

KAUFMAN
ARTS DISTRICT

Queens Together is proud to present this guide to our very own home neighborhood, in conjunction with the Kaufman Arts District and local Queens culture and food expert Joe DiStefano.



For an eight-block neighborhood the Kaufman Arts District, anchored by New York City's oldest film studio, the century-old Kaufman Astoria Studios, which has played host to such film and television greats as the Marx Bros. and Sesame Street, is one of the most diverse and dynamic in the World's Borough featuring all manner of arts institutions, from the Museum of the Moving Image to a performing arts high school founded by Astoria's favorite crooner Tony Bennett. There's also a staggering array of international restaurants, from Mexican cantinas and late night Desi kebab stands frequented by cabbies to a bistro featuring French crepes from Brittany and Astoria's only Nigerian eatery.



Share and tag photos of your KAD passport experience. [@qns_together](https://www.instagram.com/qns_together) and [@kaufmanartsdistrict](https://www.instagram.com/kaufmanartsdistrict).

1. Astoria Bookshop
31-29 31st St, Astoria
(718) 278-2665

Lexi Beach and Connie Rourke opened the community's sole bookshop in 2013 and it's still going strong. The shop features books from all sorts of authors on all kinds of topics, but they are fond of shining a spotlight on Queens authors like food writer and Edible Queens contributor Sonya Gropman who penned "The German-Jewish Cookbook," and expert on all things Queens Joe DiStefano who authored "111 Places in Queens That You Must Not Miss." The latest Queens celebrity author? Jason Wang whose cookbook Xi'an Famous Foods details the cuisine of his family's restaurant empire, which started as a humble hawker stand in Flushing. Best of all, no matter what kind of book you are looking for the shop offers contactless shopping during these trying times.



2. Astoria Seafood
37-10 33rd St.
(718) 392-2680
www.astoriaseafoodnyc.com

For now, there's no dancing—or tables—inside this legendary seafood market/restaurant that sits on the corner of 33rd Street and 37th Avenue. Fear not though there's still fish aplenty—monkfish, trout, and porgy and of course the grilled octopus beloved by many of the Greek patrons to name a few—as well as plenty of outdoor seating at this Astoria favorite run by Spyro Christakos and his family. Opened

in 1993 as a fishmonger, it still operates much like a fish market. The only difference is that after picking your screamingly fresh maritime bounty you don't have to take it home and cook it yourself, Christakos and his crew will do it for you, and for the fraction of the price of a night out in Manhattan. So bring some libations and your crew and have a seafood feast, Astoria style!



3. Café Triskell
34-04 36th Ave.
(718) 472-0612
www.cafetriskell.co

This cozy bistro has been serving up the flavors of Brittany—crepes both savory and sweet as well as mussels and escargots—since 2007 when Chef Philippe Fallait who hails from that part of France

decided he wanted to return to the cooking of his homeland, which was once one of the five Celtic nations. Elsewhere in France crepes are seen as a street food, but in Brittany the buckwheat delicacies are so popular many people get dolled up and make dinner reservations at their favorite creperie. They're a pretty big deal at Café Triskell too, where Fallait makes more

than a dozen sweet and savory varieties, including the classic ham and Swiss cheese, Scottish smoked salmon with capers and crème fraiche, and a maple syrup number for your sweet tooth. Other Gallic specialties include his award-winning French onion soup and a ribeye steak with garlic butter. The restaurant is named for the triskell, a lucky Celtic symbol that embodies the elements of fire, water, air and earth.

4. Ćevabdžinica Sarajevo

37-18 34th Ave.

(718) 752-9528

Astorians and outer borough food adventurers have been enjoying Bosnian bites from this cheery restaurant located just off Steinway Street since the late 90s. (The awning reads since 1976, but that's when Ifeta and Ismet Huskovic opened their first restaurant in Sarajevo before emigrating to Queens during the Bosnian War.) The kitchen excels at grilled meats, especially the titular cevapi—finger-shaped, skinless sausages made from beef and lamb—served with chopped raw onions, the red pepper relish known as ajvar and kajmak, a lovely clotted cream that is to cevapi what butter is to a Peter Luger's steak. Hearty appetites will be easily satisfied by the pljeskavica, a flat patty composed of the same blend, and offal aficionados won't want to skip the teleci bubrezi (veal kidneys) and teleca brizla (sweetbreads). The meat, spinach, and cheese bureks are also excellent.



5. Chela & Garnacha

33-09 36th Ave.

www.chela-garnacha.com

(917) 832-6876

This cantina takes its name from a song by Mexican rockers Cafe Tacuba that extols the virtues of a cold beer, or chela, and street food, or garnachas, offers a taste of Mexico on 36th Avenue. The roster of garnachas features a dozen tacos, including traditional ones like al pastor made with marinated pork tenderloin topped with pineapple and

more unique creations like camarón adobado, shrimp in adobo sauce wrapped in a mantle of crispy cheese. Among the other street food favorites are quesadillas filled with either squash blossoms and cheese or huitlacoche, a corn mushroom, and cheese, and the heavyweight Mexico City sandwiches known as tortas. There's plenty of chelas to be had too, from nine Mexican cervezas including Victoria and Sol to a great range of craft brews like Astoria's very own SingleCut Beersmiths.



