



On The Side

Girls Night Out?
These Three Guys Are Really In!

by Jami Tryer

Two Chains and a Charm

Okay, let's get right down to it. If you've got a gaggle of gals to get together to celebrate a birthday, an upcoming wedding or just to dish, these three spots are perfect for glass clinking, finger licking and even worth a tiny stray off the ole diet. Spending time with friends is good for your emotional well being, especially if you haven't seen your buddies in

a while. Everyone is so busy and lives are hectic so make time around the table count. Have an entrée of laughs with a sprinkle of naughtiness. The food you put in your mouth can't be half as good as the gossip that flies out! Try all three of these dining destinations. Sharing good times is great for the soul and sharing entrees is great for the waistline!



Vivacious Vinny

He may be someone's cousin, but Vinny has really come a long way in the City of Brotherly Love. Vinny T's is just the place for hobnobbing and fork twirling. (260 East Lancaster Ave, Wynnewood,

PA, 610-645-5400) Now I know what you're thinking...pasta? Isn't this a column about eating out healthfully? Yes. But every now and then it's better to burn calories by laughing and carousing with pals. No one says you have to dive head first into a vat of spaghetti and meatballs. There are a lot of dishes to try and share that won't give you a carb hangover.

If you landed Alex Jackson as your server, consider yourself lucky. I swear this kid's going to be famous someday. Start with the Gorgonzola, Apple, Walnut Salad - fresh romaine lettuce, crumbled Gorgonzola

cheese (not tons), wedges of fresh Granny Smith apples, chunks of toasted walnuts and a light red wine vinaigrette. Dishes are prepared "family style," which makes them perfect for sharing (not hording)...so you will be able to sample many things, not just eat and eat and eat yourself into a gluttonous coma. Next, order the Capellini Vegetable - angel hair pasta tossed with fresh mushrooms, tomatoes, carrots, zucchini, broccoli, onions, garlic, olive oil and Pecorino Romano cheese. Feel free to ask the chef to leave off the cheese. You really don't need it with all the great flavor of the veggies. Move onto the Chicken Basilico - grilled double breast of chicken basted with a lemon-basil olive oil dressing. It's served with steamed broccoli and oven-roasted potatoes. Also great for sharing is the Lobster Oreganata- a one-and-a-quarter pound whole Maine lobster broiled and served with imported linguini marinara. Skip the desserts and head next store to FIVE BELOW and pick up your favorite nostalgic candy treat for pennies. Yes, Vinny T's is a "chain," but it's 24-karat and the next closest one is in Manchester, CT.



Devilish Dave

Any BBQ spot that offers up Devil's Spit as a condiment is worth checking out. This *callthefiredepartment* sauce is just one of seven zippy concoctions that are at your table ready for you to try at Famous Dave's Legendary Pit Bar-B-Que Restaurant (Columbus Commons – 1936 S. Columbus Blvd. 215-339-0339). Now, they don't take reservations, but if you call ahead and sweet talk Dave Marks, he'll accommodate your gaggle of girls on most evenings (Friday and Saturday nights may be tricky). Most of the food at this tasty spot is made from scratch. Their southern hospitality is fun and refreshing and makes ya just want to scream, "YeeHa." There are many items that are for those counting carbs. Order the ribs "naked" or roasted chicken – this way, YOU control the amount of sauce/calories! The Sweet and Sassy Grilled Salmon Platter (Grilled salmon fillet basted with a pineapple BBQ glaze and served atop of bed of fried onion strings) really satisfies. You can ask them to ditch the strings and get veggies instead. Be sure not to pass up the burgers...just don't get the bun, try the sauces at the table instead (big on flavor, light on guilt). It's no problem for them to customize food recipes. They are a scratch kitchen so if you have the time, they have the butter-free option for you. The bottomline is if you have the willpower to stay away from the cream-based soups, corn bread muffins and bread pudding you can really enjoy a great finger-lickin' night out with the girls. Famous Dave's process for smoking food is a no calorie way to protein consumption with loads of lip-smackin' flavor. Don't leave without trying the Brisket. It's really great with the Georgia Mustard sauce. I personally would take a bath in the Rich & Sassy sauce. All of their award-winning sauces, rubs and marinades are available for purchase at the restaurant or on their site www.famousdaves.com. Say "hi" to Mark Bove if you happen to get him as your server. His knowledge of the menu and BBQ accumen is really as good as it gets.

Derek's

Delicious Derek

Well, truth be told, I'm not sure if Chef Derek Davis is delicious (I've never bitten into him) but the food that he's

been cranking out of the kitchen is beyond yummy. Unlike the two aforementioned eateries, Derek's is NOT a chain. It's a charm. If you're mourning over the old Sonoma, get over it. Chef Derek Davis effortlessly resides over the kitchen with more creativity, energy and innovation than ever. This is the best destination to plan an intimate and upscale gathering for your best girlfriends. Derek's is located at 4411 Main Street in Manayunk, PA 215-483-9400. Reservations ARE accepted. I love the concept here of "small plates." Dinner is where Derek's really shines! Broken down into three sections, the first is a collection of small plates designed to allow you to mix and match various foods and give you a maximum of tastes without busting your wallet or your stomach. The second section is a selection of entrees that are the ultimate in quality; Derek's meats are as fine as you will find anywhere! The third section is the most fun. Derek changes these offerings weekly. Start with salad of baby lettuces with balsamic-honey-mustard vinaigrette, tomato, cucumber and roasted shitake mushroom slivers or have the grilled hearts of romaine lettuce with roasted red peppers, salt-packed anchovies, shaved reggiano-parmigiano and garlic-mustard aioli. The chopped salad of chicken, bacon, shrimp, Gorgonzola cheese, avocado, tomato, cucumber and corn with Thousand Island dressing (ask for the dressing on the side!) is also great! Move onto the seared tuna with edamame, black sesame and ginger crusted, honey-ponzu reduction and fried wontons although my favorite thing on the menu is the jumbo lump crabmeat salad with roasted corn, avocado, fresh lemon, extra virgin olive oil, chives and sliced vine ripe tomatoes. These simple, fresh flavors will create an orgasm in your mouth. If you are still hungry, the third course will really satisfy. Try the filet mignon [12 oz] with grilled asparagus, whipped potatoes, crispy onion straws (there are those pesky straws again!) and balsamic glaze. Also fabulous is the free form lasagna of braised artichokes and fresh tomatoes with goat cheese, mozzarella and basil and the smoked chicken quesadillas with jack cheese, fresh tomato salsa, green onions and lime crema. I know, the lime crema might end up on your "cute butta.", but there's not a lot. Finish off the perfect girls night out with campfire s'mores- dense, flourless chocolate cake with graham cracker bottom, toasted marshmallow topping and caramel sauce. I know, I know...I have gone mad. If you are feeling like you may have to do three hours on the treadmill the next morning, opt for the dessert "sushi" an aesthetically pleasing selection of delicious and cute petit flours and miniature desserts.

Whether you choose Vinny, Dave or Derek, these three guys who really know how to serve up tasty food with certain panache - and all are welcoming destinations where fun is always on the menu.



Jami Tryer is a freelance writer, who grew up in Margate, N.J., but has been a Center City Philly resident since 1991. She is a partner with Munroe Creative Partners, a well-known graphic design firm, where she is a Senior Project Manager and helps to develop new business. She has been freelancing in her spare time for five years for magazines such as Philadelphia Style where she has reported on trends in beauty, fashion, food and culture. For PhillyFIT, Jami has countered the myth that dining out can be frighteningly fattening in her column. Contact JamiTryer@phillyfitmagazine.com.