

HOT SPOT ||||| PITTSBURGH



A GLORIOUSLY GRITTY GROOVE

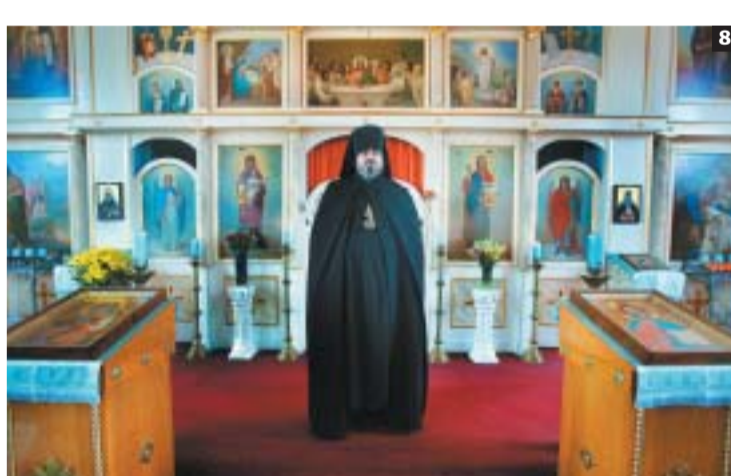
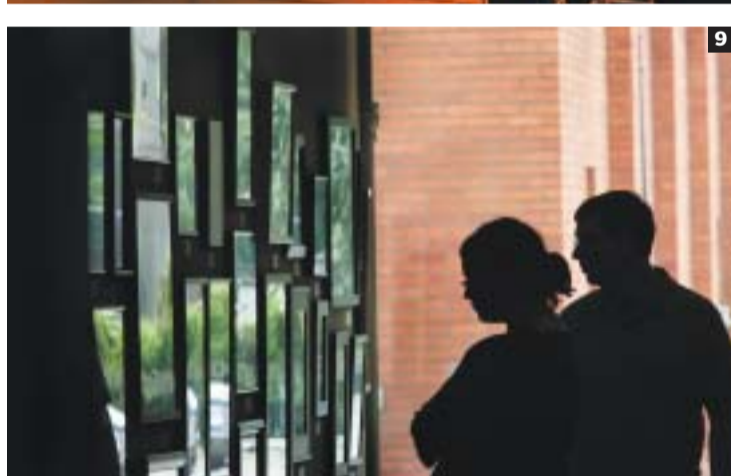
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Moving beyond its industrial past, the South Side pulses with a funky vibe yet stays true to its working-class roots



BY NEECE REGIS ■ GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Thursday night at 11:30 a line is forming at the corner of East Carson and 17th streets for grilled chicken wrapped in pita bread that locals fondly refer to as “cat on a stick.” Grill meister Dan McSwiggen explains that he usually cooks outside only on weekends, but a lightning strike knocked out power at Cambod-Ican Kitchen, an American-Asian fusion restaurant he runs with his Cambodian-born wife, Moeun. ■ Ten years before opening here, the couple operated their business from a truck. ■ “I remember times when people would line up late at night, and it would start snowing. There’d be a guy standing with an inch of snow on his head wanting cat on a stick and a wonton,” says McSwiggen. ■ His good-natured ability to adapt to challenging circumstances and his customers’ tenacity mirror the spirit of Pittsburgh as it emerges from its industrial past into a 21st-century city. ■ One neighborhood that particularly embodies this transformation is South Side, or, as the natives pronounce it, “Sou’side.” ■ When vir-



