

2night

magazine



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DUBLIN

Guide 2010

THE GUIDE ISSUE

the best restaurants and venues in Dublin

WELCOME TO OUR 2010 GUIDE ISSUE!

Since launching our print magazine late last year, we've had a flood of Dubliners to our site, www.2night.ie, looking for the best tips on restaurants, gigs, nightlife and other entertainment. Many of you have already downloaded our fantastic iPhone app, letting you tap 2night's wisdom on the go.

With this issue, we're bringing you Dublin's top restaurants, pubs and clubs in one handy little magazine. Whether you're going out after work, looking for somewhere to enjoy dinner, grabbing post-dinner drinks or partying until the wee hours, you'll find the best place for it in this issue.

Keep it, treasure it, and make it your nightlife bible. In the meantime, keep track of the hottest events and exciting new places in 2010 on www.2night.ie.

All the best,

Derek Owens
2night Editor - Ireland

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AFTER WORK

from after work to late night, find the perfect spot to spend your evening

EVENTS

an events calendar with daily listings of parties, concerts, exhibitions and more, keeping you in the know about what's on in your area

PEOPLE: COMMUNITY

meet other night-life enthusiasts keen on making the most of the night

AFTER WORK



Bia Bar

28/30, Lower Stephen Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 014053653

A cosmopolitan, funky bar serving nifty food, Bia Bar's atmosphere is reflected in the décor: a mix of retro and ultra-modern furniture, with interesting colours to complete the feel of a cool-but-relaxing place to spend an evening. The name is a good indicator also that these guys take their food seriously, as is the sheer breadth of the menu. Aside from classic main courses like the Sirloin Steak (€13) at reasonable prices, they also have a great range of gourmet pizzas. The full food menu is served from 12:00 until 21:30 (13:00 to 21:00 on weekends), with the pizzas dished out until 22:00. The mixed clientele ensure a good vibe, as does the bar's live music programme: you'll hear musicians or DJs in action here five nights a week.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 11:00 (12:00 Sunday) until 23:30 (02:30 Thursday-Friday, 23:00 Sunday).

Getting there: From the Grafton Street end of Stephen's Green (facing towards Stephen's Green), turn right and walk down South King Street. Follow the road as you cross South William Street and Drury Street, and you'll see Bia Bar on your left.

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your guide to restaurants, venues and events in your city



NEW

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Doheny & Nesbitt

5, Lower Baggot Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016762945

This Victorian-era pub became famous around the mid-eighties, when the country's top academics, journalists and politicians all clubbily drank together and set the world to rights over creamy pints of Guinness. What came afterwards – a clique-driven ten year boom and a tawdry two year bust – probably owes as much to the intimate, convivial atmosphere of Doheny & Nesbitt as it does to our collective obsession with property. That intimacy may be gone – a recent renovation, though tasteful and sympathetic, has extended the pub's size significantly – but the after work crowd can still enjoy a well-run bar with an old-time ambience. Given the pub's location around the corner from Government buildings, it's easy to see why the odd political 'celebrity' also wanders in for a few evening scoops: imagine the Horseshoe Bar without the crush. Doheny & Nesbitt is also a popular haunt before and after Irish rugby matches, and the atmosphere during a lively game can rival Lansdowne Road in its pomp. Even when there's nary a sniff of sport, you'll find a food menu of good pub-grub staples served with speed, and plenty of entertainment from the mixed crowd of drinkers.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 10:30 (12:30 Sunday) to 23:30 (00:30 Friday and Saturday, 23:00 Sunday). Food served from 12:00 to 15:00.

Getting there: From the Merrion Row end of Stephen's Green, walk down Merrion Row towards the canal. You will pass onto Lower Baggot Street. After two minutes, Doheny & Nesbitt will be on your right.



Hogan's

35, George's Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016775904

Since opening in the early 1990s, this intriguing pub has gone through all the stages of cool – 'hidden gem', 'nice little hotspot', 'poser's paradise' and 'getting old' – before coming out the other end as a pleasant, laid-back haunt for the more mature gen-ex crowd. We think it's where this place always belonged. With three places to put yourself - a main standing bar,

a side bar with comfortable seating, and a downstairs bar hosting weekend DJ sets – Hogan's has a lot to offer most punters, and the service is famously snappy. The decor is tasteful and moody, while the furniture has a hint of vintage chic about it – it's probably no surprise to regulars that this was originally planned to be a jazz club. Today, of course, you can still check out the basement boogie on Fridays and Saturdays at 22:00, while the team of Road Records takes over

the party on Sunday evenings from 21:00. This is a great place to listen to some tunes while enjoying a decent drink, though we'd recommend arriving before or after the 17:00 to 19:00 rush if you want to grab a table.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 13:00 (15:00 Sunday) to 23:30 (Thursday 01:00, Saturday 02:30, Sunday 23:00).

Getting there: From Central Bank (facing onto Dame Street), turn right

and start walking away from Trinity College. Turn left at George's Street. Hogan's will be five minutes walk away on your left, at the corner of George's Street and Fade Street.

Kehoe's

9, South Anne Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 016778312

From the outside, this pub – despite its eye-catching green and red paint-job – may not look like much. However, if you're passing on a Friday evening, the sizable after-work crowd should be a good clue that the place is a bit special. More than any of the plastic paddy-whackery pubs in Dublin 2, Kehoe's offers the truly authentic traditional pub experience.

The owners haven't gone in for all that modernisation malarkey, meaning that the downstairs Victorian-era decor still has a timeless charm without putting up any tacky memorabilia. The upstairs lounge, meanwhile, has the feel of a grandparent's living room, enhanced by the old-school wallpaper and equally elderly piano. Some of the best pints in the city are poured by staff who know what they're doing and, time permitting, are chatty enough when they get

going. Kehoe's often gets packed with early drinkers fleeing work from around 16:30, so come early if you want to claim a prime spot (or a seat) on weeknights. Weekends, while plenty busy, are a bit less frantic, although the place still seems to fill up disproportionately on Sunday evenings for some reason. If you can grab it, of course, a sneaky drink in the snug (to the left as you walk in the entrance) is ideal at any time.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week from 12:00 to 00:30.
Getting there: Walking down Grafton Street (away from Stephen's Green), South Anne Street will be on your right. Kehoe's is two minutes walk down the street on your left.



Sheehan's

17, Chatham Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016771914

Plenty of people have passed by Sheehan's on Chatham Street, a welcoming but unassuming pub, without bothering to take a look inside - more fool them. Sheehan's is a perfect pub if you're looking for a laid-back 'local boozer' atmosphere in the city centre, while the crowd of regulars is everything you could wish for: close-knit but welcoming of

strangers. The decor - classic Victorian style wood furnishings and panellings behind the bar - adds to the genial, easygoing atmosphere. The unpretentious food menu plays its part too: after all, good-quality pub grub at reasonable prices is always a winner. Go for the stews if you fancy a hearty, flavourful meal, or the Cajun chicken salad if you're more in the mood for a light bite. The much-loved landlord, Dermot (Jeremiah) Sheehan, passed away late last year,

but the place has still a happy-go-lucky attitude much in evidence. Of course, if you particularly enjoy the easy-going laughs at this place, you should make your way here on Tuesday nights: the Comedy Dublin crew take to the mike here from 20:00, with tickets costing €8 or €6 with a flyer. A special pre-show meal deal, moreover, gives you a great dinner and access to the gig for €15.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 11:00 (12:00 Sunday) to 23:30 (00:30 Friday and Saturday, 23:00 Sunday).