6. Desi BBQ Pulao Kabab
36-02 Steinway Street
(718) 650-1750

Open until 3 a.m. this no frills South Asian takeout specializes in Pakistani kebabs and grilled meats, including beef with mint chutney, and chicken tikkah, all available as rolls wrapped in freshly baked naan pulled straight out of the tandoor. As the name implies there are several varieties of pulao or rice plates, including tangy achari boti—chicken in tangy

marinade—and the house special pulao, which comes with a quarter chicken and two chicken chapli kebabs, highly spiced patties of ground chicken.

7. Frank Sinatra School of the Arts
35-12 35th Ave.

<https://franksinatrashoolofthearts.org/>

Across from Kaufman Astoria Studios—which has seen the filming of everything from The Marx Brother's Animal Crackers to Goodfellas—stands an arts institution of more recent vintage, the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School. Sinatra's pal Tony Bennett, who grew up in Astoria, founded the school in 2001. It was the brainchild of Bennett and his wife Susan, a social studies teacher. During more normal times, each of its studios hosts public productions of everything from jazz concerts to Mozart's Requiem and musicals like Aida, The Music Man, and Rent. Even though the shows have halted for now, it's still worth taking a peek at the majestic glass walled building done up in Sinatra's favorite colors, orange and blue.



8. Mar's
34-21 34th Ave.
(718) 685-2480
www.lifeatmars.com

When man about Astoria Evan Roumeliotis opened this bar/restaurant in 2013 the neighborhood lacked a place for grownup cocktails and oysters. With its great selection of raw oysters and craft cocktails, including a signature Manhattan made with overproof bourbon and mission

figs, all served in a retro barroom with plenty of marble and wood panelling Mar's soon fixed that. Roumeliotis, who also owns the The Sparrow named the joint for his daughter Maria Amelie Roumeliotis. She does not enjoy oysters, he says, but she does love the restaurant's

grilled octopus, a nod to her father's Greek heritage. Mar's also has an extensive brunch menu, including smoked salmon benedict, and an omelette Parisien with ham and aged Gruyère.

9. Nneji

32-20 34th Ave.

(917) 832-7338

nneji.business.site

Astoria's sole Nigerian eatery is nestled between a barbershop and a pizzeria. The restaurant whose name means "mother" in Igbo was opened this past summer by Beatrice Ajaero. Ajaero dishes, like the edikang ikong soup—a potage of tender beef, cow foot, dried fish, and a goodly amount of hot peppers—are rooted in her mother's memories of family recipes. The dishes rotate out; consider yourself fortunate indeed if you are there when lamb tagine is available. It's served with yassa, stewed onions singing with mustard and black pepper that do a fine job of cutting through the meat's funkiness. Each entree comes with a choice of grain, either nutty tasting fonio or garri made from cassava. For dessert there's Italian pastries from nearby Rose & Joe's Bakery, which is as it should be for a Nigerian takeout in the World's Borough. For now Nneji remains takeout only.



10. No. 5 NYC

35-43 36th Ave.

(718) 729-5665

www.no5nyc.com

Located just steps away from the Museum of the Moving Image, this stylish restaurant features a gorgeous screen worthy dining room done up with tropical plants and an equally appealing outdoor garden for dining al fresco. The specialty

of the house is vegan for nonvegans. One taste of the tacos and you'll see why. The chorizo is smoky and spicy and mimics meat quite nicely, while the buffalo cauliflower taco lashed with cucumber walnut ranch sauce, puts a healthy spin on a classic bar snack. There's a full non vegan menu too, with seven types of burgers and seven varieties of open-faced tartine sandwiches, including shrimp and manchego and skirt steak with sautéed mushrooms and caramelized onions. For dessert there's raspberry white chocolate cheesecake and what is quite possibly the best frappe coffee to be served at a non-Greek establishment in Astoria.

11. Sac's Place

35-11 35th Ave.

(718) 204-5002

www.sacsplace.com

Domenico Sacramone and his brother Anthony grew up in Astoria where they enjoyed many a home-cooked Italian meal made by their mother, Maddalena, whose family roots lie in Orsogna, Abruzzo region of Southern Italy. Years later in 1989 the two opened Sac's Place on Broadway and 29th. At first they started out with just coal brick oven pizza and special dishes—like manicotti, and fried Italian artichokes—that they cooked for regulars. Soon word got out though and the brothers expanded to a full-service restaurant. Domenico has a distinct memory of learning to cook meatballs and lamb shoulder from his mother when he was five or six and this passion shines through in the restaurant's dishes and the pizza, especially the Mama's Old-Fashioned. Last year the brothers moved their operation to the old Paramount Pictures commissary at Kaufman Astoria Studios, where stars like Rudolph Valentino and the Marx Brothers once dined. Now you too can enjoy a lovely Italian meal in the gorgeously restored art deco dining room.