1. Hanging out at The Beehive, an eatery with brightly painted walls and mismatched tables and chairs. 2. Details on some of the older homes in the neighborhood, which used its designation as a historic district to spur development. 3. Miriam Belblidia found flowers at a farmers' market. 4. Restaurant workers take a break outside. 5. Paintings by Katharine T. Harris are for sale at The Beehive. 6. A dog announces a stranger's arrival. 7. Barry Slade of Duquesne Light works at running a cable underground. 8. The pastor at Holy Assumption of St. Mary's Orthodox Church on South 19th Street is known as Father Patrick. 9. Pittsburghers Michele Kranik and Robert Revay check out an exhibit at the Silver Eye Center for Photography. 10. The Slopes section of South Side has spectacular views of the city. 11. The band MINK checks out the area before a gig. 12. A papier-mâché head gazes out of a window from Culture Shop on East Carson Street.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHELE MCDONALD • GLOBE STAFF

||||| SAN FRANCISCO

A DAY IN THE LIFE

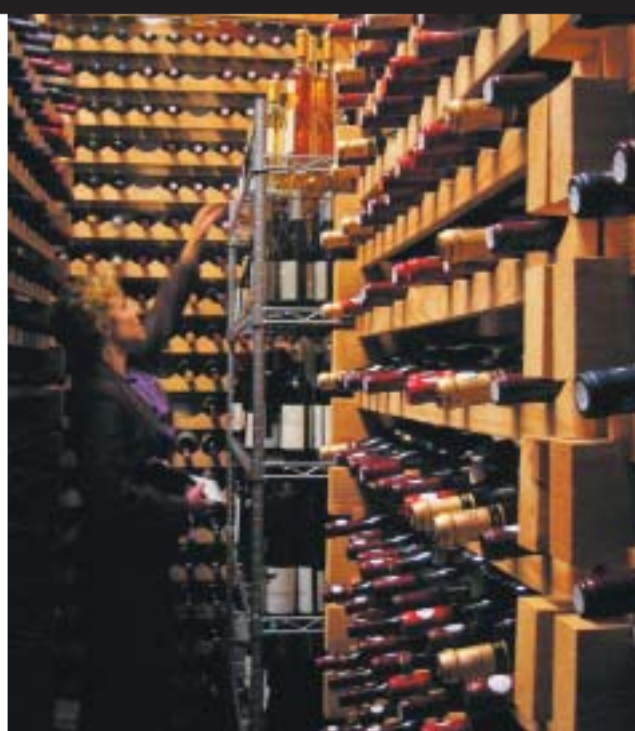
HOTEL LETS GUESTS SHADOW ITS SOMMELIER

By Bonnie Tsui
 GLOBE CORRESPONDENT
 SAN FRANCISCO — My day in the life of a sommelier started in the cramped quarters of the wine cellar for the Fifth Floor Restaurant in San Francisco, where I helped Emily Wines — yes, that's her real name — restock her upstairs bar.

Wines is the head sommelier at Fifth Floor, and lucky for me, she has quietly begun to welcome the public for behind-the-scenes glimpses into her rarefied world. Seven years ago, she joined Fifth Floor, the Hotel Palomar's signature restaurant, and helped her predecessor, Rajat Parr, create an impressive 1,400-bottle wine list that has won Wine Spectator's Grand Award several times. Now she is spearheading an ambitious program that includes theme tasting

seminars, classes in wine and food pairing, and a weekend sommelier experience for hotel guests. What I began to learn in that cool, dim storeroom is that the business of being a sommelier is a lot less mysterious (“Deciding what you should drink doesn't have to be intimidating; it should be about what you like”) and more ephemeral (“wine is a

Sommelier Emily Wines pulls bottles from the cellar of the Fifth Floor Restaurant. **SOMMELIER, Page M6**



BONNIE TSUI FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

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► **SOUTH SIDE**
Continued from Page M1

tually all of the steel mills closed in the mid-1970s and early 1980s, this area, spanning three miles along the Monongahela River's south bank, was struggling. The business district, along Carson Street, was particularly hard hit.

But South Side persevered. Home to 15 blocks of Victorian architecture, the neighborhood used its designation as a historic district to spur development. Today, more than 70 restaurants thrive in these restored 19th-century structures, along with galleries, theaters, live music venues, antique stores, vintage clothing boutiques, and — so that the district doesn't stray too far from its working-class roots — tattoo parlors, beer joints, and a magic shop.

