

## Where farm and table are always next door

November 3, 2014 – by Marc d'Entremont - [LINK](#)



Robin Pellegrini, Alfred's Victorian Restaurant, Middletown

*Marc d'Entremont*

Before there was state government, before there was coal, iron, steel and chocolate there were farms on the western frontier of William Penn's colony. The Pennsylvania Dutch, the common moniker for shared beliefs among early 18th century German speaking immigrants, thrived on land that would become the breadbasket of the colonies. Famous for hearty family style meals the breads, cured meats and casseroles were augmented by the influence of 19th century industrial age immigration from Ireland, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Farm and tavern table were always next-door.

Yet the ingredients to make a creamy mushroom risotto, charcuterie, or a Polish vegetarian chili are still from the earth surrounding the **Harrisburg/Hershey** region.

Harrisburg's downtown **Second Street restaurant row** is growing into mid-town as restoration expands the residential allure of the city. The monthly **Third in the Burg** food, arts and cultural third Fridays grows in popularity.

Craft beer production dates from the start of the colony and thrives in such award winning local breweries as **Tröegs**, next door to **Hershey chocolate**, a major consumer of local dairy products. This latest edition in the series on the flourishing culinary creativity of these virtual twin cities draws the spotlight on eight with offerings from flaming salad to tapas for brunch.



Little Amps Coffee Roasters, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## **Little Amps Coffee Roasters, Harrisburg**

Little Amps is a modest shop – two locations in Harrisburg – selling honest premium coffee with a minimum of jargon. Flaky blueberry scones are among a select variety of pastries. The 2nd & North State Street location, just a few blocks from the steps of the Pennsylvania State Capital building, must attract a clientele that needs some depth with their caffeine before returning to the committee room. Its zen-like interior is as intriguing as its coffee with space punctuated by minimalist art. In the heart of 2nd Street's restaurant row Little Amps is part of a growing network reviving Harrisburg. Local neighbor **Christian DeLutis, Executive Chef of Tröegs Brewing Company's Snack Bar**, is a high school chum of Little Amps founder **Aren Carleson**.



Cafe Fresco, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## Cafe Fresco, Harrisburg

Cafe Fresco's **Brian Fertenbaugh** has been either GM or owner of Cafe Fresco for most of its nine years. He helped make Cafe Fresco's reputation for Asian fusion then purchased the popular 2nd Street restaurant in early 2014. With Cafe Fresco's original executive chef, Asian fusion still sets the menu's tone. A crab stuffed avocado, a caesar salad with spicy pecans and slow cooked Mongolian short ribs shared an undertone of pepper tempered with ginger and spice blends. Red snapper and anchovies napped with a balsamic/bourbon/ginger reduction lay on a risotto with kalamata olives. Brussels sprouts were grilled with soy seasoning. Well-modulated music set an ambiance conducive to conversation. While the soft pastel lighted black lacquered dining room was ably coordinated by manager Matt Kelin and allowed focus on imaginative presentations. (After dinner DJs entertain upstairs in the Level 2 dance lounge until the early a.m.). Food should not only taste good but also make you smile. Cafe Fresco's Dim Sum Donuts satisfied both: fresh fried – light like beignets – donuts were served in a white take-out box, tilted on its side, with hot chocolate and raspberry sauce side dishes, and chop sticks, of course.



Brunch at Suba, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## Brunch at Suba, Harrisburg

Upstairs above sister restaurant **Mangia Qui** is Suba Tapas Bar with a low key decor reminiscent of a simple Spanish tavern. At brunch craft cocktails are invented in this 21st century tavern. Rum muddled grapefruit, rhubarb bitters, moonshine and Champaign was smooth with the bitters adding counterpoint to sweetness. The bloody mary was well seasoned with horseradish. Suba's brunch is known for its variety of eggs benedict. An opulent surf & turf benedict paired two English muffins, one topped by a grilled beef filet and the other by a crab cake napped with fresh Hollandaise sauce. Earthy shaved truffles on scrambled eggs were a special for the day accompanied by pheasant sausage and grilled focaccia. An artfully arranged tapas sampler is a Suba signature: beef empanada, baby shrimp on lentils, bacon wrapped dates resting on blue cheese walnut sauce and a crab gratin with homemade chips. An imaginative brunch sets the pace for a day of relaxing in Harrisburg's restored historic downtown.



Alfred's Victorian Restaurant, Middletown *Marc d'Entremont*

## **Alfred's Victorian Restaurant, Middletown**

**Robin Pellegrini** and her late husband Alfred purchased and restored the 1888 Raymond-Young Mansion in the late 1960s, now on the National Register of Historic Places. The original 19th century builders spared no expense in achieving high Victorian fashion. Original stained glass windows, carved oak window casings and chandeliers compliment Robin's oriental screens and family antiques. Alfred's Victorian Restaurant has been a premiere destination in the Harrisburg/Hershey region since 1970. A traditional northern Italian menu flares for real in the nearly lost art of tableside service. Caesar salad has a last toss with flaming brandy and triple sec. The tableside preparation of steak Diane is as classic as the fillet is tender. Pasta with gorgonzola cream sauce complimented the earthy flavor of mushrooms and grilled beef tips blended in a rich demi glace. Dinner was as sumptuous as the Victorian surroundings and as unhurried as the charming village of Middletown, just minutes from downtown Harrisburg or Hershey.



