



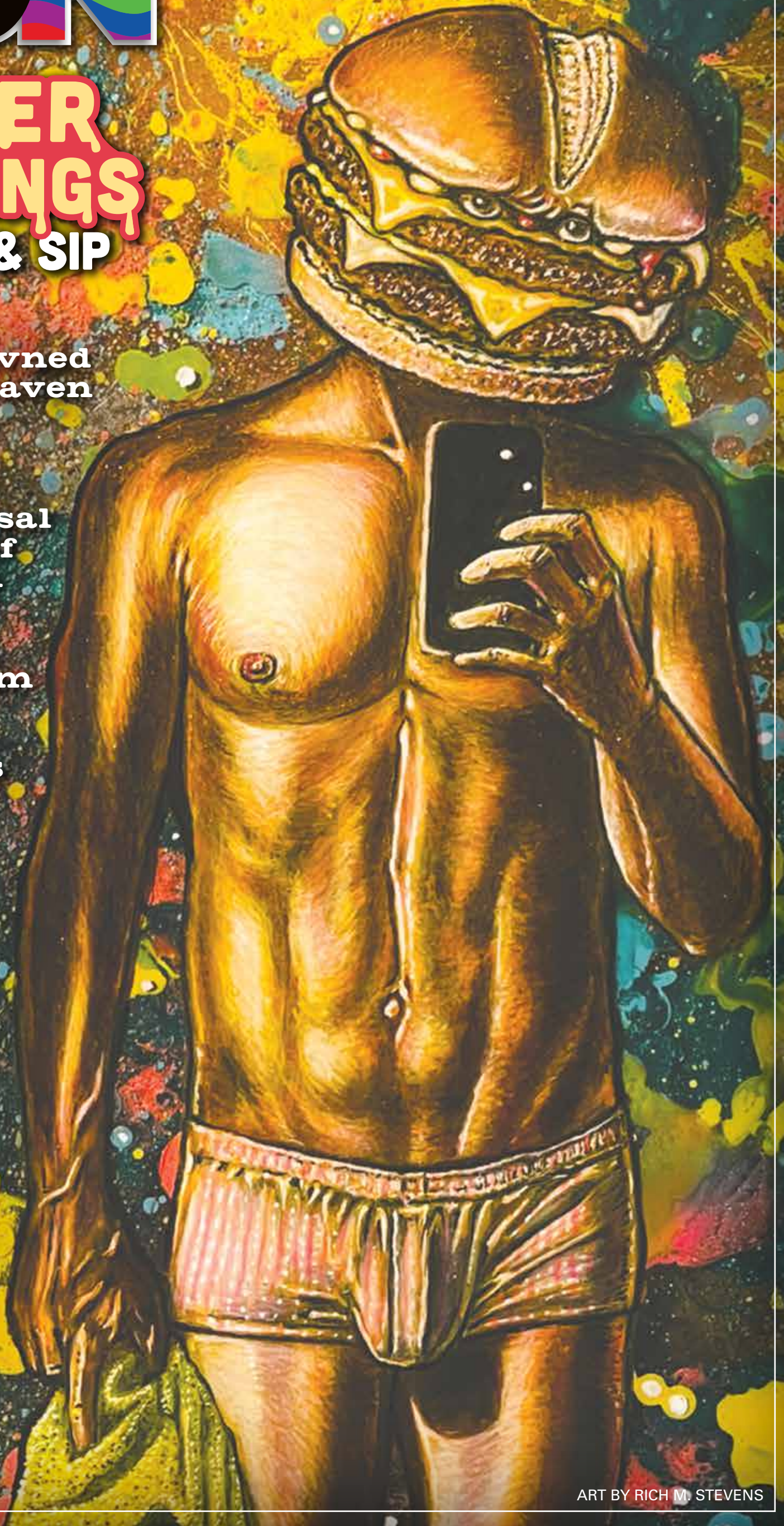
QUEER CRAVINGS SAVOR & SIP

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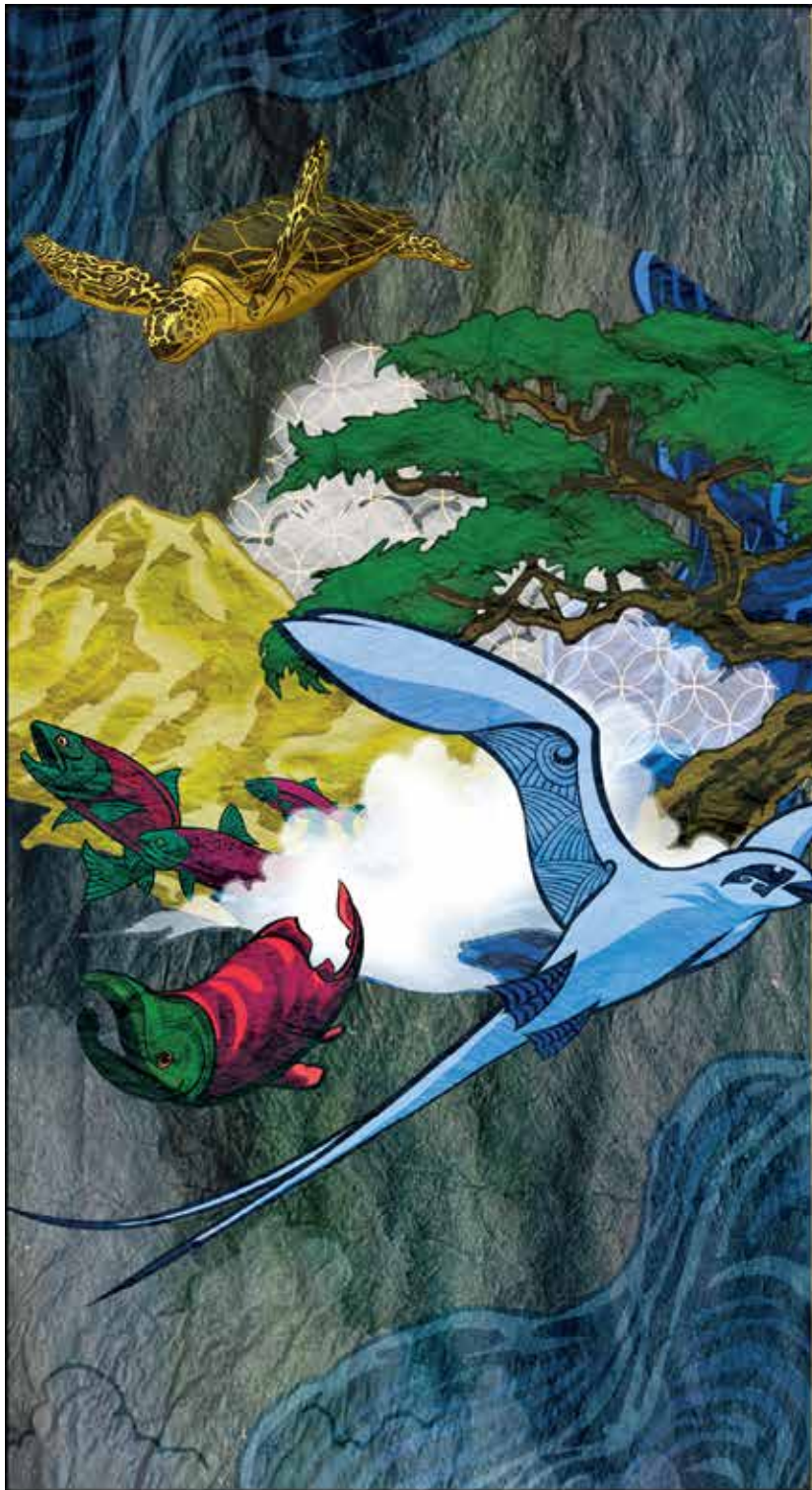
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ART BY RICH M. STEVENS