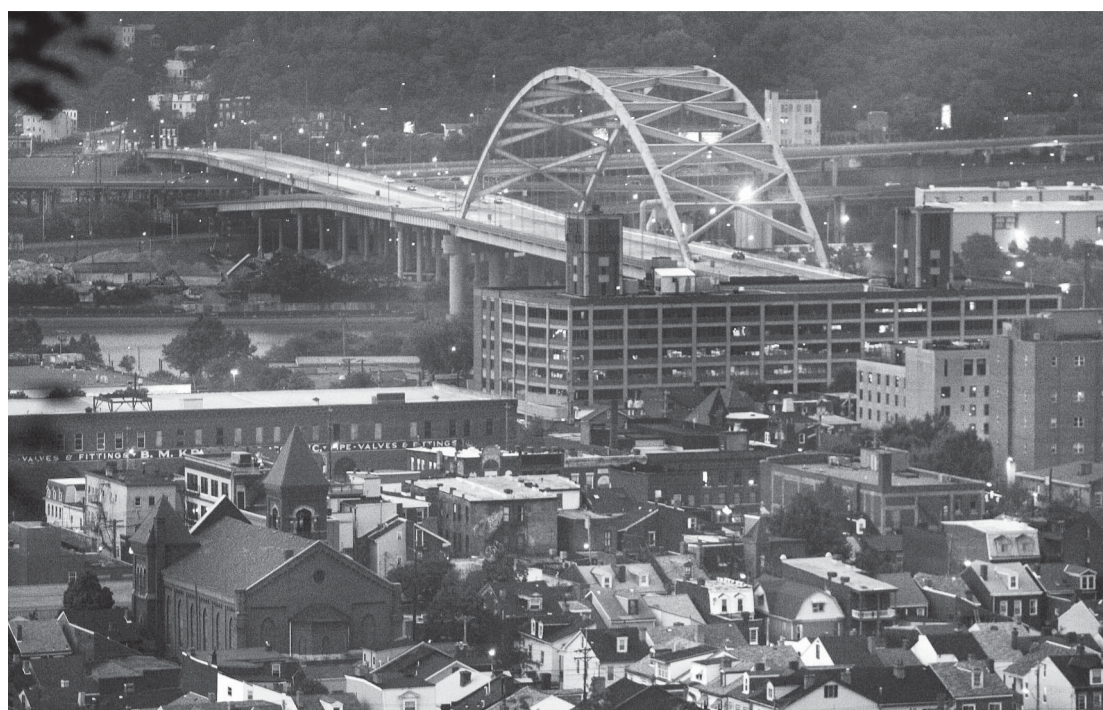
At the far east end of Carson Street, the former Jones & Laughlin steel mill was razed to make way for SouthSide Works, a 34-acre "lifestyle center" with nationally known shops and restaurants, lofts and apartments, and a cinema. At the other end, Station Square is another spiffed-up entertainment complex covering 52 acres along the riverfront.

URBAN RENAISSANCE
Stroll through Pittsburgh's South Side at boston.com/travel.

In between is Historic South Side. Visitors looking for the dynamic, quirky, and unpredictable mélange that's the heart of this area don't need to stray far from Carson Street between 10th and 24th streets.

"When I was in college [in the late '70s] this was all steel mills and 'shot and beer' places. You didn't even want to drive through. One place at a time, it started changing," says Rebecca Reynolds, a Pittsburgh resident.

Reynolds is dining on the patio at Mallorca, a restaurant specializing in Spanish and Portuguese food. As if to prove how things have evolved, a platter arrives with appetizers including squid filled with prosciutto and garlic, mushrooms stuffed with crab and shrimp, chorizo, grilled portobello and prawns, and red piquillo



MICHELE MCDONALD/GLOBE STAFF

Pittsburgh's South Side spans three miles along the Monongahela River's south bank.

peppers from Spain.

The revitalized South Side reflects its evolving demographics. Little remains of the rich ethnic culinary heritage of the German, Polish, Slovak, Lithuanian, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian people who called this neighborhood home, though at the newly opened Gypsy Café, owner Marie Evankovich's menu pays homage to her Slovak and Italian roots, along with live gypsy music and tarot readings. Along Carson and its adjacent streets you'll find Italian, French, Portuguese, Greek, Lebanese, Spanish, Mexican, Japanese, British, and Thai foods.