Devon Seafood Grill, Hershey *Marc d'Entremont*

## **Devon Seafood Grill, Hershey**

One would not guess that the graceful brick confines of the 1916 Hershey Press Building would enclose the club like 21st century modern Devon Seafood Grill. Devon delivers freshness as if the ocean was just outside or a jet delivery away. Their stated mission is "to source clean, seasonal and fair trade ingredients of the highest quality, working with artisan producers who care about their craft..." and their menu does justice to the product. Vietnamese crab spring rolls and seaweed salad were as delicate as in Hanoi. The creole gumbo was as well seasoned as in New Orleans, and the mesquite wood grilled Pennsylvania rainbow trout as good as on a campfire in the Allegheny Mountains. Add creamy intense lobster risotto, tender grilled asparagus and local mushrooms and even a business lunch becomes an experience.



Strites' Orchard, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## Strites' Orchard, Harrisburg

**Stephanie Pomraning's** family have been Harrisburg farmers since 1843, and it was her great grandfather Joseph Strite who started the orchard a century ago. Stephanie manages Strites' Orchard farm market. Defying predictable outcomes for family farms, Strites' Orchard, at 300 acres, has expanded since 1914. Known for chemical free fruit and vegetables, the market offers everything in season from peaches to berries and even now beets to broccoli – you can check what's in season on their web site. Artesian craft jams, pickles, mustards and baked goods are available. Members of Strites' Orchard Community Supported Agriculture purchase a "subscription" and are delivered a set weight of fruits and produce monthly. In seasonal rotation are pick-your-own time periods and other events. The walls of the market are lined with over a century of family history and memorabilia. Yet it's not in your face; it's just part of the classic scenery and aromas of seasonally fresh foods in beautiful Pennsylvania countryside grown by hospitable people who know what they're doing.



Broad Street Market, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## Broad Street Market, Harrisburg

Broad Street Market has been a Harrisburg institution since the 1840s. One of the nation's oldest farmers markets in its original location, this mid-town complex of two historic buildings house the bounty of the region's agricultural variety from organic vegetables to free-range pheasant sausage. Seafood from rivers, nearby Chesapeake Bay and the ocean vie for attention with Pennsylvania Dutch pies and artisan baked products like aromatic whole grain sourdough bread from **McGrath's Bakehouse**. Prepared foods from vendors range from **Jamaican jerk** to the **Polish Vegetarian Deli** where Tomasz Trembecki's vegetable chili is a powerhouse of flavor.





Famous Reading Cafe at Midtown Scholar Bookstore, Harrisburg *Marc d'Entremont*

## **Famous Reading Cafe at Midtown Scholar Bookstore, Harrisburg**

What makes the Famous Reading Cafe at Midtown Scholar Bookstore intriguing is its integration into the town square like space of the early 20th century atrium in this former department store. The rich full flavored counter culture coffees, organic teas and special coffee beverages, along with local pastries, can be enjoyed within the library-like bustle of the main floor or ensconced in the soft armchairs of the club-like mezzanine. Nice weather draws one to sit on the balcony observing the modest bustle of a reviving mid-town Harrisburg and the Broad Street Market. Special events bring live music, readings and book discussions to the main floor stage.

The **Little Scholar reading room** hosts children's activities and **Goodspeed's Bakery** has an outlet within the bookstore. Original art works, especially lining the mezzanine, are on the walls. In **Robinson's Rare Books & Fine Art Prints** you'll think you've stumbled into a fine London shop. Wander through the orderly yet labyrinth-like rooms that make Midtown Scholar Bookstore one of America's largest private purveyors of new, barely used to rare books especially university texts. With an in-store inventory of over 100,000 titles and warehouse inventory of nearly 2,000,000 volumes, Midtown Scholar is a unique location in a city full of surprises.

### Links and Addresses

Discloser: the author was a guest of the **Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau**

**Little Amps**, 133 State Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17101

**Cafe Fresco**, 215 North 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

**Suba Tapas Bar**, 272 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

**Alfred's Victorian Restaurant**, 38 North Union Street, Middletown, PA 17057

**Devon Seafood Grill**, 27 West Chocolate Ave., Hershey, PA 17033

**Strites' Orchard**, 10000 Strites Road, Harrisburg 17111

**Broad Street Market**, 1233 North 3rd. Street, Harrisburg 17102

**Famous Reading Cafe at Midtown Scholar Bookstore**, 1302 North 3rd. Street, Harrisburg 17102

**Robinson's Rare Books & Fine Art Prints** in Midtown Scholar Bookstore

**McGrath's Bakehouse**, at **Harvest**, Broad Street Market

**Polish Vegetarian Deli**, Broad Street Market