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A QUEER FOODIE GAL'S guide to eating out in Seattle

BY NOVA BERGER

COURTESY NANA'S GREENTEA

It's spring! The flowers are in full bloom, the sun is shining, and suddenly the population of Seattle seems to have multiplied. The dark days are over, replaced by residents emerging into the light, with a freshly brewed latte and pastry in hand. But before you head outside for your hot-girl walks, check out this colorful guide to LGBTQIA+-owned eateries.

For French-loving, beret-donning girls on Capitol Hill: Tous les Jours
Right around the corner from Cal Anderson Park, nestled in the M2M Mart, is Tous les Jours, a French-Asian bakery that uses traditional Korean methods to whip up fresh breads, cakes, and pastries. Grab a buttercream bread or honey cheese mochi pancake on your way to the park, or enjoy a mango smoothie to match the yellow dandelions. The chocolate croissant is a classic!
<https://tljus.com> (various locations)

For the South Lake Union sweetheart: Nana's Green Tea
Nana's Green Tea, a modern Japanese café chain, originally from Tokyo, offers a plethora of what has recently been taking the social media health community by storm: matcha! From the classic tea to the chocolate frappes, Nana's has got it all. The matcha chocolate cake in particular is the

perfect combination of an iconic drink and an iconic dessert, all meshed into one. Check out the other mouthwatering pastries, like a bright pink hojicha roll cake or green yuzu cheesecake. Japanese culture is incorporated through the use of ingredients like adzuki and warabimochi, all delivered in a stylish, colorful form. It's also the ideal spot for a cute and colorful sakura drink to mark Pacific American Islander Heritage Month (May).
<https://www.nanasgreenteaseattle.com> (Seattle and Bellevue)

For the Greenwood diva: Diva Espresso
If an intimate café with a book in hand is your vibe, try out Diva Espresso's Greenwood location. This cabinet of curiosities is like a visit to your grandmother's house. The walls are decked out with wacky and wonderful art, from emus to lace to Renaissance-style, and everything in between. With seasonal delights galore, like an orange blossom latte and vanilla cardamom latte, its specialties offer a cheaper price point than some of the city's more prominent chains. Be sure to stop in soon, as it will soon be moving across the street to a newer, more modern location, which will certainly keep the authentic artsy feel.

<https://www.divaespresso.com/pages/cafes> (various locations)

For the hospital hotties: Bakery Nouveau
A classic Capitol Hill staple, Bakery Nouveau is seemingly the one-stop shop for many of the area's medical students and providers. Long days in the hospital are made easier with one of its buttery California club croissants, or a classic quiche Lorraine, which pairs bacon and Swiss Emmental cheese and sweet caramelized onions. Live out your Meredith Grey dreams and grab a decadent chocolate slice for you and Doc Shepherd to share.
<https://bakerynouveau.com> (Cap Hill, West Seattle, Burien)

For the college cutie: Mee Sum Pastry
What began as a family boba store has transformed into an institution on University Avenue. Mee Sum pastry, a former Taiwanese bakery, has expanded to include some of the greatest Chinese dim sum — from massive BBQ pork sticks to juicy shrimp wedges and sesame matcha buns. And you can get a handful of pastries for under \$20! (the perfect lunch: \$3.75 sesame ball + \$5.75 moon cake + \$6.75 hombow). Most of the recipes are straight from the owner's family cookbook. The best steal here? The perfectly sweet and savory chicken hombow, which sits in a crispy pineapple bun.
<https://www.meesum.com> (also at Pike Place)



CHEF WILLIAM LEAMAN
COURTESY BAKERY NOUVEAU



COURTESY TOUS LES JOURS



COURTESY DIVA ESPRESSO



COURTESY MEE SUM PASTRY



WELCOME TO KAMP

Madison Valley's Queer-owned culinary haven

BY ALEX GARLAND

ALEX GARLAND

Tucked into a cozy strip of independent and majority woman-owned shops, Kamp Social House stands out, not just for its menu or cocktails but for its unapologetically Queer identity and commitment to community. Also known as “Katy’s and Marceil’s Place,” it is run by romantic partners Marceil Van Camp and Katy Knaff.

“The idea behind Kamp is that we wanted people to find a place where they could feel welcome, feel warm, and see familiar faces, whether it’s mine or Katy’s, or staff or their neighbors,” Van Camp told the *SGN*. “A lot of what you see in Kamp is a replica of what you might see at our house. The idea is like: welcome to our

place, and don’t be a stranger.”

The food, much like the atmosphere, is heartfelt and vibrant. Van Camp explained how her partner is the restaurateur, with a lifetime of industry experience, and emphasized how Knaff is not only the co-owner but also the executive chef, operator, and bar manager.

For nearly two decades, Knaff trained in a Southern-food-focused kitchen in Los Angeles and brought these roots to Seattle, mixing in her own creative spin. One of her favorites, Knaff said, was the soft serve, due to its weekly changes.

“You don’t get bored with it being here six days a week,” Knaff said, noting that that week’s flavors were “strawberry rhu-

barb, balsamic black pepper, and then a Meyer lemon cheesecake.”

“We want things that pair well, that make sense together, and also that really reflect what we like,” Van Camp said.

New dishes roll out with the seasons, and right now, people are going wild for Kamp’s gumbo. Van Camp said people are coming in for the sole purpose of tasting Knaff’s favorite dishes. Knaff said she’s been busting out shrimp tostadas, plantain tostadas, and the shrimp plantain tostada combo (watermelon margaritas and ceviche are coming in the summer). The pasta has also been a standout.

“Our pasta is incredible. Handmade fresh daily... The gnocchi, for example, comes

with this beautiful pea puree... hand-rolled gnocchi,” Van Camp said. “We work with the local forager... just stuff that I don’t think folks are expecting.”