Getting there: From the Stephen's Green end of Grafton Street (facing away from the Green) walk down the street and take a left at Chatham Street. Sheehan's will be a minute's walk down Chatham Street on your right.



The Ormond Wine Bar

6, Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin 1
Tel: 018749778

The wine bar may be an endangered species now that Dubliners are dropping their pretensions in droves and swilling Guinness like never before, but nobody told the people behind the city's newest place for grape juice. In truth, we're pretty glad. Once you get beyond an ordinary-looking entranceway, the Ormond Wine bar is jaw-dropping: a massive-

ly airy space with rustic brickwork feature walls contrasting against cool whites. Coupled with the classic furnishings and bar, the design makes this place worth going just for a gawk. Gawkers will also appreciate the occasional art exhibition that the Ormond features too, though there's more to here than nice visuals. The wine list plumps for quality rather than sheer breadth: though a selection of 37 wines should be enough for most palates, the manag-

ers have selected a cross-section of top bottles from all the major regions rather than bombarding people with choice. There's value and variety too - wines go from €9.50 a bottle and €3 a glass right up to €110 - while the food menu is a pleasant surprise. Changing regularly enough to be interesting, it features everything from spicy little lamb meatballs (€4.50) to a full-blown rib-eye at €18.50. There may be life in the old 'wine bar' formula yet.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 09:00 to 00:00.

Getting there: From O'Connell Bridge (facing towards O'Connell Street) turn left and start walking down the quays, passing Capel Street. After about 10 minutes, you'll reach Upper Ormond Quay, and the Ormond Wine bar will be on your right.



Whelan's

25, Wexford Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 014780766

It seems like this place has been a haven for indie-kids since our grand-parents were indie-kids (or whatever the equivalent was back then). In actual fact, Whelan's only celebrated its 20-year anniversary last year. For most of that time, it's been the homely pub and live music venue of choice on the Wexford/Camden Street Strip, but it's recently faced competition for that title from flashier upstart The Village and the distinctly homelier Anseo. Perversely, that challenge has improved the place, which has moved decisively away from a comfortable booking policy focused on Frames wanabees and four-chord chancers. Varied local Irish talent and international stars now rub shoulders on both the main stage and in the intriguing 'Whelan's upstairs', which tends to focus on the former. They've recently touched-up the bar, although it still remains a dark and cozy place to visit before a show, and very popular with students – ditto the nightclub on Friday and Saturday, which is a sexually charged twenties-omething's paradise. As for the music, anywhere that you can see Damien Dempsey, Alphastates and an up-and-coming outfit calling themselves The Lambrettas in the same month is ok by us.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week from 10:30 to 02:30 (01:00 Sunday).

Getting there: From The Harcourt Street end of Stephen's Green (facing up Harcourt Street), turn right and walk up Cuffe Street. Turn left onto Wexford Street at the first junction. Whelan's is two minutes walk away, on the right hand side of the street.



DINNER



101 Talbot

100-102 Talbot Street - Dublin 1
Tel: 018745011

101 Talbot may not have the most imaginative name in the business, but you can't accuse it of false advertising: in fact, there's very little about this unpretentious restaurant that isn't comfortingly honest. Co-owner and head chef Neal Magee has focused on a simple formula – top-drawer food mixing Mediterranean and African themes at reasonable prices. Main courses start at €16.50, and an excellent set dinner deal offers the most popular starters and main courses with tea or coffee for only €21.95. It shouldn't be surprising, then, that this place has long been popular with the pre-theatre crowd, and the dining room hums with activity anytime we visit. Time permitting, this casual-but-lively place is ideal for first dates over a bottle from the restaurant's varied wine list.

Opening hours: Open Tuesday to Saturday, from 17:00 to 23:00.
Getting there: From the Dublin Spire on O'Connell Street (facing north), turn right onto North Earl Street. Keep walking for about five minutes, crossing Malborough Street onto Talbot Street, and the restaurant should be on your right.



Eden

Meeting House Square – Dublin 2
Tel: 016705372

Even if this restaurant didn't offer some great continental and Irish bistro cuisine, Eden would merit a mention for its excellent setting looking onto probably the nicest civic square in the city. While a table by Meeting House Square is a must on warm days or evenings, it's worth visiting here even when it's a bit nippy, and not just because the interior dining room itself is so bright and airy: the menu has some devilishly indulgent dishes too. Though it does change regularly with the seasons, it's worth keeping an eye out for certain dishes in particular. To kick off a meal, the organic gravadlax is hard to beat (although the pork belly does make it a close run thing), while the pan-fried fillet of venison (€26) and mallard breast (€27.50) are both excellent choices as mains. A pre-theatre menu, with two courses for €25 and three for €29, puts this firmly in affordable territory too. We've yet to hear anything negative about the service – anytime we visit, the waiters are capable and charming – and the atmosphere is still lively.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch and brunch served from 12:30 (12:00 Saturday and Sunday) to 15:00, dinner from 16:00 to 22:30 (22:00 Sunday to Tuesday). Getting there: From the Central bank (facing onto Dame Street), turn right and walk down the street until you see Sycamore Street on your right. Turn right and the front entrance of Eden should be five minutes walk down Sycamore Street on your right.



Chapter One

18-19, Parnell Square - Dublin 1

Chapter One has been, in the words of co-owner and manager Martin Corbett, "a fifteen year overnight success." Since setting up in the 1990s beneath the Dublin Writer's Museum, Corbett and his partner Ross Lewis have turned a Georgian basement on Parnell Square into a little beacon of culinary excellence, dispensing great Irish and continental food at prices that don't cause (too much) strain on the wallet. First the braver society ladies came, reportedly hiding their expensive accessories in Dunnes carrier bags, and the place soon started to fill up as the reputation of the area improved.

Corbett is still every inch the welcoming host, but it's Ross Lewis' creations that you'll find yourself waxing lyrical over: the menu changes constantly to ensure ingredients are fresh and in season. If it's on offer, of course, make sure to try the Conemara mountain lamb. As if great food in a warm, pleasant setting wasn't enough, they'll even pick up your tickets mid-meal if you're heading to the Gate Theatre after dinner. Despite the downturn, this place is often booked out for months in advance, so make your reservation early.

Opening hours: Closed Sunday and Monday. Lunch from 12:30 to 14:00, Tuesday to Friday. Pre-theatre dinner from 18:00 to 19:00, Dinner from 19:30 to 22:30.

Getting there: From the Spire, walk to the northern end of O'Connell Street, crossing Parnell Street onto Parnell Square East. Walk up Parnell Square East, turning left onto Parnell Square North. The Dublin Writer's Museum will be on your right, and Chapter One is below the museum.



