

Virginia is for Night-Lovers

Bored with the Georgetown mainstays? Zip across the Key Bridge to these Virginian nightspots

BY EDIE VAN HORN

While famously underrepresented in the Senate, the District “represents” with aplomb in all things nightlife. We’ve got Sunday brunch at Busboys and Poets, power lunch at the Palm, world vibes and big-name DJs at Ibiza on Saturday nights, etc. It’s easy to forget (especially after a few too many Pabst Blue Ribbons between pizzas at Comet) that we’re mere miles from a world of options. Virginia’s red clay is steeped in history, true; but the here and now of Arlington, Alexandria and other VA burbs may surprise jaded Georgetowners looking for an alternative to the M Street mainstays.

ALEXANDRIA

“OldTown” Alexandria is the kind of place to take your parents (cool parents who like to party, that is). Quaint enough to please the conservative, it’s still got enough bite to placate a dad who remembers the hedonism of Monterey Pop. This town tends to cater to those searching for an upscale night out rather than to college-age frat boys. **PX** (728 King St) may be the definitive in retro (1920s) chic – a Todd Thrasher (resident alcohol alchemist at Restaurant Eve, also located in Alexandria) project, PX resembles Eighteenth Street Lounge in terms of word-of-mouth exclusivity, signaling business hours by flying a discreet pirate flag out of the window above “Dublin Chipper” Eamonn’s and turning on a mellow blue porch lamp. Its occupancy set at a strict 38 lucky souls, PX pays off once inside. Thrasher’s bar menu is thoughtful

and creative, offering delicious draughts like the “Eamonn’s Cocktail,” which is lovingly made with Irish red lemonade, Irish whiskey, and yuzu. Word to the wise: much like 1789, PX has a no jacket, no entrance policy which suits (pun intended) the intimate and luxurious space.



Alexandria’s The Majestic, whose vintage neon sign is the only one allowed by town by-laws. (Photo by Zaid Hamid)

Thrasher is also involved (unsurprisingly) with **THE MAJESTIC** (911 King Street), which ties PX for best date-night spot. Originally founded in 1932, its art-deco décor is complemented by a working antique phone booth, from which patrons can drunk-dial (for 25 cents, even) merrily and historically at the same time. Under its quaint tin roof, Thrasher mixes up “Majestic Classics” such as mint juleps, sidecars and even an egg cream or two.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

VERMILLION (1120 King Street), whose microbrew menu is staggeringly expansive; the **BAYOU ROOM** (219 King Street), the bouncy basement dance lounge under priecy Victorian eatery 219 Restaurant; **100 KING STREET** (um, 100 King Street), which draws oenophiles with a rich and varied wine selection.

ARLINGTON AND CLARENDON

Clarendon has become well-known for its eclectic mix of unique shops, trendy bars, and small restaurants. **ELEVENTH STREET LOUNGE** (1041 N. Highland St.)’s notoriety stems from a great selection of Belgian beers and from its luxe ambiance: crystal chandeliers, cherry-wood

staircases, and hip-deep plushy couches. **LIBERTY TAVERN** (3195 Wilson Blvd.) was originally a Masonic temple, which adds spooky juju to the bar experience. Impress a date by selecting cheeses; they come paired with honeyed figs. Its star shines brightest at happy hour. Every draft – including those fancy ones – is just \$3 a pint. Wines by the glass are half-price, so it’s a perfect chance to try exotic vintages. The weekend bar scene can become raucous, but the upstairs dining room remains a peaceful haven for the more docile diner. **EATBAR**’s (2761 Washington Blvd.) gentle and flattering lighting plays kindly across the ravaged visages of 70-hour-work-week-warrior Washingtonians, and its 70-wines-by-the-glass, velvet booths, and copper-inlaid tabletops are pleasing to the eye as well.

Have a comment or know a great nightlife event? Let us know: columns@washingtonlife.com.

GREEN DRINK DRUNK

VODKA 360

Top-shelf vodka with recycled bottle, five-time filtration, and eco-friendly facility.

SQUARE ONE VODKA

After-tax profits to land and water environmental causes, recycled paper for their label, packaging, and all PR materials.

ORANGEV

Brewed by one of the few small certified distillers, natural citrus taste that comes from a blend of valencias, mandarins, and tangerines.

DEATH’S DOOR SPIRITS

Small-batch spirits are made with special winter wheat and wild juniper berries.