And let’s not forget the fries: “She has a really special recipe for fries,” Van Camp added.

“It’s the attention to detail,” Knaff said. “Tampons in the bathroom... patios for your dogs... the nonalcoholic menu... It’s ...nailing it every time... getting excellent food ratings every time,” Knaff said.

Community, pride, and purpose

Kamp’s vision extends far beyond plates and pours, and the owners have been actively involved in creating a purposeful and positive impact in the neighborhood.

“I joined the Madison Valley Merchant Association so we could better connect with SDOT and the Office of Economic Development,” Van Camp said, as she recounted challenges of the RapidRide G Line project, which devastated the Madison Valley business community. “We watched 40% of the businesses in this strip close in a year.”

Despite those setbacks, in less than a handful of years after opening, Van Camp and Knaff have prided themselves on being a part of one of the most welcoming and inviting neighborhoods in Seattle.

During June, the Kamp team heads to the annual Pride parade, as well as the Wildrose to celebrate with the Queer community. As an LGBTQIA+-owned business, Pride, naturally, is a cornerstone of their own annual programming too — but Kamp goes deeper than just rainbows and parties.

“We’re going to be really focusing on health in our community,” Van Camp said. “A mammogram truck, STI resources... folks who maybe need Botox because they’ve just had facial reconstructive surgery because they’re transitioning.”

All of that’s alongside the drag brunches, and the beloved “sliders — we ask if you want all tops or all bottoms,” Van Camp noted.



KAMP MENU ITEMS
ALEX GARLAND

Burritos and big dreams ahead

As summer approaches, Kamp is planning a new pop-up on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.: “A breakfast burrito program... on the way to the beach... really good, delicious burritos [with] really good salsa,” Knaff said. “That’ll be fun... our own pop-up in our own space.”

Van Camp said they’d like to expand and that she believes there is a need for it. Knaff said that many Lesbians already come to Kamp, but at the same time, she’d love to have a small and intimate Lesbian bar. But for now, they’re staying grounded by focus-

ing on what they already have and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Because, as Van Camp put it, “Neighborhoods need restaurants like ours — the mom-and-mom-type spots to really keep bringing people together. I’m concerned that they’re disappearing. And we’re going to fight really hard to keep Kamp here.”

Kamp Social House is at 2800 E Madison St and online at <https://www.kampsocial.com>.



A KAMP COCKTAIL ON THE OUTDOOR PATIO
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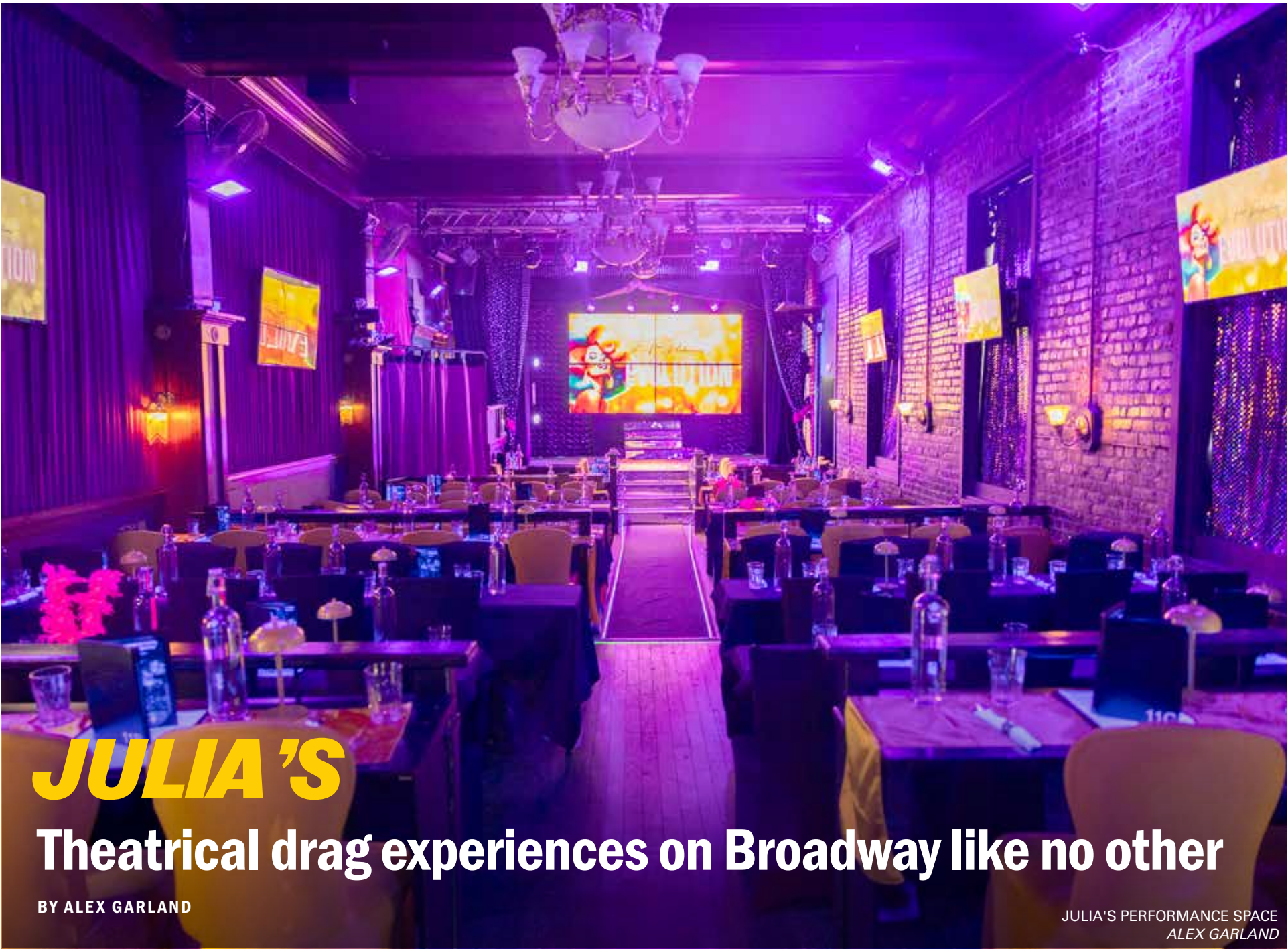


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JULIA'S

Theatrical drag experiences on Broadway like no other

BY ALEX GARLAND

JULIA'S PERFORMANCE SPACE
ALEX GARLAND

For 25 years, Julia's on Broadway has been a cornerstone of Seattle's LGBTQIA+ and entertainment scene, blending drag, burlesque, and theatrical performances into an unforgettable experience. Its evolution began with classic impersonations of beloved Queer icons like Madonna, Cher, and Dolly Parton. Over time, the shows evolved into something entirely unique.