Green Nineteen

19, Camden Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 014789626

Green Nineteen is a pretty new kid on the block, having only opened its doors in October 2008. It's got a simple proposition to suit the times we're in too: breakfast dishes for a fiver, lunch for €8 or less, and dinner for €10. "The recession had nothing to do with this approach," says owner Steve Murray. "We just wanted to create somewhere where

we could go and have a fresh home-cooked meal and it would be value for money." The food itself, a mix of well-made Irish staples with the odd international dish thrown in, is well worth travelling up to Camden Street for too. In particular, the portobello mushroom, pinchos, and corned beef have been attracting rave reviews. Aside from money-conscious locals, the restaurant has been able to draw

a fair crowd of families and discerning gig-goers – in fact, the arrival of good food on the Camden/Wexford Street strip has made going to concerts an infinitely more enjoyable experience. For a reasonably priced treat, you should check out the drinks menu: beers are all €4 or €5, while a variety of cocktails are available at €9 a pop (we like 'business time', but there's something for every palate here). Add an impressive collection of paintings for patrons to

peruse during dinner, and you've a combination that's bound to appeal.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 11:00 (12:00 Sunday) to 23:00 (18:00 Sunday). Getting there: From the Harcourt Street end of Stephen's Green, walk down Cufe Street away from the Green. Turn left at Wexford Street, and Green Nineteen should be five minutes down the street on your left.



Gotham Café

8, South Anne Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016795266

Several things – including constant foot traffic, trendy patrons and Rolling Stone covers adorning the walls – help give this place an authentic New York vibe. The key ingredient, though, is simple: the food. An extensive pizza menu pays homage to the big apple's famous neighbourhoods (the Bronx is ideal for pepperoni-lovers in search of

something new, while the Midtown is a flavourful veggie-friendly offering). Meanwhile, the other main courses and salads are loaded with some of the great city's rich flavours. A trip to this restaurant is fun at any time, but Gotham really comes into its own over a gossipy lunch with co-workers or a more leisurely Sunday brunch, where you can sample French toast or a breakfast pizza in classy surroundings. Adventurous brunch-eaters simply have to try the

huevos rancheros, fried eggs with cheese, guacamole and salsa on a tortilla – it's new to most Irish taste buds, but you'll be pleasantly surprised. Staff are friendly, and tend to move you through your meal quickly enough. This is understandable, of course, as word of Gotham has spread fast, meaning that the place is typically packed. Book in advance if at all possible.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Breakfast served from 10:30 (11:30 Sunday) and lunch from 12:00 (not served on Sunday). Evening menu served from 17:00 (16:30 Sunday) to 23:00 (00:00 Saturday and Sunday). Getting there: Walking down Grafton Street (away from Stephen's Green), turn right onto South Anne Street. Gotham is on the left, half-way down the street.



L'Gueuleton

5, Fade Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 016753708

It might be based just off the George's Street restaurant strip, but L'Gueuleton still draws an impressively-sized (and dressed) crowd to sit in the rustic French-style dining room – the odd rickety chair or table adds to the charm. The food also fits the ambience, featuring all the hearty fare you'd expect at a traditional French bistro, from the venison stew to the obligatory Toulouse sausages, and Irish upper-range staples such as the slow roasted pork belly. While these are excellently done, we like some of the dishes you'll rarely find in Dublin, such as the civet of wild Irish hare or the grilled hake with chorizo. Desserts are also a mix of Irish and French classics, with the white chocolate mousse particularly worthwhile. High-end food coupled with very reasonable prices (the aforementioned hake costs a manageable €22.50 even at dinner) tends to ensure a restaurant stays busy, and L'Gueuleton is no exception – the battle to get a seat is made fiercer by the restaurant's no-reservations policy. Of course, any annoyance at this little anachronism is quickly dispelled by the satisfaction once you actually sit down, and the sheer buzz of the dining room.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served 12:30 (13:00 Sunday) to 15:00, dinner from 18:00 to 22:00 (21:00 Sunday).

Getting there: From Central Bank (facing onto Dame Street), turn right and start walking away from Trinity College. Turn left at George's Street, and walk up until you reach Fade Street. Turn left onto Fade Street, and L'Gueuleton will be on your right.



L'Ecrivain

109a, Lower Baggot Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016611919

For years, going to L'Ecrivain was like driving a spiffy sports car: by the time you had enough money to do it, you'd be a bit too old to look cool enjoying the experience. However, Michelin-starred chef Derry Clarke (who's reached celebrity status with rather less grumpiness and fuss than neighbour Kevin Thornton) has started to pull in the cash-strapped lunchtime crowd by introducing a fixed price lunchtime menu, charging €35 for two courses and €45 for three. It's a great way to introduce yourself to Clarke's signature style: simple but seasonal and high-quality ingredients combined in inventive ways and finished with frequently dazzling presentation. If this impresses you, it's worth saving up to make an evening visit for a rare experience: dropping €200 or more on a meal for two and knowing it was worth every penny. The quality of the cooking is superlative, little mid-dinner treats are a welcome surprise, the dining room is airy but welcoming, and the service – friendly, polite, and highly efficient – completes the perfect meal. If you simply can't choose between Clarke's various creations, try the tasting menu on offer between 19:00 and 20:30, which gives samples of a range of dishes for €120 a head.

Opening hours: Open from Monday to Saturday. Lunch from 12:30 to 14:00 (excluding Saturday), dinner from 18:30 to 22:30.

Getting there: From the Merrion Row end of Stephen's Green, walk down Merrion Row towards the canal. You will pass onto Lower Baggot Street. After roughly ten minutes, L'Ecrivain will be on your right.



Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud

21, Upper Merrion Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016764192

With two Michelin stars to its name, and an elegant neighbour in the Merrion Hotel, Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud cultivates certain expectations from patrons as they walk through the door. Happily, it doesn't disappoint. The high-ceilinged dining room has a cool, crisp feel, with blinding white the dominant colour. The staff are as you'd expect also:

faultlessly polite, well-nigh unflappable and knowledgeable when it comes to the menu. That menu itself, of course, is the key piece in the puzzle, a mix of inventive and classic French cuisine with a distinctly decadent streak. Particularly noteworthy dishes include the vegetarian-friendly Basque pepper terrine, and the Anagassin blue lobster with green apple and lime jus – rarely does a dish costing €80 leave you feeling you got your money's worth. For a

little more indulgence on the desert front, try the variations of Valrona chocolate desserts: none are too hefty by themselves but, taken together, they make up a veritable symphony of sweet tastes. Save up for a visit to Guilbaud's this year – it's a must-have feasting experience.

Opening hours: Open Tuesday to Saturday. Lunch served from 12:30 to 14:14, dinner from 19:30 to 22:15.

Getting there: From the Molly Malone statue (facing towards Grafton Street), turn left and walk down Nassau Street towards Merrion Square. Turn right at Merrion Square onto Upper Merrion Street. Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud is two thirds of the way up the street on your left, opposite Government buildings.



Pacino's

18, Suffolk Street – Dublin 2

It seems odd to apply the term 'hidden gem' to a restaurant and venue that's been on the go since 1994 in the shadow of Grafton Street, but people who have walked by Pacino's for several years may not even know what an enjoyable restaurant lies inside. For starters, the large dining room has been filled with light – and an easy-going atmosphere – since a renovation that finished in 2008.

Though it still fills up quickly in the evenings, the space is now airy and expansive. The renovation has also seen the restaurant's basement transformed into a cellar bar and venue that is free to hire for private parties. When patrons are finished enjoying themselves downstairs, they can head upstairs at 22:30, mingling at the Rock/Roll club room has been filled with light – and every Friday or the hot Salsa club on Saturday nights. Even though they've added these late

night clubs, it's clear that the staff at Pacino's haven't taken their eyes off the food either. The breakfast menu still has a mix of light crepes and hearty Irish fare, while lunch and evening features Italian classics. The classic and gourmet pizzas – and the delicious Carbonara – are all cooked to perfection. If you're watching the pennies, meanwhile, you can order from the recession-biting menu, which offers two courses for €12.95 all evening from Sunday to Wednesday.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 07:30 (09:00 Saturday, 10:00 Sunday) to 23:00 (22:00 Monday). Late club Friday and Saturday from 23:00.

