

## Steve Lindsay's Victoria Restaurant, Beer, and Jazz Guide and UVic Grad Students' Nightlife Recommendations

### Restaurants

Victoria is a hotbed of good restaurants (the yellow pages dedicate more than a hundred pages to restaurants). Listed below are a few idiosyncratic suggestions that I hope you will find helpful. I've given a rough guestimate of how much a mildly gluttonous/bibulous BBCSer might expect to spend including tax but not tip. You will probably need a reservation at all of the places listed under "Fine" or "Pretty Fine" dining, but it's worth calling them if it gets to be the last minute and you don't have a reservation. Unless otherwise noted, the restaurants listed below are within +/- 15 minutes brisk walking distance of the heart of downtown. The #4 bus from UVic (near the book store) will get you downtown in 15-20 minutes for \$2; schedules are posted at the bus stop. A cab costs about \$12 plus tip: Bluebird 382-4235; Empress 381-2222.

#### FINE DINING (\$50-75)

Café Brio, 944 Fort St. ( between Quadra and Vancouver Sts.), 383-0009

Far and away my favourite. The cooking is west-coast-inflected Italian with a strong emphasis on locally harvested produce, meats, and seafood. The dishes are creative but not pretentious and, most important, they are truly delicious. The room is visually attractive and the atmosphere warm and energetic. Co-owning couple Greg and Sylvia are extraordinarily welcoming, the wait staff are friendly pros. If all the tables are booked, see if there's space at the bar and if so say hi to Nick.

Brasserie L'Ecole, 1715 Government (near Fisgard St.), 475-6260

Probably my second favourite. Chef Sean Brenner was the chef at Brio when it first opened, and left after a few years to open the Brasserie. It's small and really looks the part of a French bistro. The frites are very good – not the best I've ever had, but up there. The greatest strength of this place is the excellent wine list and the policy that any wine on the list can be purchased by the glass for 1/5th of their bottle price if the party buys at least two glasses (and any bottle they've already opened for another by-the-glass customer can be bought by the single glass). Of course, their mark-up on the bottle is non-trivial, but nonetheless this lets a person try special and interesting wines that are rarely available. The cheese selection is also particularly good.

Rosemead Dining Room, in the English Inn, 429 Lampson St. (NOT downtown) 412-7673

I generally eschew restaurants associated with hotels, but this is a worthy exception. The building is old and funky/grand, but the restaurant decor combines a variety of stylings in an interesting way. The kitchen here is doing some very ambitious cooking (e.g., an appetizer of foie-gras-crustéd scallop, artichoke-crispy bacon and frisee salad, with frozen horseradish cream). More formal than the other restaurants on this list.

Paprika Bistro, 2524 Estavan Ave. (NOT down town), 592-7424

A bit closer to campus than the other restaurants on this list, Paprika Chef George Szasz's menu features French/Hungarian approaches to local foods. I sometimes find that the service borders on the obsequious, and there's not much else to see or do in this neighbourhood, but the food is excellent and the wine list is pretty good.

Camille's Fine Westcoast Dining, 45 Bastion Square, 381-3433

Terrific wine list; quite good food (sometimes a touch pretentious in presentation). The atmosphere can feel just a bit subterranean as the place is a half-floor below ground level, but nonetheless it's a very solid restaurant.

## PRETTY FINE DINING (\$35-55)

The Temple <http://www.thetemple.ca/> 525 Fort Street (near Government St.) 383-2313

A fun if somewhat self-consciously hip spot with very tasty and inventive tapa-size dishes. Prices are quite reasonable for the creativity and yumminess of the food (the lambsticks are especially toothsome). The wine list is small but has some nice offerings.

Il Terrazzo Ristorante, 555 Johnson St., (near Wharf St.) 361-0028

This is a very nice, informal place, with appealing decor, pleasant service, good food, and an OK wine list. Especially nice if you can sit outside in the courtyard (and if you happen to stray from the conference and find yourself downtown at lunch time this would be a good choice). Inside tends to get noisy on a Friday or Saturday, and the dishes are not wildly unusual or adventurous. But good.

Zambri's 110 - 911 Yates St. (between Quadra and Vancouver Sts.), 360-1171

Small, completely unpretentious (e.g., you line up, place an order, put a number on your table), a limited wine list, but some seriously delicious pasta sauces and terrific soups. Reportedly they do a 5-course meal for \$50 on Saturdays (for which reservations are recommended), but I haven't tried that. The restaurant is in a little strip mall.

The Tapa Bar, 620 Truncheon Alley (between Government and Broad Sts. by View St.), 383-0013

This isn't really a tapa bar of the sort found in Spain – compared to a real tapa bar, the dishes are bigger, pricier, and slower to arrive. But the location is quaintly attractive, the place is nicely decorated, they offer a variety of tasty dishes at reasonable prices (e.g., prawns sizzled in white wine & chipotle peppers, \$10.50), and they have some decent wines.