12. Sunswick 35/35

35-02 35th St.

(718) 752-0620

www.sunswick3535bar.com

This watering hole takes its name from Sunswick Creek, which ran straight from the East River to Astoria. With a lineup of 25 craft beers, including Queens' very own Big Alice and Mikkeller, and lots of specialty bottles like Belgian Christmas

ales, the 'Swick is a beer geek's paradise. Locals and visitors alike love the buffalo wings, which range from mild to nuclear, as well as the fish and chips. Like every good tavern worth its suds, Sunswick 35/35 has a signature burger. On the corner of 35th and 35th that means two beef patties, Gruyère, and onion, confit, all topped with a fried egg. For dessert there's the mudslide: devil's food cake soaked with Bailey's and served with espresso ice cream.



13. Tacuba Cantina Mexicana

35-01 36th St.

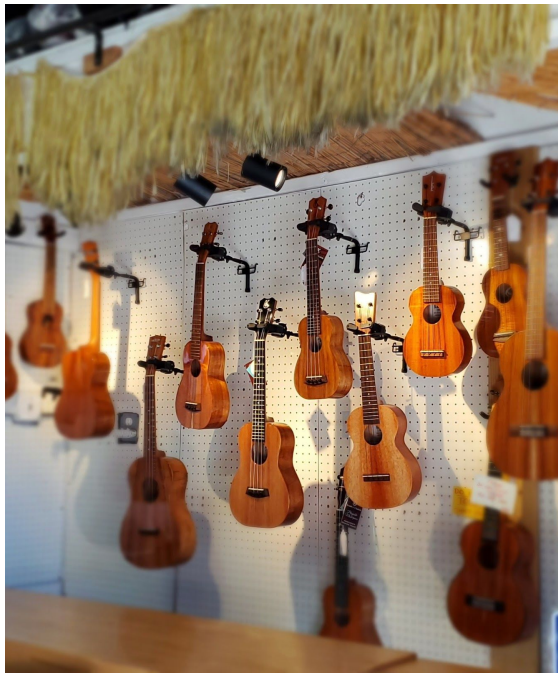
(718) 786-2727

<http://www.tacubanyc.com>

Named for a neighborhood in northwestern Mexico City, Julian Medina's modern cantina is a love letter to his hometown where he first learned about cooking by watching his father and grandfather. Among more than half a dozen tacos are such

traditional favorites as carnitas made with suckling pig and carne asada with skirt steak as well as some more unusual ones like pulpo and chorizo which combines octopus with spicy

sausage. For the truly adventurous there are tacos de chapulines filled with crunchy Oaxacan grasshoppers, guacamole, and jalapeños. Other Mexican specialties include a hefty torta ahogada sandwich packed with carnitas. There's also a roster of ceviches listed as "rompe colchones," or mattress breakers, no doubt due to their purported aphrodisiac qualities. Tacuba's eight margaritas include the pepinada made with fresh cucumber puree. In addition to bottled Mexican beers there are micheladas—cervezas served with spiced rims, fresh lime, and salsas—and chavelas served with seasoned clam juice.



14. Uke Hut
36-01 36th Ave., Astoria
(929) 500-8680

www.ukehut.com

Tues.-Sunday Noon-7 p.m. The ukulele is most often associated with Hawaii and tiki culture, yet thanks to local musician Ken Bari Murray's Uke Hut, Astoria has become a stronghold of ukulele culture. The local musician opened the shop, which sports a tiki thatched roof over the counter, in the heart of the Kaufman Arts District on Halloween 2015. Not only does Uke Hut have the distinction of being the only ukulele store in Queens, it's the only such emporium on the East Coast. More than 200 ukuleles—from colorful toy plastic Makala numbers that sell for \$52 to glossy collector's pieces made from gorgeous acacia and koa woods that fetch \$1,000 or more apiece—in all

shapes and sizes line the walls of the shop. For now live concerts are cancelled, but you can enjoy the cheery sound of the four-stringed instrument nicknamed the "jumping flea" in livestreams on the shop's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ukehut>.

15. Veronica's Bar
34-04 36th Ave.
(718) 255-1886

Situated on a block that features an Ecuadorian restaurant and a Spanish language Pentecostal church sits Veronica's, a local's local of an Irish pub if there ever was one. These days the bar is owned by Lorraine Devine, daughter of the bar's namesake Veronica, who still revels in making free corned beef and cabbage for her customers on St. Patrick's Day. Veronica is from Fermanagh in northern Ireland and her husband is from Limerick in the southwest. As their daughter puts it, "We're an all-encompassing bar. People come and ask do you have Black Bush. Yeah we sell everything guys it's fine." As for Lorraine herself, she's a local's local, too. She grew up around the corner and has fond memories of celebrating her 18th, 21st, and 30th birthdays at Veronica's as well as numerous Christmas dinners.