Getting there: From the Molly Malone statue, simply take a right turn onto Suffolk Street. You'll see Pacinos on your left.



Pichet

14-15, Trinity Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 016771060

Literally feet away from the endless bustle of Temple Bar and five minutes walk from Grafton Street, this bold attempt to put a modern spin on the classic bistro formula is already winning many converts. The interior of the restaurant and coffee shop is positively breezy – we love the bold touch of bright blue chairs against the paler colours everywhere

else – while the heated outdoor terrace is very pleasant to sit in too. The food itself is mightily creative: the simple discovery of a crispy hen's egg with serano ham and veal Bolognese on the starters section of the menu (the latter is available as a main course too) should be a good sign that you've found a special little place. The mains are impressive too, particularly the suckling pig and a slow braised lamb shoulder so tender that you'll barely need a knife to

enjoy it. With such quality on offer, they'd get away with charging a lot more than they do – the suckling pig and lamb for example, are only €20 each. The wine list is nice and concise, with many good quality bottles, and you can buy any wine that you enjoy to take home from Pichet's wine shop. A café with some delicious sweet treats prepared on site is another welcome part of the mix.

Opening hours. Open seven days a week, from 08:00 (10:00 Saturday, 12:00 Sunday) to 22:30 (23:00 Saturday, 21:00 Sunday).
Getting there: From the Central Bank (facing onto Dame Street) turn left and then right to cross the road onto Trinity Street. Go up Trinity Street and you should see Pichet on your right.



Saba

26, Clarendon Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016792000

There's no use mincing words – Dublin's most popular Thai and Vietnamese eatery rocks. Saba has deservedly nabbed several awards remains the very cool and modern restaurant-cum-cocktail bar. The menu has treats for adventurers and more conservative tastes alike, from black pepper squid to tempura vegetables, and it's well worth tasting the Bangkok noodles or hake in banana leaves. Staff are capable and professional – not excessively friendly, but always polite – and will get you

through your meal at a fair pace. If you fancy lingering, though, the cocktail bar up front has won a few awards of its own, and the sake mojito is a great twist on a Dublin staple. Prices are very fair for top-class food, with mains starting at €10.95, and fixed price menus (you can now get a three course dinner for €25 - vive la recession!) help food-lovers on a budget. Saba buzzes with people on most nights, meaning it's best to book a good week or two in

advance. Once you get a table, it's easy to see why.
Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served from 12:00 to 18:00, dinner from 18:00 to 22:30.
Getting there: From Stephen's Green, walk down King Street (on the north side of the shopping centre) and turn right at Clarendon Street. Walk for three minutes, crossing Chatham Row, and Saba will be on your right.

advance. Once you get a table, it's easy to see why.
Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served from 12:00 to 18:00, dinner from 18:00 to 22:30.
Getting there: From Stephen's Green, walk down King Street (on the north side of the shopping centre) and turn right at Clarendon Street. Walk for three minutes, crossing Chatham Row, and Saba will be on your right.



Shanahan's on the Green

119, Stephen's Green – Dublin 2
Tel: 014070939

For several years now, Shanahan's has been shaped by the vision of its determined proprietor – who clearly felt that an upscale, American style steakhouse in a beautifully restored Georgian building was worth persisting with, whatever the Dublin foodie set thought. After a decade or so of faffing about with haute cuisine, it seems that many Dubliners have

come around to agree. Steak may be a long-standing favourite on this island, but the atmosphere here owes more to Wall Street eateries than it does to the Irish restaurant tradition. The Americana hits you once you enter the downstairs bar – officially named 'the oval office', it features historical curios, including JFK's rocking chair from Air Force One, plush furniture and snappy service. That's continued in the restaurant, where waiters have that elusive blend of

competence and personality, as does the food. As a starter, try the Oysters Rockefeller – a marriage of molluscs, bacon and spinach with hollandaise – to get into the Yankee spirit. And if you're not getting a steak as a main course (they range from the eight ounce 'petit filet' right up to the 24 ounce Shanahan Steak) then you're just being difficult. As you've probably guessed, the wine list is packed with some great bottles – including, of course, the best from California.

Opening hours: Open Monday to Saturday from 17.30 (18:00 Friday and Saturday) to 22:00. Lunch served on Friday from 12:30 to 14:00.

Getting there: From the Grafton Street end of Stephen's Green, walk up the west side of the Green (Stephen's Green shopping centre should be on your right). Shanahan's should be five minutes walk away on your right.



Siam Thai

14/15, Saint Andrew Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 016773363

Since opening its doors in April 2003, this authentic Thai restaurant has been a revelation. Siam Thai's décor – vibrant, colourful and luxurious – gives diners a hint that the people at this place take their food very seriously, while somewhat masking an atmosphere that's decidedly unpretentious and prices that won't add a sour note to the meal. The staff are very much on top of things too and, even if you're stuck waiting for a table, Siam Thai's wine bar is an excellent aperitif spot, with all cocktails weighing in at €10 – try an x-rated cosmopolitan if time permits. The food, of course is also worth a wait. We're particular fans of their tum yam soup on the starters front, while the garlic and pepper dishes, available with prawns, beef or chicken, are just a highlight of an impressive mains selection. Vegetarians are also blessed with plenty of choice here, thanks to Thailand's Buddhist religious (and culinary) tradition, and their ginger vegetables and cashew nuts dish is a riot of flavour. Finally, unlike all too many Asian establishments, their desert selection is excellent.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served from 12:00 to 14:30, dinner from 17.15 to 23:00 (22:30 Monday-Wednesday).

Getting there: From the Molly Malone statue (facing towards Grafton Street) turn right and start walking down Suffolk Street. Turn left at the fork in the road, bringing you on to Saint Andrew Street. Siam Thai will be on your right.



The Exchequer

3-5, Exchequer Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016706787

Recently re-opened under new management, The Exchequer is already making serious waves. It's easy to see why: a renovation to prepare the venerable old bar as a hip gastropub has breathed new life into the space, filling it with interesting features and brightening it up immeasurably. Moreover, while many gastropubs are difficult to navigate, with drinkers constantly getting in the way of diners, a short corridor separates The Exchequer's

main bar from the eating area, meaning you can enjoy a meal in peace. And enjoy it you will. The Exchequer boasts an ambitious menu prepared by head chef Lee Doyle, formerly of Cooke's Restaurant. "Our emphasis is on Irish quality produce – trying to use Irish producers and support our own," explains Peter Rock, one of the pair behind the revamped Exchequer. Hearty but inventive dishes, including chicken stuffed with black pudding and wrapped in bacon, are available at prices to suit the moment, while the venison pie and jelly and ice

cream are also well worth a try. "The whole idea, even with the pricing of our menu, was to attract people, be it young, old or in the middle," notes Ian Tucker, Rock's partner in the project. The Exchequer has also invested behind the bar, poaching top cocktail man Darren Geraghty to create a menu with signature drinks and top-class spirits. All cocktails are also available for a handy €9 with the 'loop the loop' (any child of the 80s will have an idea how it tastes) a particular treat.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 12:00 (11:00 Sunday) to 23:30 (02:30 Friday and Saturday, 01:00 Sunday).
Getting there: From the bottom of Grafton Street (facing towards Stephen's Green) turn right onto Wicklow Street. Keep following the street as it winds - and becomes Exchequer Street - for roughly eight minutes. You should see The Exchequer on your right.



