

EXCLUSIVE

INSIDE BRIDGEGATE HOW THE CHRISTIE MACHINE CAME UNDONE

—FROM THE NEW BOOK AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

New Jersey

MONTHLY

BEST NEW RESTAURANTS

30

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THE BONNEY READ Asbury Park

At the open kitchen, patrons can watch the fennel and sausage being stirred into the Bonney Read's stirring Jersey Green Chowder (\$7). "We're really an old-fashioned clam-chowder house," says general manager Sebastian Walker of the 78-seat restaurant, with 40 seats at and around a well-stocked bar.

Actually, the Bonney Read is more than that: it's a magnet for seafood mavens. The open kitchen also affords views of the raw bar's quick-shucking young

Chef/partner James Avery of the Bonney Read



crew and of chef James Avery (a David Burke and Gordon Ramsay veteran) and his mates turning out fish and chips, crab-cake sliders, lobster rolls and the latest fresh catch. "James basically just grills the freshest thing we can get with lemon-herb olive oil," Walker says. Named for what it calls "the two most infamous female pirates that ever lived, Anne Bonney and Mary Read," the Bonney Read will shiver your timbers but steal only your heart.—TLG
525 Cookman Avenue; 732-455-3352; thebonneyread.com

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BRICK FARM TAVERN
Hopewell
Stone columns and wood beams accent the elegant dining rooms of this renovated 18th-century farmhouse. Virtually all ingredients are sourced locally; from line-caught fish to vegetables grown outside the kitchen door on Double Brook Farm or in its greenhouses. With a menu that changes almost daily, executive chef Greg Vasano turns the provisions into state-of-the-art sandwiches, and general manager Mike Lykens guides you to signature cocktails and food-friendly wines, all at reasonable prices.—CH
130 Hopewell Road; 908-822-9222; brickfarmtavern.com

BURG
Newark
Plagued by construction and equipment delays and other snafus, this stylish, retro burger joint in the middle of Newark's Military Park finally opened in November, almost a year late. It was worth the wait. Chef/owner Chris Stevens (of the NJM Top 25 Maritime Park in Jersey City) serves 5-ounce burgers made from chuck, brisket and short ribs "for better richness and tenderness," and a tad of

trimmings from duck to give it a little bit of Out of 10 burgers (tuna, a chicken or beef), the Ci can cheese, lettuce and "my version of special sauce," \$8; by the MP (Veggie) California, "the perfect gruyere and cheddarized onions, lettuce sauce, \$9.95; wild and the Chipotle II. The most popular: fried pickles and super-crispy fries (33.50). Made potatoes, they are the usual (a little bit of extra) guys have me for it says, "but I think it's a big difference." Do as offered with the Long Island Style (grew up in Herdick Style, with horseradish sauce, a nice wine and wine. You order, and servers deal. There are just \$11 up last.—TLG
100 Park Ave; 908-421-1111

THE CORNE
Montclair
Nothing in restaurant as stunning as an open, where, north a line out the door. Somebody has fig thing out! In this is native Jeff who earned a Rutgers degree in 2005 and sunny breakfast omelets last May at the corner of Walnut and Grove. Soones,



Asbury Festhalle & Biergarten

imported and domestic drafts and another 68 in bottles, plus wine and cocktails. There's live music, which in summer literally rises above the neighborhood on the Festhalle's rooftop garden.—CH
121 Lake Avenue; 732-997-0202; asburyfesthalle.com

B2 BISTRO+BAR
Red Bank
Clifton native and CIA grad Cesare "Ciar" De Chellis returned from five years cooking in Manhattan to launch his first solo venture in a tucked-away corner that formerly housed Sal's Tavern. He and partner Andrew Raszler, a sommelier and fellow CIA grad, chose the offbeat location for their rustic hangout because "it makes it more special," De Chellis says. From the open kitchen come hearty plates of lentil salad with spiced pumpkin; roasted prawns with fennel and Pernod; Arctic char with cauliflower coucous; and slow-cooked pig with braised greens, apples and mustard. Add a host of beers, and cocktails as well conceived as the food, and you just may be happy to call it a night.—CH
121 Shoreway Avenue; 732-997-0202; b2bistro.com

THE BAR ROOM & KITCHEN
Deal
If you walked into the Bar Room & Kitchen after a long, hard day, you'd find the solace of a dimly lit, self-described blue-collar bar where you can unwind among a neighborhood crowd of regulars. But your eyes and nose would soon alert you that, in addition to craft beer on tap, the place sends out comfort food of a high order. "We started to notice that people were having a couple of drinks here, then going somewhere else to eat," says Jay Vacchiano, owner of the 45-

Lake. There, a recent menu included a mixed-seafood bisque that gained distinction from a dollop of tarragon cream; a becor-dashi broth with an unusual combination of bits of foie gras and speltale; sumptuous rack of lamb with Madeira sauce; and Vietnamese coffee with a layer of sweet condensed milk at the bottom. Andre's may not be everyone's cup of Vietnamese coffee, but it's Andre in full.—EJL
114 Teakwood Trail; 973-997-8888; asburyrestaurant.com

ASBURY FESTHALLE & BIERGARTEN
Asbury Park
Some restaurants cast their spell the moment you step inside, so evocative is the space. Before you even read the menu, you want to order everything, such is the allure of its type and design. That's what happens at Asbury Festhalle & Biergarten, Andy Ivanov's latest Old World beer hall (after Radeagat in Brooklyn and Pilsener Haus in Hoboken). The stalwart promise of the retro-industrial design—with its wood-slab tables, stenciled-brick facade and Austro-Hungarian graphics—is fulfilled on the plate and in the stein. With your wursts, schitzels, sauerbraten, smoked trout or goulash, choose from 36



Chef/partner James Avery of the Bonney Read



FORAGING
Watch
Chefs are hiring professional foragers or are securing Jersey woods and fields themselves for everything from mushroom to herbs to garlic mustard. Taste the wild at Farm and Fishermen Tavern in Cherry Hill, Chicks in Paramus, Elements in Princeton and Escape in Montclair.

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the more is more. Big, Du- Argentine but beloved in the