Co-owner Jacqueline Hyde, one of the performers and guest services lead, spoke with the *SGN* about the venue's changes, its impact on the community, and what makes it a must-visit destination.

"Our journey originally started with impersonation... and then more of the modern. Today, we have completely evolved out of that, and we're now doing inspiration," Hyde said.

Julia's newest show, *Evolution*, is a prime example, blending inspiration from Beyoncé and Dolly Parton. It opens with a 1920s burlesque-inspired number, and even teases the upcoming summer show, *Wicked Oz*.

"Every number is a minimum of seven to eight minutes... No show that we've ever done here has ever done that," Hyde said.

For those who prefer brunch, Julia's weekly Bad Girls Brunch features Disney's most iconic villains — Cruella, Ursula, Maleficent, the Queen of Hearts, and Scar — with Julia's signature twist.

"It's not just queening, it's not just a bar show. It is literally a theatrical experience," Hyde added.

The venue recently installed a video wall, allowing for dynamic visuals during performances and making the space ideal for corporate events. Hyde said the video wall can be split into four screens or remain as one video over the entire surface. The lighting and sound equipment have blacklight and neon effects that transform the room into a glowing spectacle. Julia's is also working to utilize the space more in the daytime for events.

"There is kaleidoscope of neon that we use during the show... everything glows," Hyde explained.

Feels like home

Julia's is a hub for Seattle's LGBTQIA+ community, especially during Pride, with Hyde noting how "literally, all roads lead to Julia's at Pride."

But the audience isn't only Queer —

many first-time visitors are straight patrons, some of which use the space for bachelorette parties, because Julia's is seen as an "odddity," or as the city's drag hot spot. Still, Julia's remains a safe space for those with and without a family, especially during holidays.

"A lot of people come here when they don't have families... it feels like home," Hyde said.

The driving force behind Julia's success is founder Eladio Preciado, whose vision and attention to detail shaped the venue into what it is today.

"Eladio single-handedly has the vision, the mission, the fortitude, and the drive... He'll draw out of you the best and give it to them a little bit at a time," Hyde said.

Food and drinks: Comfort with a twist

In addition to its colorful performances, the food and cocktails at Julia's draw in the crowds. Hyde highlighted some menu items that are favorites of customers and staff:

- Hawaiian Benedict with pulled pork and pineapple
- Steak tacos with ribeye beef and cilantro sauce

- Stuffed chicken wrapped in prosciutto
- Cheesecake with a crème brûlée top and passionfruit glaze
- Vaginal Rejuvenation cocktail
- 50 Shades of Gay cocktail
- Screaming "O" cocktail

"Any one of our cocktails can be made into a mocktail... We carry nonalcoholic champagne so that people can still celebrate," Hyde noted. "If you're looking for a drag brunch, you go to brunch. If you're looking for an experience that will blow your brain... that is legit *Evolution*."

At its core, Julia's is about the people: the performers, the staff, and the patrons.

"Without the community, we are nothing... It is a living, breathing entity in here," Hyde said, adding how even the building itself has a personality. "This room knows when there's a good audience and when there's a bad audience."

Julia's is at 300 Broadway E. on Capitol Hill and online at <https://www.juliasonbroadway.com>.



COCKTAIL AT JULIA'S
ALEX GARLAND



JULIA'S LOADED NACHOS
ALEX GARLAND



FRELARD TAMALES

A decade of Queer-owned Mexican excellence

BY ALEX GARLAND

FRELARD STAFF MAKING TAMALES
ALEX GARLAND

The irresistible aroma of masa and slow-cooked carnitas greets visitors at Frelard Tamales, where husbands and co-owners Osbaldo Hernandez and Dennis Ramey have built both a culinary institution and a vibrant Queer community hub over the past decade. Their story — from a humble market stall to a thriving Fremont restaurant with an attached brewery — reflects Seattle’s appetite for authentic Mexican flavors and inclusive spaces.

“We started in 2013 as a weekend side gig at the Fremont Sunday Market,” Hernandez told the *SGN*. “Dennis worked at Seattle Children’s; I was with the government. We just wanted extra income, but people really welcomed the tamales. They really enjoyed them.”

What began as a pop-up operation quickly gained a loyal following.

“After three years of pop-ups, customers kept asking, ‘Where can we find you during the week?’” he added. “That pushed us to open our first brick-and-mortar in Green Lake in 2015.”

The Fremont location, with its expanded kitchen and brewery, marks Frelard’s evolution into a full-service restaurant. The name “Frelard” itself has a serendipitous origin.

“It was midnight, and we needed a business license to register for an event,” Hernandez said, while chuckling. “We lived in Ballard and sold at Fremont markets, so we mashed the names together.”

Family recipes and Queer identity

Generations of family traditions feed into Frelard Tamales. Hernandez shared that he was born in Puerto Vallarta and moved to Seattle at the age of 11.

“Every recipe comes from my mom and grandma — these are the exact flavors I grew up with,” he said.

While proud of their food, they resist competitive claims: “We don’t believe in arguing who makes the ‘best’ tamales. Everyone’s grandma’s tamales are special to them,” Hernandez said.

What truly sets Frelard apart is its unapologetic Queer identity, he added.

“We’re a Mexican restaurant that happens to be Queer-owned, and both identities matter equally.”

This dual heritage shines through initiatives like Frelard’s annual “Un Poco Gay” Pride beer collaboration with El Suenito Brewing (“the cans feature stunning Queer

artwork”) and its twice-monthly, sold-out drag brunches, where performers are paid some of the highest rates in Seattle.

Challenging craft beer norms, plus menu must-tries

The owners have deliberately disrupted the craft beer scene, as the industry has been dominated by long-bearded, white, straight men, Hernandez said.

“While Dennis is white, we wanted to challenge the idea that beer is for everyone. Our staff is Queer, femme, and BIPOC — we center communities often excluded from breweries.”

Frelard’s Mexican Lager is a favorite and a testament to its mission: accessible, flavorful, and rooted in ethos.

While the Taco Flight Tuesdays draw rave reviews, when pressed for recommendations, Hernandez highlighted the chicken tamales with verde sauce (“my personal favorite”) and newer additions, like Jalisco-style carnitas tacos, made with pork skin for authentic texture.

“Don’t miss the queso fundido,” he added. “It took a month to perfect—just real cheese, milk, and chilies. No fillers.”

Community and the future

As Frelard enters its second decade, Hernandez is focused on expanding outdoor seating, seasonal specials, and partnerships with LGBTQ+ businesses like Charlie’s Queer Books.

“We don’t just hang a rainbow flag — this is a truly Queer space,” he emphasized, adding how a recent one-star review criticizing their “Queer-centric” branding only solidified their resolve. “If your fragility can’t handle our identity, we’re not for you.”

For Hernandez, Queer ownership is both privilege and responsibility.