The Pig's Ear

4, Nassau Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016703865

Opened where Jacob's Ladder used to stand, this welcoming bistro has a nice, simple layout, with pale cream walls contrasting against darker, rustic-but-comfortable wood furnishings. If the dining room screams simplicity, you'll find considerable flair in the food. Head chef Stephen McAllister (of One Pico, The Restaurant and The Afternoon Show fame)

has picked up a thing or two working around the city's top eateries, and has put together a menu that mixes Irish favourites with creative international dishes. Between the sheer inventiveness of a Boston crab and chorizo salad, or classy old-school items like the Jane Russel's Beef & Guinness Sausage cooked to perfection, most people will see something to whet their appetite on the rotating menu – if it's being served, try the lamb shepherds pie for a glimpse

of how truly great simple food can be, and make sure to leave room for the vanilla cheesecake. Add a solid drinks selection, a great location, and a wonderful view over Nassau Street into Trinity College, and you have a very special little restaurant. If you're looking for somewhere handy but slightly out of the way for a private party, The Pig's Ear takes bookings for groups ranging from 30 to 50 people.

Opening hours: Open Monday to Saturday. Breakfast served from 09:00 to 12:00, lunch from 12:00 to 15:00, and dinner from 17:30 to 22:00.
Getting there: From the Molly Malone statue, walk down Nassau Street towards Merrion Square. After about eight minutes, you should see The Pig's Ear on your right.



The Unicorn Restaurant

12b, Merrion Court, Merrion Row - Dublin 2

The Unicorn makes certain demands of its clientele: the dress code, we've learned, is informal-but-smart, and mobile phones are very much frowned upon unless they're on silent mode. Of course, it gives a lot back, and not just freedom from slovenly-attired investment whizz-kids braying into their blackberries. The menu is rich in traditional Italian staples, from the veal cutlet on the bone to the delicious Milanese escalope, cooked with considerable skill. Moreover, the atmosphere is excellent, with a buzzing dining room and a piano bar. As an extra little twist, they even offer a tableside magician – the talented Brendan Byrne does his thing on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The team at this Dublin institution are always adding something new – the Unicorn Food Store around the corner, for example, is a successful recent innovation – so, while the food is certainly enough to warrant a visit, it's certainly not the only thing that The Unicorn has going for it.

Opening Hours: Open Monday to Saturday. Lunch served from 12:30 to 16:30, dinner from 18:00 to 23:00 (23:30 Friday and Saturday). Antipasto bar serves from 12:30 to 15:00.

Getting there: From the Grafton Street end of Stephen's Green (facing away from Grafton Street), turn left and walk across the north side of the Green towards Merrion Row. Continue down Merrion Row and you'll see The Unicorn's food store on your right. The restaurant is in the laneway around the corner.



Thornton's

128, Stephen's Green – Dublin 2
Tel: 014787008

The self-styled "great philosopher of Irish food" (those words come directly from Thornton's website) may be just as well-known for his curmudgeonly public personality as he is for his culinary skill – order chips here at your peril – but the latter isn't something you should discount. The first Irishman to win two Michelin stars spends more time in

the kitchen than he does raving at impertinent guests, and the regular serving staff at Thornton's have considerable grace and élan. It's easy to be upbeat, we're guessing, when the kitchen is producing excellent fare, a mix of traditional Irish dishes with some continental flair thrown in. The menu may change with the seasons, but Kevin Thornton's twists on traditional Irish meats – hare, venison and fowl make appearances – are reliably delicious. Prices for this es-

tablishment used to be off the scale, but reality has set in – aside from the a la carte and indulgent tasting menu (with an eight-course surprise available for €125), lunchtime and pre-theatre menus let diners sample Thornton's most popular creations for a more manageable €49 a head. Still cheaper is the canapé menu served at lunchtime, allowing anyone stuck for time to enjoy smaller bites for €38.

Opening hours: Open Tuesday to Saturday. Lunch served from 12:30 to 13:45, Thursday through Saturday, dinner from 19:00 to 21:30. Canapé lounge open from 18:00 to 00:00, and from 12:00 to 14:00 Thursday to Saturday.

Getting there: From the Grafton Street end of Stephens Green, head towards Harcourt Street. Thornton's will be on your right.



Town Bar & Grill

21, Kildare Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 01662 4800

It's tempting to pre-judge a restaurant that has a manifesto - Town's, in case you're curious, is to "use only the best, the freshest, and most inspiring Italian and local produce as possible". It's a worthy one, and this New York style Italian restaurant has a knack for winning people over. Set in the old cellars of Mitchell's Wine Merchants on Kildare Street, Town has a wonder-

fully intimate but lively atmosphere for a 100-seater dining room, and there's still a fair turnout of diners even on weeknights. Despite financial issues with the group's satellite restaurants that threatened the health of this flagship eatery, it's clearly still going strong. That's due primarily to the fact that Town still has an exceptional menu: try the hearty rib-eye or the monkish fillet for a real treat, or the Sunday lunch deal (with three courses available at €24.95) if you're counting

the pennies. Of course, you might want to head down later on that day, as the addition of live music (talented Jazz pianist Max Greenwood makes it up every Sunday evening) makes for a wonderful evening, regardless of how you feel about their manifesto.

Opening Hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served from 12:30 to 15:00 (17:30 Friday to Sunday), dinner from 17:30 to 23:00 (22:00 Sunday).

From the Molly Malone statue (facing Grafton street), turn left and cross the road onto Nassau Street, walking towards Merrion Square. Turn right at Kildare Street. Town Bar & Grill will be on your right, about two thirds of the way up the street.



Venu Brasserie

21, Anne's Lane - Dublin 2
Tel: 016706755
Website: www.venu.ie

Venu was hotly tipped on its 2006 opening to be Dublin's next big thing and, unlike many such places, hasn't proved the tipsters wrong. Below the pale, clean and ultra-luxurious décor of the entranceway lies an atmospheric cocktail bar and restaurant with unobtrusive music, and tables spaced far apart enough for the most indiscrete conversations. More to the point, the restaurant has a nifty little menu - the Bombay spiced chicken breast is particularly enjoyable, as is the rack of Wicklow lamb. It's the extensive cocktail menu, however, that makes Venu a 'simply must visit' establishment: top class spirits, mixed by bar staff who know the difference between a sidecar and a martini with brandy in, are a winner in any setting. They're also mercifully understanding of customers who need time to pick their drinks and capable of pulling together virtually any tittle on request. "We take pride in mixing the best spirits and using only the best ingredients," explains owner Charles Guilbaud. "The guys can make nearly anything." Unsurprisingly, the bar has snagged several awards, including the LVA and Hospitality Ireland's 2008 'cocktail bar of the year' gong. Coupled with some excellent coffee - in fact, Venu's Fixx coffee was the gold winner at the Great Taste Awards 2009 - the drinks make this place well worth sticking around in after an enjoyable meal.