Queen Mother Waterside Café 100 - 407 Swift St. (near Store St.) , 598-4712

Fabulous views, interesting decor, cool vibe. Fusion menu featuring such dishes as Asian five-space lamb sirloin, Madras curry chicken purses, and tofu filet mignon. I've only had lunch here, but many people swear by it.

Herald Street Café, 546 Herald St. (between Douglas and Government Sts.), 381-1441

I haven't gone to this place for a few years, but it used to be one of my favs. Their appetizers are especially good (indeed, we used often to make a meal of appies). I especially liked their crab cakes. Bright, artsy, noisy.

Superior Café, 106 Superior St. (the "bottom" of Superior St, near the water), 380.9515

A fairly new spot, and a very fun place. Located in an old church, with quirky/artsy/interesting decor (e.g., every glass-topped table has a novel artscape below) and an equally quirky and eclectic menu of small, interesting dishes, great for sharing. Limited wine/beer list. Live music (neither staid nor loud). Highly recommended for those looking for something different that won't break the bank.

Heron Rock Bistro, 435 Simcoe St. #4 (between Menzies and Croft Sts., 383-1545

This place has only been opened a year or so, and I've only been once. Don't be put off by the location (beside a supermarket in the James Bay residential neighbourhood, a bit of a walk from down). Every night of the week they feature a different 3-course meal for \$15!

Pagliacci's, 1011 Broad St. (between Broughton and Fort Sts.), 386-1662

A Victoria standard for decades, Pag's (as locals call it) offers a little slice of the Big Apple with a dollop of nostalgia. Casual/funky/fun, tables packed together, lots of pasta dishes. On the border between "pretty fine" and "casual" dining.

## CASUAL DINING (\$20-35)

Da Tandoor, 1010 Fort St. (between Vancouver and Cook), 384-6333

Pretty darned good Indian food. The butter chicken is a particular favourite.

Siam Thai, 512 Fort St. (between Government and Wharf Sts.), 383-9911

Might be Victoria's oldest Thai place. Consistently good.

JJ Wonton Noodle House, 1012 Fort St. (between Vancouver and Cook), 383-0680

Nothing fancy, just very well done Chinese dishes of the sort familiar around here.

The Noodle Box, 626 Fisgard or 818 Douglas St.

More of a take-out place, but they have a couple of tables. Very tasty for what it is, and very cheap. Not the sort of place one needs to telephone in advance.

Sook Jai Thai, 839 Fort St. (between Blanshard and Quadra Sts.), 383-9945

I haven't been to this restaurant for a while, but previously enjoyed it.

Rebar Modern Food, 50 Bastion Square, 361-9223

Rebar has been "serving up the freshest, funkier and healthiest food on the West Coast" since 1989. The fare is mostly vegetarian but includes fish/seafood dishes. They also offer a bewildering array of freshly made juices (e.g., the "Liver Quiver" is a bracing blend of grapefruit, lemon, olive oil, cayenne, and garlic). The co-owners here have published a darned good cook book that makes a very nice gift. Reservations recommended.

5<sup>th</sup> Street Bar and Woodfire Grill, 1028 Hillside (NOT down town), 380-4600

This is a casual neighbourhood pub near the corner of Quadra and Hillside (25 minute walk from down town). Nothing fancy, but definitely a full notch above standard pub fare, and the value is terrific. Their pizzas are thin-crust and tasty, the bison burger bounteous. Staff are friendly, and they keep their beer lines clean (and offer three locally made craft beers as well as the usuals). The location is not ideal, being between UVic and downtown with not much else nearby. Reservations recommended.

John's Place Restaurant, 723 Pandora, 389-0711

As close to a diner as you'll find in Victoria. My experience here is limited to breakfast, which they do quite well.

## WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE OF UVIC

UVic is in a noncommercial area, so there's nothing right at hand except for UVic facilities. Felicita's, the undergrad pub in the Student Union Building, was recently redecorated and seems to be under new management and doing as well as one might expect an undergrad pub to do. The IQ Bistro in the Graduate Students' Centre has some reasonably tasty things on the menu and a quite pleasant space.

Near campus, one option is to walk south east down Sinclair Rd to Cadboro Bay Rd. and turn right (where you will find an excellent supermarket called Peppers, a small restaurant called Olive Olios, another larger restaurant called Martin's Place, and a pub/store called Smuggler's Cove).

The other option is to walk north west (down Cedar Hill or Sinclair-which-becomes-McKenzie or on the smaller neighbourhood streets that run between them) to Shelbourne St.. There you'll find a variety of places to eat and shop (including a BC Liquor Store). Maude Hunters' Pub is pretty decent. Lin Heung offers perfectly acceptable Chinese food. The Little Thai Place is also nice.