“We’re here to uplift others,” he said. “Whether it’s paying drag performers well or partnering with Bellingham’s Queer-owned Wink Wink Sex Shop for our ‘CNTJCE’ beer, we want to keep pushing boundaries.”

Visit Frelard Tamales at 106 N. 36th St. in Fremont for tamales, tacos, and a side of radical inclusivity. Follow @frelardtamales for event updates and behind-the-scenes glimpses of their kitchen.



ALEX GARLAND



ALEX GARLAND



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I LOVE YOU VERY MOCHI

The moon-shaped sweets and their universal language of connection

BY NOVA BERGER

NOVA BERGER

Spring marks a new era for Japanese culture. It's a time to practice mindfulness, to slow down, and appreciate the natural beauty of spring. Sakura, or cherry blossoms, play a vital role in Japanese springtime culture, and while these trees only bloom for a short while, they are an essential representation of that country's idea of the beauty of life: short yet sweet.

The Seattle Cherry Blossom & Japanese Cultural Festival took place outside of Seattle Center from April 11-13. The vibrant celebration of Japanese culture featured a diverse lineup of traditional and contemporary performances, like martial arts demonstrations, tea ceremonies, calligraphy, and taiko drumming, plus the opportunity to wear traditional dancing attire.

Buddhism was established in Japan back in the sixth century CE, and it has a philosophy known as *mono no aware*, the

acknowledgement of an ever-fluctuating world and the powerful emotions that that instills upon people. Gatherings in which this impermanence is revered and celebrated are called *hanami*, during which Japanese people come together to share food beneath flowering cherry trees.

Mochi: A hanami favorite

Mochi making, or *mochitsuki*, is conducted by pounding steamed glutinous rice into a smooth, sticky dough to create the chewy rice cakes that are tied to cultural rituals and celebrations.

Modern Japanese Cuisine & Setsuko Pastry, vendors at the event, offered *sakuramochi*, a decadent mochi made from sweet, pink-colored rice that is then filled with red bean paste and wrapped in a pickled cherry blossom leaf.

Many Buddhist temples practice *mochitsuki*, including the Seattle Koyasan Bud-

dhist Temple. While not present at the cultural festival, head priest Imanaka Taijo spoke with the *SGN* about the power of the mochi dish. Taijo said that when learning about Buddhism, Americans focus only on the secular side — like rituals, statues, and chants — bypassing the religion's ethnic side.

"The ethnic side of Buddhism isn't about clinging to these things. It's about learning to let go of them: to release the need for physical things. That's the actual practice," Taijo said. "The goal of Buddhism is to find that sameness. You and I — so many differences. But if I carefully [keep the] mind free, appreciate, observe who you are... oh, I see myself in you. And then you see yourself in me. To find that something same — that's oneness."

Taijo said that what separates people isn't race or gender but rather desire, like seeing a bright, ruby red Tesla and wanting it.

"It's like: 'I don't want to drive my old Honda Civic 2004 anymore. I want [the Tesla],' because, you know, something physical catches my eye. And then, those desires. 'I want it. I want to buy it.' That desire forms attachments. If I cannot get it, I cannot be happy."

Taijo said he doesn't feel those desires for lavish products, but that food is different, as it's more than just a desire. Food is a need, and a sign that we are alive.

"Why we have desires is because we are alive," Taijo said. "What's wrong with the fact I am alive? Nothing is wrong. So, this is the starting point. You have to eat. I have to eat."

In sum, mochi represents connectedness: It reminds us that at the end of the day, we're all human, and we all appreciate the beauty of things. And one thing is for sure: we like those beautiful things in our belly.



NOVA BERGER



NOVA BERGER



NOVA BERGER POSES WITH PRIEST IMANAKA TAIJO
NOVA BERGER



DOUGH JOY

Seattle's Queer donut haven

BY ALEX GARLAND

DONUTS ON PLATTER AT DOUGH JOY
ALEX GARLAND

The smell of freshly fried dough and sugar hung in the air as Shawn Willis sat by the window in Dough Joy's Capitol Hill location, laughing as he admitted how he and the other co-founder bought a food truck without a plan. This spontaneous beginning in May 2021 blossomed into one of Seattle's most beloved donut destinations, with locations now in Capitol Hill, West Seattle, and Ballard.

"We were thinking, do we do donuts? Do we do a taco truck?" Willis told the *SGN*. "But donuts felt like a middle ground between figuring out how to do something once and then replicating it in different fun ways."

Willis's journey into donuts was anything but conventional. After he moved from LA in 2017 and dabbled in veganism-related publishing, the pandemic forced a pivot, shutting down his vegan dinner parties. When a friend offered up his food truck, Willis and his partner took the leap.

"We made [the donuts] on the truck overnight, which was crazy," Willis said. "Rain would pour through the window while dough proofed on the table."

After struggling with commissary kitchen costs in Tukwila — "four grand

a month at one point," he said — they secured their first brick-and-mortar location in Capitol Hill, followed by a West Seattle production kitchen.

A rotating menu of creative flavors

What makes Dough Joy stand out in Seattle's crowded donut scene? "We have no egg, no dairy, and no nuts," Willis explained. "And we have gluten-free options separate from the case."

The shop deliberately avoids vegan labeling, as Willis said this creates exclusivity, and that "these are just great donuts."

The gluten-free options defy expectations. Willis said they're a little denser and cakier than the non-gluten-free ones, but that they aren't dry.

"People have preconceived ideas, but we're trying to change that," he added.

Dough Joy's seasonal rotation keeps customers coming back. Current offerings include blueberry lavender and chocolate chip cookie, while fan favorites like the "everything bagel" donut and maple bars stay in the lineup.

"[The flavor inspiration comes from] our managers, staff from other shops, seasonal stuff," Willis said, noting how the thin mint

donut was a last-minute creation. "I realized it's the last month when Girl Scouts are active."

The development process can be sticky or flaky. Some ideas, like a cookie-dough donut, got shelved due to labor constraints, as Willis said the creation process is cumbersome.

"We had a chocolate cherry that didn't sell as well as our lavender last month, so we kept the lavender," Willis explained.

Queer community at the core

Dough Joy's LGBTQ+ roots run deep. The store supports organizations like Life-long AIDS Alliance, The Trevor Project, and Immigration Equality, having raised "\$2000 for LGBTQ asylum seekers in one weekend," Willis said.

Its signature glitter-covered Pride donut is available year-round, because queerness is not limited to the month of June. It comes at a price, though, with one pound of glitter costing \$800, but Willis considers it essential.

"Kids love it, especially in West Seattle," he noted.

During Pride Month, Dough Joy offers a Transgender Pride donut in blue, pink,

and white. The business also supports local events like Trans Day in the Park, which Willis said Dough Joy has donated to since the first year, adding that consistently showing up is crucial to supporting the LGBTQIA+ community. For Pride 2025, plans include a possible rooftop party and Capitol Hill Pride Festival appearance.