Opening hours: Dinner from 18:00, Tuesday to Saturday. Brunch from 12:00 on Saturday. Last food orders at 23:00

Getting there: From Grafton Street (walking from Stephen's Green towards the Molly Malone Statue) take the first right turn at South Anne Street. Anne's Lane is the first right turn off South Anne Street and Venu is just on your left.



AFTER DINNER



Odessa

13, Dame Court - Dublin 2
Tel: 016704195

Having opened its doors back in 1994, this stylish spot remains as enticing to the elite as ever. Perhaps that's due to the plush members club upstairs, but it's also because Odessa has an amazing brunch menu on offer. Even if you're not an early bird, Odessa Restaurant offers some fabulously recession-friendly food options. Their 'fivers' menu is hugely popular with diners, with slightly smaller portions of their favourite starters, mains and desserts for a mere €5 each: finding a dish like Chorizo, red wine and Chickpea stew or salted cod on toasted ciabatta for a fiver is a real bargain. If you feel like loosening the purse-strings, though, main courses start at €13.50, while the cocktail menu is dominated by classics: this place is ideal for a late bite washed down with the French martini or the elderflower and apple Collins (both €11).

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 17:00 (11:00 Saturday and Sunday) to 22:00 (23:00 Saturday).

Getting there: From the bottom of Grafton Street (facing towards Stephen's Green) take a right turn onto Wicklow Street. Keep walking, crossing onto Exchequer Street, and turn right onto Dame Court.



South William

52, South William Street - Dublin 2

Several pubs and clubs have come and gone from this South William Street spot - therefore, when a plush, trendy place calling itself South William opened its doors, not many people expected that it would last. It's still standing after several years, though, and that's definitely a good thing.

It's still got a stylish feel, while cock-

tails and some premium beers offer a different drinking experience to most places, even though they have most of the big brands on tap too. It's worth being adventurous and trying the Irish espresso martini and the bubbly berry martini at the very least. This mix would be enough reason to recommend any bar. However, when it's coupled with some varied and inventive club nights - including everything from nine-hour

funkathons to reggae and tropical beat evenings - and you've got an easy explanation of why South William is still enjoying such success: because it deserves every bit of it.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 12:00 (16:00 Sunday) to 23:30 (02:30 Thursday to Saturday, 01:00 Sunday). Food served from 12:00 (15:00 Sunday) to 22:00.

Getting there: From the bottom

of Grafton Street (facing towards Stephens Green), take a right turn onto Wicklow Street. Five minutes down the street, turn left onto South William Street. South William will be halfway up the street on your left.



The Sycamore Club

9, Sycamore Street, Temple Bar – Dublin 2
Tel: 014743942

Dublin's newest members club and rooftop bar certainly doesn't go in for the classic/stuffy Kildare Street Club style – instead, the décor of this place is strikingly post-modern and stylish, with pale walls and coloured mood lighting across its 4,500 square feet. The series of deceptively comfortable lounges and

gallery space is impressive enough, but we're particularly taken with the top-floor 'open air' bar, featuring an aperture in the roof, heated seats and restored brick feature walls. Membership of the club is limited to the over 25s, and access is through a digital membership fob, but it's worth the hassle of signing up: quite apart from high level of service throughout (naturally, you're pampered once you walk in the door), you can enjoy some very impres-

sive events here every weekend. Thursday's features DJ Aidan Kelly playing classic 45s, including Aretha Franklin, Nicole Willis and other Motown staples with a bit of brassy hip-hop and funk thrown in for variety. On Fridays and Saturdays, DJ Feel Bass takes the decks with a very tech-house influenced style. Finally, Sunday is hosted by the house-music collective Some Like It Deep, focused on bringing fresh sounds to the club every week.

Opening hours: Open Thursday to Sunday, from 18:00 to 02:30.
Getting there: From the Central Bank (facing onto Dame Street) turn right and walk down Dame Street. Turn right at Sycamore Street. The Sycamore Club will be on your left, towards the end of the street.



The Chocolate Bar

Old Harcourt Street Station, Harcourt Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 014763374

Credit where it's due to POK Design. With some soft furnishings, drapes and dramatic lighting, they've managed to transform an old train tunnel in the POD group's extensive Harcourt Street complex into an intimate, cozy little bar while retaining some impressive features. The POD crew have done their bit too, of course, in offering everything the Irish drinker could need in 2010. In addition to the usual selection of beers and spirits, The Chocolate Bar serves five very popular bespoke cocktails, a solid selection of wines (you can buy from the bottle, which is nice), and hot drinks – including a signature hot chocolate designed by Michelin Star Chef Dylan McGrath.

Music is played from 20:00 but, rather than sticking to the proven formula of hosting concerts, The Chocolate Bar promises a place where you can actually hear yourself think. Aside from the refreshingly unobtrusive tunes, reservations are accepted for tables, and complimentary WIFI helps facilitate catch ups, meetings, make-ups and break-ups. All in all, this place is a handy and pretty stylish pre-show meet up area if you're headed to a gig in one of the Pod group's venues or further south in the Wicklow Street area.

Opening hours: Open Tuesday through Saturday from 16:30 to 23:30 (00:30 Friday and Saturday).

Getting there: From the Harcourt Street end of Stephen's Green, head up Harcourt Street. After roughly ten minutes walking up the street, you should see Harcourt Street Station on your left.



The Octagon Bar

The Clarence Hotel, Wellington Quay · Dublin 2
Tel: 014070800

The Octagon Bar at The Clarence has long elegantly defied late-naughties brashness and the plethora of new bars that sling out second-rate mojitos like Big Macs – don't bet against it continuing to do so for years to come. The first thing you need to realise is that cocktails here take time, as the staff under award-winning head barman Szabi Sandor are nothing if not thorough. It shows on the first sip: well-known cocktails such as the Daiquiri, Mojito and Margarita are perfectly prepared, while the bar's original creations (particularly the Russian Passion, a worthy winner at the 2009 National Cocktail Championships) are a delight. The occasional seasonal cocktail (the 'mistletoe' made an appearance at Christmas) also adds a bit of welcome variety. The wood panelling and very attentive service makes the bar feel warm and friendly, while prices hover around the slightly-expensive-but-well-worth-it €10-€12 mark - at least until you reach the champagne cocktails. If you're happy to pay for some bubbly in your drink, try the Clarence classic (€15), champagne with the added flavour of midori and a cherry-infused sugar cube. Yummy.

Opening hours: Open Tuesday to Saturday, from 17:00 until 23:30 (00:30 Friday and Saturday).

Getting there: From O'Connell Bridge (facing South), cross the river and turn right onto Aston Quay. After roughly ten minutes walking (during which you'll pass onto Wellington Quay), The Clarence Hotel should be on your left. The Octagon Bar is inside The Clarence Hotel.