"For Pittsburgh, this is where it's hot," says Jeff Edwards, a fourth-generation owner of Edward Marc Chocolatier and the Milkshake Factory. "It's cohesively interesting. I call it Eat Street. There are so many restaurants and bars. There's such an eclectic mix of people on the street. People who reek of money are rubbing shoulders with pierced Goth kids. Everyone has a great time."

Dave Eshelman, who along with his wife, Nancy, owns the Morning Glory Inn, says, "This is a unique neighborhood. It has ev-



SOURCE: ESRI, TeleAtlas

ED WIEDERER/GLOBE STAFF

everything from light manufacturing to warehouses to residences, shopping, and art galleries. It's very eclectic, diverse, and dynamic." After serving guests a breakfast of souffled lemon pancakes, Eshelman sits in the garden of his five-bedroom inn, an Italianate-style Victorian brick townhouse built in 1862, and shares his knowledge of the neighborhood's history.

Originally settled and developed in the 18th century by British Major John Ormsby, the area by the mid-1850s was a thriving center for glass, with foundries producing more than half the nation's supply.

"In the late 1800s, industry shifted from glass to iron. There was an enormous immigration of all nationalities, especially Eastern

Europeans. The alleys between the streets were lined with three-story houses packed with families. There were no horses or cars; men walked down the flats to the iron foundries and mills. At shift change, 5,000 to 6,000 men stopped for a drink on the way home. Bars were part of the social fabric," says Eshelman.

Bars are still very much a part of this district. At Jack's, stools are filled day and night with gregarious patrons.

"People seem to like to drink in Pittsburgh. Everybody knows about Jack's. It's a real diverse group," says Tom Gregg, who's checking IDs.

In South Side, as in many lively city hot spots, as the night progresses the crowd gets younger and the noise level rises. In fact, there are so many bars that a moratorium on new establishments was recently enacted. This shouldn't scare more genteel visitors away from enjoying this vibrant part of town at an earlier hour.

Located on 12th Street, on Bedford Square, Café Allegro is an oasis of casual elegance in the sometimes-boisterous East Carson Street environment. With white table cloths, simple black chairs, and twinkling overhead lights, the café merges the coastal cooking of the French Riviera and Italy. With zesty offerings like fennel-crusted scallops and pork scallopine saltimbocca, it's easy to taste why this family-run establishment celebrated its 21st birthday in May.

"When we first opened, we were it," says Antoinette Cardamone, one of four siblings who helped start the restaurant. "Jack's and the Club Café were both 'shot and a beer' places. We were lucky. We've been busy from the get-go."

Another fine-dining pioneer in South Side is Le Pommier Bistro Français. This intimate, 30-seat restaurant, tucked into a historic 1869 storefront, uses local organic meats and produce. In 2004, the original owners retired and the longtime chef and house manager took over, updating the decor and menu while maintaining the bonhomie of a classic French bistro.

Newer additions to the South Side culinary scene that shouldn't be overlooked include Café du Jour, which serves California-style food (there's a quiet garden in back for al fresco dining); Dish, a Sicilian restaurant with a New York vibe located off the main drag on Sarah Street; Nakama, a wildly popular Japanese steakhouse and sushi bar; and the Double Wide Grill, serving beef and pork barbecue and vegetarian specialties in a former garage and service station.

In a world where too many shopping venues look the same, the range of one-of-a-kind stores in South Side is almost breathtaking. Clothing stores run the gamut from handmade consignment (Pack Rat) to tribal (Culture Shop) to contemporary couture (Apartment). At Apartment, Nami Ogawa's second-floor gallery is sample showroom and studio for her collaborative work with her husband, a graphic designer and artist.

In addition, there's a candy and cigar distributor (S & S Candy and Cigar), an eco-friendly shop (The E House Company), vintage instruments (Pittsburgh Guitars), and a magic shop (The Cuckoo's Nest).

