

VEGAS

sevens

Sept. 27-Oct. 3, 2012

WEEK IN YOUR CITY



**ELLIOTT
WANTS
YOU TO BE
AFRAID**

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Selections from the antipasto list and the Bacon Bloody (insert)



MAX'S MENU PICKS

APPETIZERS

El Matador cocktail, \$12.
Jamón Ibérico, MP.
12-hour roasted tomatoes, \$4

ENTRÉES

Jambalaya, \$20.
Korean-style rib-eye cap, \$32.

continued. Soft pretzels and provolone fondue (\$12)? Doughy hunks in a basket paired with a flavorless cheese dip that dloys after one piece. And a grilled artichoke with lemon aioli blurred the line between charred and burned.

Generally, what I had was a mixed bag. My Kushi oysters were terrific, fresh and briny, and house potato chips, while not extraordinary, come with an amazing onion dip I'd love to eat every day.

The chopped vegetable salad is an interesting blend of artichokes, asparagus, corn, beets, avocado, pistachio nuts and Parmesan cheese, but I would have liked it better with less, or even without lettuce. My pork-belly Cubano sandwich was greasy, in no small part because of a fatty chunk of pork belly in the sandwich's dead center.

My friendly, well-informed server bragged about the fried chicken, a thick-crusted version served with mashed potatoes, gravy and a puffy biscuit that needed less baking powder and more shortening. The Korean-style rib-eye cap, however, is delicious, stir-fried with bean sprouts and other Asian veggies. As to the 24-hour ribs, they are

smoky to the extreme, fork-tender and slathered with a thick sauce that tastes like pure molasses with a touch of jalapeño. Next time, I'm having the sauce on the side.

Much as I am amused by the name—and love the green leather sofas, sprawling patio, subway-tiled open kitchen and deco beaded chandeliers—Culinary Dropout might make the gastropub concept

passé before it even matures in our city. This certainly isn't London, where the gastropub was born and where you'll find potted smoked mackerel or beef red-wine pie at The Eagle. And we're not even New York, a city with gastropubs such as the Spotted Pig and its radical menu of innovative pub grub.

That's not to say there aren't reasons to pay Culinary Dropout a visit.

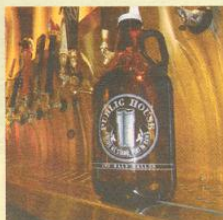
The tattooed and pierced staff is happy in their palette of grays, plaids and jeans, and the overall vibe is great—more live music bar with fun, cocktail-and-beer-friendly food than restaurant with a bar scene. I also love the indoor/outdoor thing with the garage-door-style walls, even if the music they play is too jarring for my outmoded musical tastes. Indeed, there is no doubt that Culinary Dropout is "amped up." Well, hey, this is the Hard Rock, after all. **G**

[A SMALL BITE]

ON THE GROWLER PROWL

And in other gastropub news, Public House—the one at the Venetian—has revealed its answer to the yard-glass or souvenir cup that is so ubiquitous on the Strip. The 64-ounce Public House growler (a time-honored tradition in brewpubs and breweries for bringing draft beer home or to parties) is available now for \$8 empty, or filled on the spot with a half-gallon of your favorite craft brew for between \$22-\$52, depending on your taste.

Or, if you prefer your beer in smaller doses, for the month of October, Public House will offer an autumnal flight featuring four festive pumpkin and Oktoberfest beers for \$17. The flight will include Tenaya Creek Oktoberfest, Firestone Oktoberfest, Warsteiner Oktoberfest and Big Dog's Pumpkin Barleywine. — *Xania Woodman*



DINER'S NOTEBOOK

MAX JACOBSON

LEMONGRASS CHANGES HANDS, MENUS FOR KIDS, AND HOPTOBER HAS YOUR FALL FUN ON TAP

Lemongrass Café, the diner-like Vietnamese restaurant in a mall on Eastern Avenue and Pebble Road in southeast Las Vegas (8820 S. Eastern Ave., 463-1300), has new owners, and the food is better and more diverse than ever. The 160-item menu has dishes such as the classic spicy soup *bun bo Hue*, stuffed calamari, grilled lemongrass beef, and several variations of *pho*, the meal-in-a-bowl rice noodle soup.

The Epicurean Charitable Foundation of Las Vegas (ECF) will host the organization's 11th annual scholarship fundraiser, M.E.N.U.S. (Mentoring & Educating Nevada's Upcoming Students), at the M Resort's upscale Villaggio Del Sole Pool and Entertainment Piazza at 7 p.m. Sept. 28. Chefs from Gordon Ramsay's steak house, Hubert Keller's Fleur, Shawn McClain's Sage, Carla Pellegrino's Bratallian and others will participate. Counting Crows will provide entertainment. It should be a fun event, even more so for the students awarded scholarships for a full ride to attend UNLV's hospitality school.

Meanwhile, beer lovers can head over to The Mirage for Hoptober, a monthlong beer fest that apes Munich's Oktoberfest. The emphasis will be on craft beers, and a few of the resort's restaurants will participate. Kokomo's and Onda, for example, will offer \$79 four-course menus with beer pairings throughout the month. In addition, seminars on selected Fridays and Saturdays in the Onda wine lounge will begin at 4 p.m.

Over at the MGM Grand, chef Michael Mina is doing a creative happy hour at Nobhill Tavern, and it lasts all night. Beginning at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, the tavern is serving snacks and finger foods such as bangers and mash, *fritto misto* and crispy chicken wings with Korean barbecue sauce for \$6. Nibble on those, and sip libations such as the Perfect Effen Drop—Effen Black Cherry, fresh sour mix and crème de cassis, shaken, not stirred.

Kudos to Bellagio for having been chosen as America's Leading Casino Resort by the World Travel Awards in a ceremony Sept. 14 in the tiny Caribbean nation of Turks and Caicos. This is quite an honor. The WTA is like an Oscar in the travel industry, and senior tourism officials from more than 30 countries participate.

Finally, after I finish this column, I'm headed over to chef Natalie Young's new downtown breakfast and lunch spot, Eat, which opened on Sept. 15. Sometimes, after days of fancy food, American comfort fare is the only thing that makes sense.

Hungry, yet? **G**

Follow Max Jacobson's latest epicurean observations, reviews and tips at VegasSeven.com/blogs.