'The Secret Bar'

3, Fade Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 016480010

For a crowd that strangely neglected the biggest pleasure of owning a bar – naming it – the proprietors of this Fade Street boozier haven't done a bad job of creating a very chic little drinking hole. You'll recognise the place variously known as the 'no name bar' or 'the slug place' by the rough wooden carving of a snail above the door, though the

initial rough-and-ready appearance is deceptive. After clambering up the stairs of what feels like a barely converted residential apartment, you'll enter a bright and airy space that's jammed with people most evenings. The cocktails from the bar are great, the couches are comfortable, and the barely-less-packed beer garden has a nice vibe too. People may be looking around to see who's looking at them, but that's the price of drinking somewhere trendy. In short, it's

like the college house party you always wanted to throw or gatecrash, even if the crowd is more suity than studenty. For a change to the cocktails or pints after work formula, nip down here on Saturday or Sunday afternoons to enjoy an indulgent brunch.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 16:00 (13:00 Saturday and Sunday) to 23:30 (01:00 Thursday and Sunday, 02:00 Friday and

Saturday).

Getting there: From the Central Bank (facing onto Dame Street) turn right and start walking away from Trinity College. Take a left turn onto George's Street and, five minutes walk up the street, turn left onto Fade Street. You should see the bar on your right, recognisable from a carved snail above the door.



Ukiyo

7-9, Exchequer Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016334071

A Japanese restaurant with a name that roughly translates as 'pictures of the floating world' conjures up a few images, most of them less-than-pleasant: discomfort, a stuffy atmosphere and prices to make you wince. However, Ukiyo blows these expectations out of the water by being a fun, welcoming little shrine to the best of Japanese nightlife: sushi,

a late night bar, and the obligatory karaoke. Diners that aren't too fond of raw fish will find a few dishes to suit (Bul Go Gi, delicious pan-fried striploin with mixed vegetables, will cost €15.50) but you'll have a better night if you throw yourself in head-first, choosing from the Nigiri sushi menu and sampling the Sake or the original cocktails. After all, where else in Dublin can you enjoy sushi of this quality, drinks like the cucumber sake martini and the Tokyo tea?

When you're finished your dinner, you can linger over drinks at the bar or, if you're with a rowdier crowd, nab a private karaoke booth at €25 an hour. The well-sound-proofed booths fill up fast, though, so you'll need to book in advance, particularly if you want to enjoy the half-price Karaoke offer from 17:00 to 19:00.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 12:00 to late. Main menu served all day. Karaoke runs until 02:30.

Getting there: From the lower end of Grafton Street (facing towards Stephen's Green), turn right onto Wicklow Street. Keep walking for roughly ten minutes, passing onto Exchequer Street. Ukiyo will be on your right, on the corner of Exchequer Street and Dame Court.

The Bernard Shaw

11-12, South Richmond Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 0857128342

From the outside, this place looks like a cross between a literary pub and a bad acid trip – skilful graffiti on the hoardings nearby contrasts with an old-school sign that wouldn't look out of place above Dublin's oldest establishments. In fact, the Bernard Shaw has been on the go for about 113 years, and has seen Sunday strip clubs, redoubtable landlady, and many a bar fight – sometimes all three at the same time. The current owners, Bodytonic Music, are lovers rather than fighters, and have preserved the pub in a state of shabby charm while adding to its attractions. You'll find 2 bars, 3 rooms and a nifty beer garden out the back with a pool table. Anyone passing by on their way to work can get a cup of powerfully strong coffee from 07:30 too. However, The Bernard Shaw is first and foremost a music pub. Bands or DJs play most nights of the week, while a handy little gallery gives a space for up-and-coming artists – the entire anthology of that notorious, short-lived and brilliantly obscene magazine, The Slate, was proudly displayed here not too long ago. As you've probably guessed, the combination attracts the studenty sneaker-chic set in droves. A pitcher of Buckfast costs a mere €12 on Wednesdays and Thursdays, which should tell you all you need to know.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 16:00 to 23:30 (00:00 Friday and Saturday). Getting there: From the Harcourt Street end of Stephen's Green, walk down Cuffe Street away from the Green. Turn left at Wexford Street. The Bernard Shaw is a ten minute walk down the street on your left.

LATE NIGHT



Dandelion

130, Stephen's Green – Dublin 2
Tel: 014760870

Dandelion upends certain prejudices about higher-end, trendy venues. The bright and retro interior should be like Marmite, something everybody either loves or hates, but we've yet to encounter anyone who dislikes it. It's also a blend of restaurant, club and bar – unlike many jack-of-all-trade establishments, it does a solid job in all these roles. The menu at the restaurant is varied, mixing the everyday pub-grub fare with some exotic Asian flavours. Finally, anywhere as generally glitzy and 'Tiger'-ish as Dandelion should attract in turn a significant backlash – strangely, this has yet to really happen. The convenient location ensures a steady stream of visitors to the bar (cheap cocktails probably play their part too) and the place tends to become a young professional's meat market on Fridays and Saturdays.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week. Lunch served from 12:00 to 15:00, dinner until 23:00 Sunday to Thursday (03:00 Friday and Saturday). Getting there: From Stephen's Green Shopping Centre (facing away from Grafton Street) walk up the west side of Stephen's Green. Dandelion should be on your right.



Tripod

Old Harcourt Street Station, Harcourt Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 014763374

Tripod may have only opened its doors in December 2006, but it's already become one of the most important spots on the Dublin nightlife scene. It's easy to see why: Tripod is a state-of-the-art venue, with top notch lighting and sound systems, and has won considerable accolades for the near-perfect sightlines towards the

stage from any point in the main hall. The interior is pure 'industrial chic', there's a swanky bar with a good view of the stage, and the grim-but-cool Crawdaddy is downstairs. Meanwhile, a VIP area is a very nice spot to rest your legs when you've danced your heart out.

Of course, none of Tripod's well-thought-out design features would be worth writing about if the tunes weren't good enough to warrant a visit. Tripod's rise has been fuelled

most of all by a very eclectic booking policy of live acts, and the schedule offers something for everyone - with the exception of cheesy chart music 'lovers': Artists who have played here include everyone from Ladytron, Ani DiFranco, The Dandy Warhols and Cat Power to Carl Cox and Laurent Garnier. In addition to live music, Tripod is a clubbing mecca, with regular resident DJs – house and electro feature heavily on the playlists – and some top international spinners.

Opening Hours: Opening times vary depending on schedule. Check www.2night.ie and www.pod.ie for regular updates.

Getting there: From the Harcourt Street end of Stephen's Green, head up Harcourt Street. After roughly ten minutes walking up the street, you should see Tripod on your left.



Krystle

21-25, Harcourt Street – Dublin 2
Tel: 0863068081

The clientele of this club is a mix of celebs, those who love drinking in their company, and the garden variety uber-cool – in other words, you won't find much crossover with the Copper Face Jack's crowd. In fact, the whole club seems tailored to a somewhat older, more sophisticated set. The décor has shades of Miami Vice (believe it or not, it works) while

the atmosphere is infinitely more laid back than other Harcourt Street establishments. This is probably encouraged by the layout, with many private booths that can be reserved in advance. It's also that bit more spacious, with one huge rectangular bar to greet customers on entrance, and another bar in a fully heated roof garden. A VIP suite is available if you feel like isolating yourself off from even the privileged hoi polloi that make it past Krystle's bouncers,

while they're happy to take bookings for private parties from five to 500 people. As for drinking and dancing, you'll find an extensive cocktail selection – think of classic recipes with a few original creations thrown in – while the music is refreshingly varied. Along with more commercial sounds, you'll hear hip-hop, house, rock and funk, plus the stylings of the club's live percussionists.

