote the restoration, preservation, conservation and enjoyment of our region's natural resources.

# P.J. Whelihan's Tests Chicken Wing Challengers for Wing Bowl XX

By Jim Breslin  
*DowningtowntownDish.com*

The crowd began mulling at the foot at the stage. A nervous energy arose from the floor as if a rock band was due to emerge any moment. Through the microphone, a voice called out to the crowd, "Are you ready to watch fat guys eat wings?"

This was the scene at P.J. Whelihan's in Downingtown, where seven contestants gorged themselves on wings in an attempt to secure the final open slot to compete against legends such as Takeru Kobayashi and El Wingador at Wing Bowl XX—which unfolds on February 3, 2012 at the Wells Fargo Center.

The announcer started calling

out names of contestants. Quazy, whose real name is Kevin, was the first man called up. At six-foot, five inches tall, he's a giant of a young man with a stubbly beard and backwards baseball cap. Last year, Quazy had won the final slot after a tie-breaking match. He doesn't dabble in other food eating contests. Quazy is strictly a wing specialist, and a man of few words. When asked what the secret is to winning the Wing-off, he simply replied, "not to throw up."

Other contestants included Uncle Rico, The Shocker, Beefcake Cheesecake, Tiger Wings and Things, Oink Oink. The final man to take the stage, after quite some delay, was Farmer Bob, who had secured his opportunity only twenty minutes earlier

by eating 25 wings in a five minute qualifier round.

The "So Co" girls tagged each contestant with flickering red Southern Comfort stickers before they climbed the stairs and looked out over the surging crowd. As the Whelihan waitresses streamed by in single file, each one holding three baskets of wings, the searing whiff of hot sauce singed our nostrils.

The judge, an aptly nicknamed young man known as Dough Boy, read the rules for the ten-minute contest, and then they were off. As the Rocky theme blasted in the loudspeakers, the contestants began devouring wings with their own unique strategy. Oink Oink chose to stand and rock back and forth,

rotating each wing in his mouth to strip it clean. Farmer Bob ate quickly but politely on the one end. At one point, Tiger Wings and Things appeared to puke a little into his water glass. Dough Boy was the judge, overseeing each basket and poking his finger through the wings to determine if enough meat had been picked clean. If meat was left on the bone, the wing was not counted. Someone shouted, "Your chance for glory!" And then the ten minutes were up and crowd fell silent as the contestants wiped their oily reddened cheeks clean and picked chicken out of their beards.

After Dough Boy consulted with the judges, it was determined that Quazy and Oink Oink had tied with 45 wings apiece! A two-

minute competition ensued and Quazy was determined the victor.

After winning the run off round, Quazy headed right to the men's room. As he emerged from the

bathroom after cleaning himself up, a reporter asked, "You are going to the Wing Bowl. How does that feel?"

The giant smiled and replied, "Awesome!"





# How To EAT LOCAL Even In The Winter



By Leslie Weinberg  
TheTownDish.com

This installment of Sustainabites was supposed to be a simple guide to sustainable dining terms like pasture-raised, grass-fed or humanely-raised meats. After speaking with Ann McGinnis, the Eastern Region Program Assistant at Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), I realized this was not as easy of a task as I initially imagined.

There are many pieces that make up farming: land and water management, livestock's diet and living conditions, worker's conditions, pest management, crop origin and biodiversity, slaughterhouse and processing practices, environmental impact and use of artificial additives (antibiotics, hormones or preservatives) in crops and livestock. Unless certified by a third party, most food labels are self reported, leaving consumers with lots of gray areas and questions about their foods. Ann's recommendation for solving the puzzle of our complicated food system is simple—get to know your local farmer.

“What we really recommend when we talk to people is it's really not enough to just read the labels. It is really important you get to meet the farmer where

your food is coming from and even better yet go see the farm.” said McGinnis. “A lot of the farmers we work with love having people on the farms. They want people to understand how their food is being raised.”

Low and behold, such an opportunity arrived in my inbox that same week, Greener Partner's “Eating Seasonably with Sarah Groat” class. The class began with Sarah Groat, Greener Partner's Education Garden Manager, guiding participants through the farm's 90 acres to their heated hoop houses.

During the scenic walk, students in this intimate class asked questions about preparing and eating winter foods like turnips, potatoes, squash, rutabaga, beans, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, radishes and root vegetables.

“The true meaning of sustainability? Being economically feasible, socially responsible and environmentally sound. Eating from South America is not any of those. To travel thousands of miles on boats, trains and cars uses a lot of natural resources,” explained Sarah during our walk.

“Spinach from thousands of miles away uses a lot preservatives and every day that the spinach is traveling is a day that

it's nutrition is lost. By eating locally, you are putting that nutrition into your body sometimes within days or even hours of having vegetables and fruits harvested.”

After we strolled through rows of kale, Swiss chard and bunching onions, everyone picked their own arugula straight out of the ground. Sarah finished the class by going over simple seasonal recipes. Sarah explained that our bodies are in tune with the seasons. Heartier foods keep us fueled through winters. Fruits and veggies are lighter and easy to digest in the summer.

There will be a repeat of the class on Saturday, February 4, 11 and 18, from noon to 1 p.m. Cost is \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members. Pre-registration is required. When Sarah is not teaching a class, she can be found running the farm's camps or gardening in the fields. To talk more about local foods, contact Sarah at 810-252-8755 or email her at sarah.groat@greenerpartners.org.

Chester County has plenty of ways to support your local farms and the local economy. Using Buy Fresh, Buy Local fresh food finder, I found 530 farms, farmers markets, farm stands, restaurants and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) within 40 miles of West Chester.

For more information and events about eating seasonably and supporting your local farmer visit: Buy Fresh, Buy Local PA, PASA, Philly Homegrown, Locavore Network, Greener Partners, Food Alliance or pick up copies of “The Locavore's Handbook,” “From Asparagus to Zucchini” or “A Celebration of Local Foods.”



Photo of Writer Leslie Weinberg pictured in 252 harvesting arugula by Greener Partners.



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