Numerous performance venues dot the area. The Rex Theater, originally a movie house that's been a Pittsburgh fixture for more than 90 years, seats more than 400 for live music, film, and other events. Around the corner on Bingham Street, City Theatre produces contemporary plays in one of the oldest Greek Revival churches in Pittsburgh. And art mavens won't want to miss the Silver Eye Center for Photography or the Fireborn pottery studio.

Back at the Cambod-Ican Kitchen, the grill sizzles as McSwiggen flips drumstick and thigh meat that was marinated overnight. People eat and banter while waiting for the late night bus.

"South Side is one of the few places in town where people are walking around late at night," says Bob Bianco, a magician, fire-eater, and frequent visitor from Wheeling, W.Va.

I'm directed to find The Beehive, an apt name for a place that's humming with activity at midnight. There are three long rooms with brightly painted walls and mismatched tables and chairs. A glass case displays sandwiches, wraps, pastries, and a dizzying selection of coffees and teas. The place is packed with people working on computers (using free wireless), making art, chatting, smoking, or playing games. In another

If you go . . .

Where to eat

Café Allegro
51 South 12th St.
412-481-7788
cafeallegropittsburgh.com
Coastal cooking of the French Riviera and Italy in a family-run cafe with a casual European sensibility. Entrees \$22-\$30.

Cambod-Ican Kitchen
1701 East Carson St.
412-381-6199
cambodicankitchen.com
Simple storefront eatery with a mix of American, Cambodian, and other Asian cuisines. Entrees \$6.95-\$9.95

Mallorca Restaurant
2228 East Carson St.
412-488-1818
mallorcarestaurant.com
Fine Spanish cuisine with Portuguese accents. Don't miss the new Ibiza Tapas & Wine Bar next door. Entrees \$13.95-\$33.95.

Le Pommier Bistro Français
2104 East Carson St.
412-431-1901
lepommier.com
Country French menu in a cozy, bistro setting. Entrees \$18-\$28.50.

Where to stay

Holiday Inn Express
20 South 10th St.
412-488-1130
hiexpress.com
Located two blocks off East Carson at the 10th Street Bridge. Some rooms have river views. Doubles \$143-\$150.

Morning Glory Inn
2119 Sarah St.
412-431-1707
gloryinn.com
Five-bedroom bed-and-breakfast in Italianate-style Victorian brick townhouse. Easy walk to restaurants and shops. Doubles \$145-\$210.

What to do

City Theatre
1300 Bingham St.
412-431-2489
citytheatercompany.org
Contemporary plays produced in one of Pittsburgh's oldest Greek Revival churches. Tickets \$20-\$38.

Club Café
56-58 South 12th St.
412-431-4950
clubcafelive.com
Live music, cocktails, and snacks in an intimate, hip, comfortable, 150-seat club. Cover \$5-\$22.

Silver Eye Center for Photography
1015 East Carson St.
412-431-1810
silveryeye.org
Exhibitions by locally, nationally, and internationally recognized photographers. Free.

Where to shop

The Cuckoo's Nest
1513 East Carson St.
412-481-4411
thecuckoosnest.com
An old-fashioned magic shop with card and coin tricks, stage magic, illusions, books, DVDs, theatrical makeup, and juggling equipment.

The E House Company
1511 East Carson St.
412-488-7455
ehousecompany.com
Organic, eco-friendly products for a green home.

Apartment
1113 East Carson St., Floor 2
412-481-0149
zeto-clothing.com
Boutique showroom: clothing by Nami Ogawa and paintings by Brian Holderman.

Edward Marc Chocolatier
1705 East Carson St.
877-488-1808
edwardmarc.com
Old fashioned chocolate shop and ice-cream parlor. Chocolate lovers will swoon.

Culture Shop
1602½ East Carson St.
412-481-8284
Get your tribal groove going with silver jewelry, embroidered bags, colorful cotton fashions, bangles, and incense.

corner a group is knitting. I feel like I've landed on some curious yet friendly planet.

After two full days of eating, walking, drinking, shopping, and looking at art, I'm sated. Yet there's so much more to see and do. I'll have to wait till my next trip to my new favorite planet, Pittsburgh's South Side.

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