## Beer in Victoria

Victoria is awash in excellent beer. In addition to the brew pubs (serving beer brewed on the premises) listed below, many local bars have a good range of beers on tap, often including the exceptionally brews made in small batches by Lighthouse and/or by Phillips Brewing

Spinnakers, 308 Catherine St.,

Spinnakers was one of Canada's first brew pubs (i.e., a pub selling beer brewed on the premises), and it must surely remain one of the very best, especially in terms of traditional English ales (e.g., their ESB is superb, if you like a good bitter). The place is right on the water and tables by the windows (or on the upper-level deck) have great views. A hungry person can also eat here, but I wouldn't particularly recommend it as a dining destination. It's a bit of a walk from the heart of downtown.

Swans, 506 Pandora Ave.

Swans is in a beautifully restored downtown building that was originally a chandler's. The place is packed with local art, with a strong emphasis on First Nations art. The beer is, IMHO, a whisker less good than Spinnakers, but still very good. They have live music most nights of the week. The pub fare is pretty standard, but the restaurant affiliated with Swans is pretty good.

Canoe Club, 450 Swift St.

This is a nicely re-done warehouse space on the gorge waterway near downtown. The beer's not as good as that at Spinnakers or Swans, but it's still quite good, and they also serve above-average-for-a-pub food in the "casual" (bar) side of the place; the restaurant side is OK, but in terms of dining you'd do better at most of the places listed above.

Irish Times, 1200 Government St.

Not a brew pub, but they have quite a range of beers on tap, and the decor evokes the upper end of the spectrum of Irish pubs. The pints are pricey, but it's a fun spot and the music is often good. If for some reason you're here Sunday night, the Irish music jam led by local phenom Daniel Lapp is well worth taking in.

## Jazz in Victoria

There's only one real jazz spot in Victoria, and that's Hermann's Jazz Club at 753 View Street. Funky/kitschy decor, terrific jazz.

## Grad Students' Recommendations for Nightlife in Victoria

Carla MacLean, Leora Dahl, Mel Boyce

### Close to the University

Maude Hunters

It has been 19 years since Maude Hunters opened its doors as one of the city's first neighbourhood pubs. Maude's is a relaxing pub with a patio.

The Penny Farthing, 2228 Oak Bay Ave. (several miles from campus), 370.9008

A warm welcome awaits you at The Penny Farthing Olde English Pub in the heart of Victoria's Oak Bay Village. Here you'll discover fires crackling in four fireplaces... dark, rich wood... Victorian etched glass doors and windows... a fascinating collection of memorabilia... and a fabulous bar.

### Downtown:

Spinnakers Brewpub, 308 Catherine St., 386-2739

Spinnakers is Victoria's oldest brewpub and features an extensive beer selection. The pub-style menu is highlighted by fresh, local ingredients and free-range meats and poultry. Nice patio on the water.

Darcy's Pub, 1127 Wharf Street, 380-1322

Darcy's Pub is located at the foot of Bastion Square by Victoria's harbour waterfront. This traditionally styled pub offers pool tables and live music on weekends. During the summer guests can enjoy a beautiful day looking out at the water from the patio.

Irish Times, 1200 Government St., 383-7775

Irish Times is a downtown pub in the heart of Victoria. Live Celtic music 7 nights a week. Often has a lineup on Friday or Saturday nights, especially later on in the evening.

Swans Brewpub, 506 Pandora Ave., 361-3330

Grand brick-and-wood pub has a wraparound sunroom on the south and west sides, and plenty of handpumps sticking out of the bar. It's big, and popular and noisy at weekends, but quite a bit more sedate at breakfast and lunchtimes.

Christies Carriage House, 739 Fort St. at Richmond Rd., 598-5333

Set in a restored heritage home on the Victoria-Oak Bay border (not practical walking distance from the heart of downtown), this neighbourhood pub offers traditional British pub fare paired with modern Canadian selections along with a good choice of brews and beverages. Good for a large group of people.

Glo Europub and Grill, 104-2940 Jutland Road, 385-5643

Excellent West Coast cuisine, more than 100 wines and an extensive selection of imported and domestic beers, live music and DJ's, a heated patio and a gorgeous view along the Selkirk Waterway (not practical walking distance from the heart of down town).

The Mint, 1414 Douglas St., 386-6468

The Mint is a funky, relaxed lounge & restaurant serving up Tibetan and Nepalese cuisine. Live music 6 nights a week and an extensive menu of fancy cocktails, wine and beer.

### Dance Bars:

The Upstairs, # 15 Bastion Sq., 385-LIVE

Hugo's, 625 Courtney St., 920-4846

Hush (Gay & Transgender Bar), 1325 Government St., 385.0566