Opening hours: Open Thursday to Saturday, from 22:30 to late.
Getting there: From Stephen's Green Shopping Centre (facing away from Grafton Street), walk south along Stephen's Green towards Harcourt Street. Cross onto Harcourt Street, and Krystle (with an underground entrance) will be two minutes walk down the street on your right.



Spy

Powerscourt Townhouse, South William Street - Dublin 2
Tel: 016770014

At first glance, Spy's most obvious asset is a fantastic interior – in fact, it's based in one of Dublin's finest Georgian townhouses, a listed building complete with period features. They've added the trappings of a modern bar and nightclub – plus some intriguing murals – very sensitively, meaning the place is a delight

to wander around when deserted. Of course, you'll rarely find it that way: the crowd tends to be a mix of funky 30-somethings and the kind of college students who prefer cocktail promotions to cans of Bavaria, a set that tends to start partying relatively early. Most people find it a fun crowd but by far the most intriguing part of the mix is the music and club nights. The weekend kicks off early on Thursdays with Soundcheck, featuring fresh slices of indie-pop blast-

ing out of the speakers and regular film screenings with popcorn, plus a free cupcake buffet that's just as fantastic as it sounds. Meanwhile, Friday night's War promises glitter, glamour, and buckets of Corona at €20 a pop, while Saturday night features a mix of pop, indie 80s classics and hip hop. All in all, it's a fun club to visit and packed out with good reason.

Opening hours: Open from Wednesday to Saturday, 16:00 to 03:00.
Getting there: From the lower end of Grafton Street (facing towards Stephen's Green), turn left onto Wicklow Street. Take the second left onto South William Street. Spy will be on your left, a few minutes walk up the street.



The Twisted Pepper

54, Middle Abbey Street – Dublin 1
Tel: 018734038

Many of Dublin's best promoters have tried and failed to make a success of this excellent spot just a stone's throw off O'Connell Street. Roughly a year after officially opening The Twisted Pepper, it looks like BodyTonic Music have finally cracked it with a blend of one-off gigs, DJ sets and more. The regular club nights probably bring most

people out to Abbey Street: Mr Jones takes over every Thursday night, playing a mix of house, electro and gritty urban music, while Mud gives independent promoters a much-needed Friday night slot. The key to the castle, though, is Pogo, BodyTonic's flagship club night, where a mix of regular and international DJs play house, soul, funk, hip-hop and disco every Saturday night. Tickets for the club nights can be pre-booked or bought on the door.

Aside from these regular events, there's lots to check out in the Twisted Pepper's four mini venues, which can hold crowds from 60 to 250 for intimate gigs, screenings or exhibitions. A handy café, complete with pool table, rounds out the mix to make this place an all-round haven for music, art, and all kinds of entertainment.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week from 18:00 to late. Regular clubs run Thursday to Saturday from 23:00. Early concerts run from 19:00. Check www.2night.ie or www.bodytonicmusic.com for regular updates.

Getting there: From O'Connell bridge, head up O'Connell Street, turning left at at Middle Abbey Street. The Twisted Pepper will be on your left.



The Button Factory

Curved Street, Temple Bar - Dublin 2
Tel: 016709202

Since a refurbished Temple Bar Music Centre reopened as The Button Factory two years ago, people have had good reason to renew their relationship with the once-notorious venue. The toilets are no longer ropey, for one, and you won't see drunk 14 year olds outside struggling to either score or hold down their cider. More to the point, you'll

find some hot little events taking place, from such Dublin music scene staples as Mundy et al to exciting non-musical acts such as the Cirque du Cabaret. The sound system has also been upgraded, and a larger balcony offers a much better view of the stage, where bands and DJs can administer a musical fix to 750 people. Some great regular club nights are on offer, including Muzik (a student night every Thursday), electro and indie at Transmission

every Saturday from 21:00 and Sunday's Dancehall Styles, featuring roots reggae and dancehall classics from 23:00 to late into the night. The chance to grab tasty gourmet sandwiches in the daytime café rounds off a very welcome addition to the Temple Bar scene.

Opening hours: Times vary depending on schedule – visit www.2night.ie for regular updates. Late clubs run Thursday to Sunday. Café open Mon-

day to Saturday from 11:00 to 17:00. Getting there: From the Central Bank, walk down Dame Street away from Trinity College. Take a right turn at Temple Lane south, before turning left onto Curved Street. The Button Factory should be visible on your right.



Café En Seine

39, Dawson St - Dublin 2.
Tel: 016774567

Along with the Panini, grating affection and eye-watering mortgage payments, Café en Seine is one of those places that will always be associated with the Celtic Tiger. Everything from the décor – an art-nouveau attempt to emulate a Parisian coffee house, complete with sculptures, furniture and decorations – to the sheer ambition of a Dawson Street club built to house 1500 drinkers seemed to

scream 'brash'. We'd love to gloat at the bursting of the bubble but, having visited the slightly quieter venue, we can confirm that Café En Seine is all the better for the added elbow room, the more laid back feel, and the ability to hear oneself with some ever-so-slightly offbeat tunes to fill the dancefloor. Dash back a few cocktails or foreign imported beers and you can party like it's 2006 all over again.

Bockwurst, a tasty Pork and Chive sausage) adds to the attraction. Moreover, the weekend DJs still manage to balance charty hits with some ever-so-slightly offbeat tunes to fill the dancefloor. Dash back a few cocktails or foreign imported beers and you can party like it's 2006 all over again.

Opening hours: Open seven days a week, from 11:00 to 00:00 (03:00 Thursday to Saturday).

Getting there: From the Molly Malone statue (facing towards Grafton Street), turn left and cross the road onto Nassau Street. Turn right onto Dawson Street, and walk for about two minutes. Café en Seine should be on your right.



The Wright Venue

South Quarter, Ailside Business Park, Swords – Co. Dublin
Tel: 018900099

Here's a prediction: 2010 will be the make-or-break year for possibly the boldest nightclub experiment Dublin has ever seen – and not just in sheer scale. True, The Wright Venue is jaw-droppingly big, but that's not the only bold thing about the place: it incorporates a substantial main club, a terrace bar, a members-only 'penthouse club', the more laid-back and mature 'purple room' with 70s and

80s vibes, plus 'the cities' – luxurious private hire booths with plasma screens, gaming consoles and pre-stocked fridges available for €100 a head. The music, meanwhile, is a brave mix of contemporary dance and DJ sets with live artists – Paddy Casey gave a well-received concert in December. Finally, one has to applaud the sheer gumption of a club that locates itself near the airport, daring Dubliners to make the considerable journey out there. That journey is made a bit easier if you take the minibus from town. The

venue's isolation may be its downfall, or it may continue to thrive as it's done since opening to considerable acclaim last year – in either case, it'll do so spectacularly, so it's worth journeying out to see what happens.

Opening hours: Purple room and penthouse club open Thursday to Saturday, 22:00 to 02:30. Main club open Friday and Saturday, 22:00 to 02:30

Getting there: Coming out of Dublin Airport (the Swords Road/Airport Roundabout), turn left and head

north on the Dublin Road. Take the seventh right (at a roundabout) onto the Swords Road, which then becomes Lakeshore Drive. At the fork in the road, take a right, and the Wright Venue should be on your left. Alternatively, you can journey to the venue by minibus. Buses leave at 23:00 and 00:00 from the Mansion House and various locations across the north side – check out www.thewrightvenue.ie for details.

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