The Midwest Strikes a Major Chord

The heart of rock ‘n’ roll may be in Cleveland, but the city’s hospitality industry has soul.

very hipster knows the heart of rock ‘n’ roll is in Cleveland. But the palates of denizens of this once mighty manufacturing hub have gone way post-industrial. Here’s an overview of hot places to sip and sup on both sides of the now-cooled Cuyahoga River.

East Side

“We’re more of a beer and shot kind of town,” remarks Beach Club Bistro (bcbistro.com) bartender Tim Delaney. Right near Lake Erie in suburban Euclid, the scene’s no longer just Boilermakers after the factory whistle blows. Beach Club owner Greg Jurcisin offers 16 craft beers on tap and 150 half-bottle wine selections. He pours lots of Stone Ruination IPA and single malt scotches such as Oban and Glenmorangie . . . but not in the same glass.

“I’d pair my Thai seafood stew with the

Cleveland’s Luxe Kitchen & Lounge owner/chef Marlin Kaplan likes Tito’s Handmade Vodka for their popular cocktail called Simplicity: pineapple with basil-infused vodka.

story and photos by Sarah Jaquay

Beach Club Bistro owner Greg Jurcisin (left) and bartender Tim Delaney serve up palate versions of a beer and a shot in Euclid, Ohio.
Kiwi Ginger Sparkler,” says famed chef/restaurateur Zack Bruell. Bruell is credited with starting the local gourmet movement here in the 1980s. The menu and international clientele at Table 45 (tbl45.com) are suffused with global flavors. General Manager Todd Thompson adds that other crowd-pleasers are 45 diverse wines by the glass and seasonal Martinis like tiramisu and antipasto.

West Side

Crop Bistro (cropbistro.com) owner and “culinologist” Steve Schimoler has a distinguished career blending culinary arts and food science. His Warehouse District eatery is a test kitchen by day and bistro by night. Cochon cognoscenti queue up for Crop’s signature Miss Figgy: black mission fig-infused vodka, fig syrup and a rosemary, cob-smoked bacon stir stick. When Chef Steve kicks back, he goes for Maker’s Mark with a brûléed bacon stirrer.

Marlin Kaplan’s stylish hangout, Luxe Kitchen & Lounge (luxecleveland.com), is in the heart of live theaters, an art-movie house and shops in the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood. The lounge attracts eclectic throngs with entertainment, made-from-scratch drinks and small plates. Gems include The Bloom (fresh lavender-blueberry purée, homemade lemonade and citrus-infused Smirnoff Silver) and Simplicity (pineapple and basil-infused vodka).

Purists tipple at the Velvet Tango Room (velvettangoroom.com) in Tremont. Strictly a lounge with retro ambience, its well-researched menu includes the multifaceted Ramos Gin Fizz. “Prolonged shaking aerates the cream and egg whites,” notes bartender Julie Friedman. Also popular are the French 75, a champagne cocktail named for WWI artillery, Manhattans and Sidecars. Food celebrity Anthony Bourdain likes their Negroni, made with gin, Campari and wine reduction instead of vermouth. The reservations-only back room with speakeasy entrance might even lure the ghost of Eliot Ness, who became Cleveland’s safety director after he left Chicago. He probably came for the cocktails.

Ten More Cleveland Places
To Savor Like a Rock Star

Boulevard Blue (boulevardblue.com)
Bar Cento (barcento.com)
Flying Fig (theflyingfig.com)
Great Lakes Brewing Company (greatlakesbrewing.com)
Lolita (“Iron Chef” Michael Symon’s flagship restaurant; lolabistro.com)
Parallax (parallaxtremont.com)
Prosperity Social Club (prosperitysocialclub.com)
Sunset Lounge (sunsetloungecleveland.com)
The Greenhouse Tavern (thegreenhousetavern.com)
806 Martini & Wine Bar (216-862-2912)