"Every customer is important," Willis emphasized. "No one leaves empty-handed... Our team is very diverse... However you identify, if you share our values, you belong here."

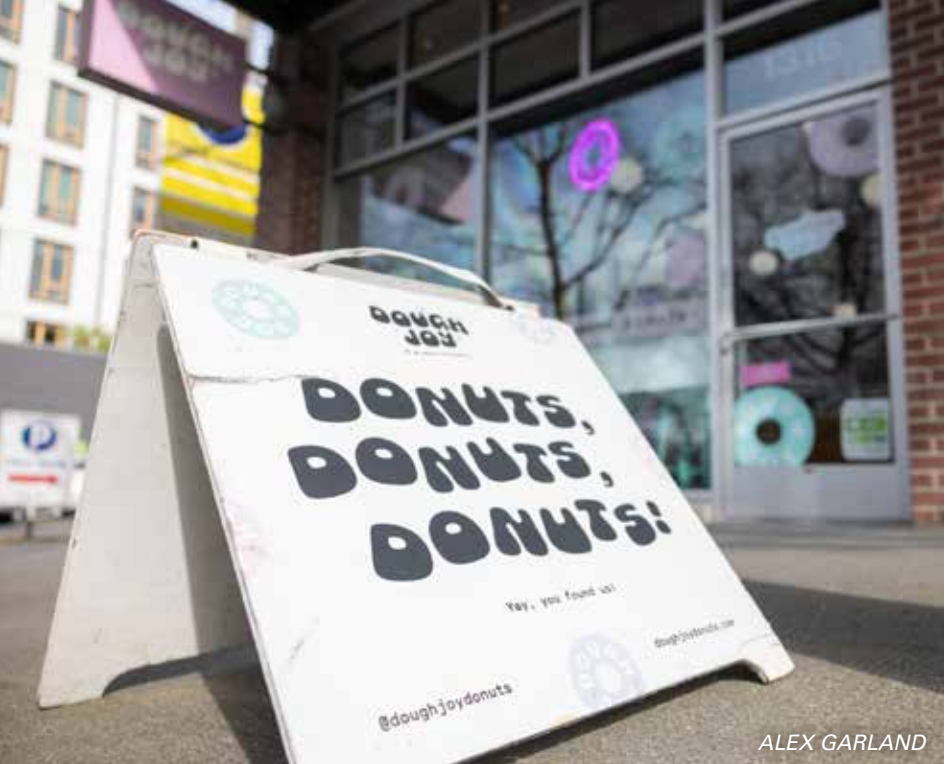
The newest location, in Ballard, continues this tradition, and future expansion could include Tacoma, Bellevue, or Beacon Hill, though Willis isn't rushing.

"Six to eight shops in the area would be nice in three to five years," he mused.

"I think the main thing is the experience that you get when you come in... We're always friendly, welcoming... You kind of feel like people want you here," Willis said.

Whatever comes next, Dough Joy remains committed to its mission — one inclusive, glittery donut at a time.

Follow @doughjoyseattle on Instagram for seasonal flavors and events.





QUEER-OWNED TRES LECHERIA offers a Texas taste of home

BY ALEX GARLAND

ALEX GARLAND

The sweet aroma of vanilla and cinnamon wafts out of Tres Lecheria, where co-owner Kevin Moulder has turned a traditional Mexican dessert into a vibrant celebration of Queer Latinx identity. This year's Pride creation remains under wraps, but Moulder confirmed to the *SGN* that "it has to be colorful, fun, diverse, and delicious — with proceeds supporting local LGBTQIA+ organizations like Ingersoll Gender Center."

"Every Pride season, we create an original flavor that reclaims Queer culture," he added, recalling last year's "Little Fruity" cake, a playful fruit cocktail medley that transformed a childhood slur into a joyful dessert.

Filling a gap

Moulder, a Texas transplant, noticed a gap in Seattle's food scene when he first arrived.

"I grew up with tres leches at every celebration: birthdays, funerals, gatherings. But everywhere I looked, it was made with artificial ingredients," he explained.

Determined to create something authentic, he committed to using real dairy from local farms, even as costs soared. He said egg and heavy cream prices have tripled since first opening Tres Lecheria but that the location will never compromise on its ingredients — even if it means putting in harder

work to keep prices fair for customers.

The bakery's identity can be tasted through innovative flavors that honor tradition while embracing modernity.

"Older generations sometimes ask why we're 'messing with' traditional flavors," Moulder said with a laugh. "But our creative versions better reflect who we are today as Queer Latinx people."

Its best-selling horchata tres leches remains a fan favorite. Upcoming flavors include a chocolate mint variation, a Dubai pistachio one inspired by viral trends, a chocolate sponge cake soaked in tres leches, and a butter pecan version inspired by Moulder's roots.

Pride, community, and collaboration

During Pride Month, Tres Lecheria plans festive outdoor gatherings where customers can enjoy their special creations.

"For the month of June, we are collaborating each week with a different person or organization in the PNW to feature a limited-edition tres leches cake flavor, with each one representing a color of the Pride flag," said Moulder. "These people are all either Queer, POC, or female, to highlight and celebrate the diverse communities we have in the PNW. A portion of the sales will be donated to a local organization that offers resources to local POC communities."

So far confirmed are: Hanna Kang, a Bellevue-based content creator, who will be creating a Korean banana milk tres leches cake slice to represent the color yellow; Danza Monarcas (led by chef Gino Garcia), a local Queer folklórico dance group; and Teresa Martinez (Amano Seattle), a Latin American-inspired artist.

The bakery partners with neighboring businesses, like Karochka Tavern, a Queer-friendly Russian bar, and it employs Moulder's family members, including his mother, who manages the location.

"We want people to feel at home here," Moulder said. "When Texans tell me they never expected to find real tres leches in Seattle, that's what keeps me going."

Moulder's visibility as a Queer Latinx baker holds deep meaning.

"I don't like a ton of attention, but I want people to feel proud of who they are and where they come from," he reflected. "Life isn't that serious. Have fun, eat cake, and tell people you love them."

Behind the scenes: Challenges and growth

Running a small bakery hasn't been without hurdles. Moulder shared how Tres Lecheria is working on streamlining production to maintain fair prices, and despite rising costs, the team remains committed to high quality.

"We're still just a small, family-owned bake shop in Wallingford. Every cake is hand-frosted and hand-poured — it's truly artisanal," Moulder said.

With interest from grocery stores across the West Coast, expansion is on the horizon for Tres Lecheria.

"We're figuring out how to scale without losing what makes us special," Moulder said.

Moulder's journey hasn't been confined to Seattle. He and former baker Myra won Netflix's *Sugar Rush* with Salvadoran-inspired creations, including a piñata-shaped Christmas cake.

