

dining out



Berkshire Pork Baby Back Ribs

Photo by Bradley Hawks

Whiskey & Rye at Sanfords

BY BRADLEY HAWKS

If your heart skipped a beat at the momentary absence of one of Astoria's most popular dining destinations, it is officially okay to take a deep breath again and relax. Sanfords has now reopened its doors beneath the train at Broadway and 31st Street—but this time, they are aiming at drawing far more than just a hearty brunch crowd.

The seating capacity has exploded from 55 seats to nearly 120, including an audio-visual-equipped space designated for private parties and events.

While many favorites remain untouched, a few loving additions have been added to a menu that has become known as one of the most diverse and affordable in the whole city. Linguine is tossed in a cilantro cream sauce with a duo of mozzarella-stuffed meatballs. The Berkshire Pork Porterhouse arrives accompanied with a mushroom-and-crab-stuffed, twice-baked potato. A glistening rack of slow-cooked Berkshire baby back ribs topped with a haystack of fried shoestring shallots will make you drool at its very sight.

Even small bites are stronger than ever, with the fried ravioli now being joined with such surefire hits as the cast iron skillet of tequila-braised meatballs, a killer truffle mac 'n' cheese loaded with wild mushrooms and orrechiette, or an appetizer portion of those tasty honey cider BBQ ribs.

Owned and run by a tremendous team of brothers, Christ and Gus Karalekas, Sanfords has always boasted one of the most impressive selections of wine around. But now the cast of more than 350 varieties of wine is joined by nearly 300 varieties of scotches and single malts—creating one of the most prolific collections in all of Queens.

A lovingly edited cocktail list focuses on vintage recipes of classic drinks,

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such as a New York sour mixed with egg whites.

The change in the drink program opens a whole new realm of possibilities to the ever-maturing restaurant that started simply as a diner in the 1930s. They sure have come a long way since the original six booths and countertop. But the tradition of excellent service remains a constant.

"As long as you hire good people," explains Gus Karalekas, "you can teach almost anyone how to serve. We were renovating for almost three months, and 90 percent of our original staff returned." This Astoria cornerstone eatery is certainly full of a team of good people.

Laser-cut steel partitions, oversized Edison light bulbs, black subway tiles, and walls staggered with cast stone tiles and bronze-tinted mirrors undoubtedly elevate the restaurant's ambiance, while the old earth-toned glass rectangles on the walls and the staff of familiar faces hearken to the comfort we have grown to love at this place.

So although we may no longer be able to stumble into this neighborhood favorite for 24 hours, growing up is always good. They still serve breakfast daily from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., and they are open until 1 a.m. (or 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays). That's plenty of time to savor a crab cake Benedict, a plate of butternut squash ravioli, or a whiskey flight or a snifter of bourbon.

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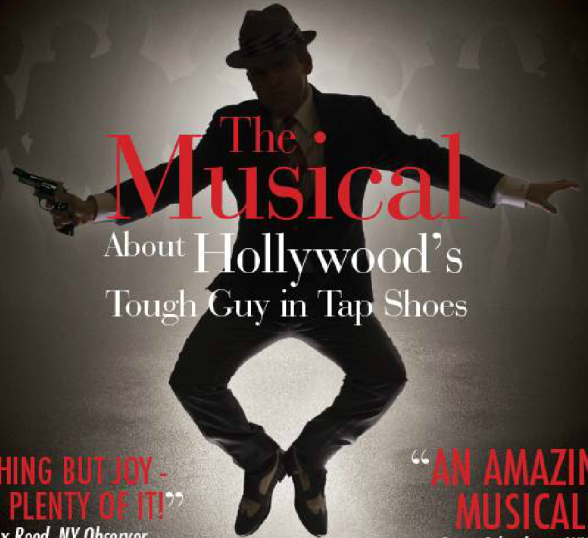


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