"We were just ourselves," he recalled. "The judges said, 'I feel lucky to have eaten this.' That confidence changed everything for me."

The experience taught Moulder to embrace his identity.

"I used to worry people wouldn't believe a fair-skinned guy like me could make authentic Mexican desserts. Now, I'm unapologetically myself — and that authenticity is why we're still thriving."

Follow @tres_lecheria on Instagram for updates on new flavors and Pride Month events, or go to <https://www.treslecheria.com>.



ALEX GARLAND



ALEX GARLAND



WORKING THE COUNTER

Stories from Seattle's Queer bartenders

BY CALVIN JAY EMERSON

WILDROSE
C.J. EMERSON

Every Friday evening, partygoers descend on Capitol Hill's Queer bars for a night of dancing, drinks, and drag shows. To meet this consistent demand for a good time, each one prepares someone for the front lines who can mix a good cocktail, set the tone for the evening, watch out for the overly intoxicated, and juggle numerous customers at a time.

Have you ever squeezed your way toward

a countertop on a packed Friday night, trying to get the bartender's attention? If so, have you imagined the bartender's perspective?

"It's not for the weak," Lauren, a veteran bartender at the Wildrose, said. "It's high stress, high chaos, high volume. You're essentially a babysitter for drunk adults... When I first turned 21, I would drive in from Maple Valley and visit this place all

the time. [The Wildrose] has a special spot in my heart, and I want to keep it going for the next generation for the next generation of small-town girls."

The *SGN* spoke with several bartenders about their love of the craft and their favorite drinks to make (many said those were whatever was the easiest to serve). Joshua E, who works at the Gay sports bar Madison Pub, told me their favorite was water: "I

just think it's good for you. Helps you live longer, exfoliates the skin."

A commonality was the bartenders' love for each of the bars and their ability to create community, connection, and peace of mind. Some felt their first tangible connection to the LGBT+ community under a Gay bar's roof. For others, the bars were places to escape from stress and uncertainty, and over time, they just ended up staying.

Nick Panaikas is the bouncer and bar-back at Diesel, a Gay bear bar. With its red-hot masculine aesthetic and fearless sexuality, Nick recognizes that Diesel won't appeal to everyone, but he takes pride in his work serving those who do, providing for people with his shared interests.

"I love our community and, you know, these are our safe spaces," he said. "The more fun and more safe I can make things around here, the better I feel," Panaikas said.

Further down Pike Street, Olivia serves coffee and cocktails at Gemini Room, a hip lounge with colorful lighting and plush seating. Olivia's a newer team member, but she has a half-decade history of serving drinks.

"I used to work at a club, and that's a very different environment," Olivia said. "We would put out a lot of fast, easy drinks, like vodka sodas, whereas here we're making craft cocktails. We have more time, and we also close earlier than most bars. That means we have fewer people who are belligerent walking in. It's just not that kind of place, and that brings less stress on us."

While guiding a young gal in a bucket hat through the Wildrose's stash of CBD drinks, Lauren reflected on some of her happier memories.

"Every year after we finish serving Pride, we always do a big, family-style dinner at Bang Bang Café, to celebrate ourselves for surviving another year," she said. "This is my Wildrose family, and though I work at other bars, this is my happy place."





WILDROSE

Forty years of Queer history on Capitol Hill

BY ALEX GARLAND

WILDROSE INTERIOR
ALEX GARLAND

Martha Manning first encountered the Wildrose in the late '90s while working a coffee cart near Pike Street, having moved from Rhode Island while she was coming into her sexuality. Like many other LGBTQIA+ transplants, Manning didn't feel like she could come out back home, she told the *SGN*.

"I wasn't even sure what I wanted or knew. So I came here, started with a coffee cart, and eventually found the Wildrose," Manning said.

She explained how a fateful hiring decision set her course: "I got hired at both the Wildrose and The Easy, but Joanne [the previous owner of the Wildrose] said, 'You can't work at both — it's competition ... I picked the Wildrose, and it changed everything. My life, my friends, my wife—none of it would've happened without that choice.'"

By 2001, Manning and her business partner, Shelley Brothers, took over the Wildrose and immediately transformed the space.

"For 36 hours straight before opening, we painted everything black and red" she said. "The place was battleship gray and pink — like a Baskin Robbins! We wanted it darker, sexier — like The Easy's vibe."

A beacon of visibility since 1984

The Wildrose's legacy of Lesbian and Queer visibility began long before Manning's time. In the '80s there were about

200 Lesbian bars across the country, yet just 34 remain, with the Wildrose being one of them, according to the Lesbian Bar Project.

"I'll always remember what Joanne told me when she hired me," Manning said. "We were sitting here — the place looked different then — and she explained the significance of keeping our windows open. That wasn't common in Gay bars back then. She said those windows had been broken before and would be broken again, but it was vitally important that we could be seen and that we could see out. She didn't use the word 'visibility,' but now, looking back, that's exactly what she meant... That conversation stuck with me — it felt profoundly significant in a way I hadn't considered before."

This commitment to visibility became a through line in the bar's history.

"People who haven't experienced something don't know how it was. I remember being interviewed after marriage equality and saying I hadn't expected so many advances in my lifetime," Manning said.

Adapting to the times while staying true

The Wildrose has navigated seismic shifts in Queer culture over the decades.

Manning said early Lesbian bars needed to be protective spaces. While the Wildrose originally opened as and is still considered a Lesbian bar, it has since become the home to many in Seattle's LGBTQIA+

community.

Previous *SGN* reporting states that not long after Manning and Brothers took over ownership, a more diverse crowd — including Gay college men — began to trickle through the doors. They and many more having been wholeheartedly welcomed ever since.

"Now we can be more inclusive while maintaining safety. We don't check sexuality at the door. If you're respectful, you're welcome here," Manning said, while acknowledging the bar's evolving clientele. "People would say, 'I was mistreated here in 1989.' I'd reply, 'That was [many] years ago — try us now.' But I believe in dialogue between generations. People who didn't experience smashed windows or hidden entrances don't realize how far we've come."

Recent years have brought both challenges and triumphs, like now not having to close on hot days due to the installation of air conditioning. The bar also celebrated its 40th anniversary on December 31, which included a proclamation of Wildrose Day from the City of Seattle — a bittersweet moment, as Brothers passed shortly after.

"Shelly was here for the anniversary," Manning shared. "She got to celebrate with friends, regulars, and so many young people. There's a renewed energy around Queer spaces post-COVID, thanks to projects like the Lesbian Bar Project."

Pride 2025 and the future

The Wildrose will shake things up for this year's Pride celebrations.

"We're front-loading, with Leslie Hall performing Friday night," Manning excitedly announced. "She played here 18 years ago — her gem sweaters and energy are unforgettable!"

As one of the last remaining Lesbian bars nationwide, the Wildrose's survival is remarkable. Manning's strategy focuses on weekday sustainability, through trivia nights and a revamped food menu. The iconic mac and cheese the Wildrose once had — four kinds of cheeses, baked perfectly — is back on the menu.

"People asked for it, so we brought it back," Manning said. "We call [the potatoes] 'Queer-cut potatoes'... Technically, they are."

Manning's vision for the future is clear:

"This bar gave me my wife, my best friends, my community. We'll keep adapting, but the heart stays the same — a place where everyone can feel at home," she said. "Just come in. Support us on weekdays. Tell us how we can improve. This place is nothing without the people who fill it."

Follow @thewildrosebar on Instagram for event updates and daily specials. The bar is at 1021 E. Pike St. on Capitol Hill in Seattle.



ALEX GARLAND



WILDROSE MENU
ALEX GARLAND



Seattle drag queen plans to open **LA CHA-BLISS WINES** **ON CAPITOL HILL**

BY HANNAH SAUNDERS
SGN EDITOR

SCOTT WARMAN

Howard Russell — known as Ladie Cha-bliss when performing in drag on Seattle stages — is opening his first retail business on Capitol Hill, La Cha-Bliss Wines. Setting itself apart from other such establishments in the area, 50% of the store’s products will come from Queer-owned wineries or very vocal LGBTQIA+ allies.

“That was one of the things that was extremely important to me,” Russell told the *SGN*. “With me being a Gay male, I want to be able to give back to my community somehow, or be a representative of [it]. And the distributors were all very excited about that.”

An avid wine drinker, Russell found a fabulous a wine shop while exploring Puerto Vallarta over the holidays with friends—and then wished he could have his very own.

After he returned to Seattle, a friend informed him of an available retail space on 12th Avenue. He ended up applying, as did numerous others, and landed the deal.

“I’ve never owned a business before. From the time I got started back in December to where I’m at today — I’m extremely proud of myself, because I didn’t know I could do it,” Russell said. “It’s been overwhelming, the support of this community.”

Since this all transpired so rapidly, Russell launched a fundraiser to assist with

start-up costs, and even extracted some funds from his 401(k), he said.

As of this writing, he planned to open La Cha-Bliss during in early April. Russell’s goal is to offer wine tastings at least once a week in a fun, boutique-like atmosphere.

“In the summertime, or when the weather starts to clear up,” Russell said, “I have a patio that’s at the front of the location, and I’ll be doing some wine tasting out there as well.”

Russell noted how many LGBTQIA+ businesses in the city are bars or night-clubs, and that people are excited for more Queer retail spots. He hopes La Cha-Bliss becomes a place where people socialize and hold small celebrations, or even group meetings.

Originally, Russell planned to offer an abundance of domestic and international wines, including from France, California, Germany, and Italy. With President Trump’s launch of economic warfare with American allies, Russell has had to shift his business plans.

“I think it’s disgusting, and ... you’re not helping the people,” Russell said. “It will not affect me as of right now, but later on, it probably will, because I’d like to see imported wines come in.”

As of now, Russell will stick with domestic wines from Washington, Oregon, and



COURTESY LA CHA-BLISS WINES

California until business builds up. He also believes that having a positive attitude will ensure this business is a success. Russell said he plans to give back to the Queer community when financially feasible.

What’s one thing Russell wants LGBTQIA+ people in Seattle to know?

“My business is not just my business — it’s our business,” Russell said.

Visit Russell’s fundraiser at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-howard-launch-la-chabliss-wines>

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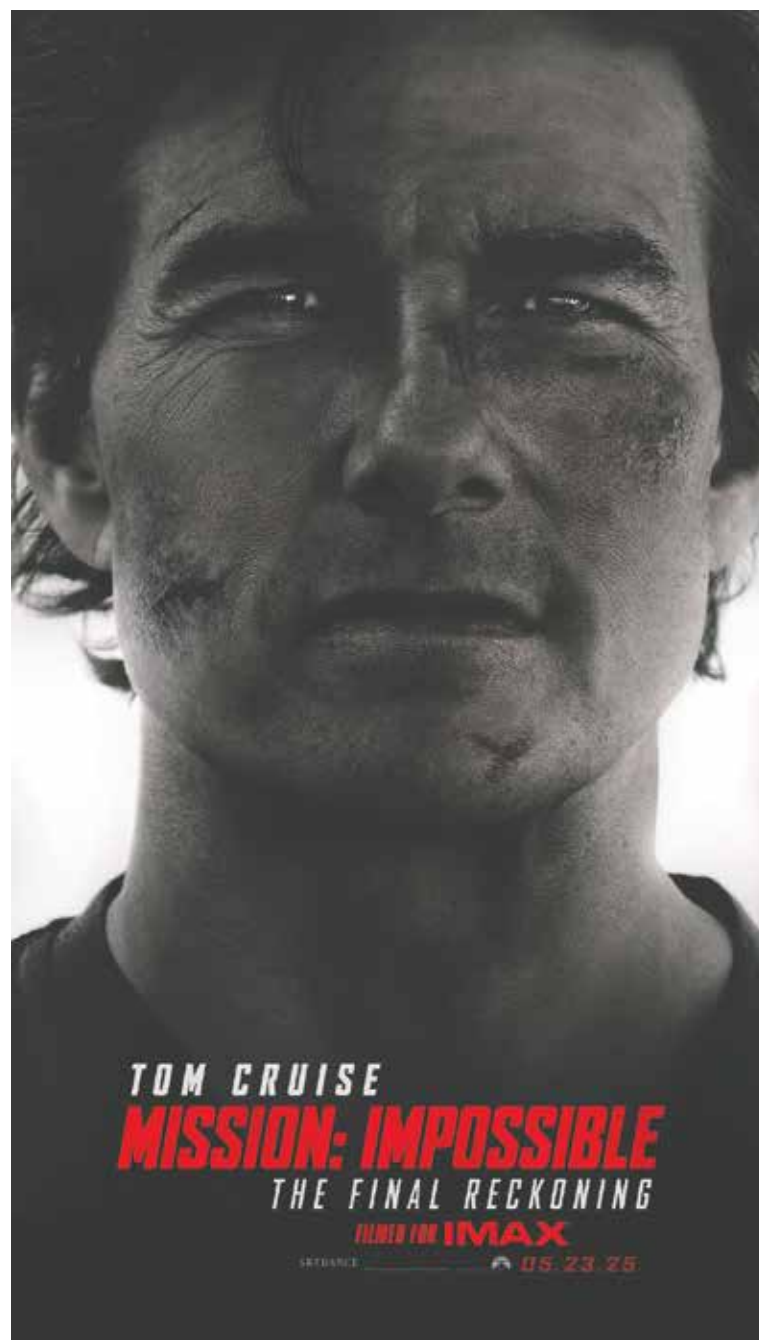
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