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THE STRIP!

Celebrating the Strip District and Lawrenceville

SPRING!





Sweet Expansion

Peace, Love and Little
Donuts Grows Nationwide





By Jennifer Brozak



On any given day, visitors strolling along Smallman

Street in the Strip District are greeted with an instantly recognizable aroma: the enticing smell of hot, fresh donuts wafting through the doors of Peace, Love and Little Donuts.

The business, which bills itself as “the grooviest donut shop this side of the Milky Way,” opened its doors to patrons in 2009. Originally located in a small, 204-square-foot storefront on Smallman Street that forced customers to line up outside, the shop relocated right next door, to the corner of 21st and Smallman, in December. The renovated storefront features plenty of seating inside and outside, bathrooms, and more counter space to work.

Founder Ron Razete says that the concept for Peace, Love and Little Donuts was conceived in “chunks.” “What started as a potential way for my wife to leave her career as a flight attendant and spend more time with our children eventually became a way for our family to pay our bills,” says Razete, 57.

He says that he and wife Marci choose the Strip District for the business’s first location because of how vibrant the neighborhood is. Today, Peace, Love and Little Donuts has nearly 30 locations in 9 states, including 11 in Pennsylvania and 9 in Ohio. All but four of the locations are franchises.

Chief Operating Officer Jeff Bennett says that more stores throughout the country are expected to open this spring, including one in Peters Township, Nashville, Buffalo, Lexington, the Dallas and Denver suburbs, and Ohio.

Continued 

Peace, Love and Little Donuts

Continued

“We get about 30 new leads a week from people who are interested in opening stores,” says Bennett, who’s been with the company for three years. “We don’t have to do anything to actively pursue those leads. Most of the people who come to us have either lived here, or have visited here, and maybe have retired to a different location and want to open a store.”

Aside from the fun and funky vibe, the store’s focus on freshness is part of its appeal. “Some donut shops make donuts the night before, some in the wee hours of the morning the day of. Some make them and freeze them and thaw them as needed. We didn’t have the room to do any of that! Because the shop was so small, we had to make donuts continuously throughout the day to keep up with demand,” Razete says.

“Customers prefer freshly made donuts. We were just blessed to discover that our only possible method for making donuts is the best method,” he adds. “Despite some mistakes and missteps, we rarely disappoint people who come later in the day who might find other donut



Peter Savani and Brittany Kessler making donuts at the Strip District store.

An advertisement for Courtyard Winery. The background is a photograph of a wine shop interior with brick walls and wooden wine racks filled with bottles. The text is overlaid on the image in white. At the bottom left is a circular logo for Courtyard Winery. At the bottom right is contact information including address, phone number, and website.

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shops to be either out of donuts altogether or out of the ones patrons prefer. We continue to make donuts to ensure that we aren't 'out' of donuts. We decorate them and top them as you order them to ensure the best combination of warm donuts and warm frosting and toppings."

The store is known for its colorful, creative toppings, which range from basic, frosted donuts to "Funkadelic" donuts adorned with unconventional toppings like Maple Bacon, Apple Pie, Cherry Cheesecake, Snick Jagger, and Fruity Pebbles. Razete's family, including his wife and five children, create most of the topping combinations. The majority of donuts are made with an old-fashioned sour cream batter, but they also use chocolate, blueberry, pumpkin, and red velvet batters.

The smaller size of the donut was the result of a mistake with the machinery, explains Bennett. No matter how hard they tried, they could not get the machine to produce a standard size donut—but soon found that the problem was a blessing in disguise.

"We lucked into it, because people seemed to prefer the smaller donut. They could eat an entire donut and not feel guilty," Bennett says with a laugh.

Looking ahead, Razete wants to continue to introduce Peace, Love and Little Donuts to new areas.

"My goal is to find people who would be a blessing to us and who would be blessed by owning one or more of our franchise locations," Razete says. "I really enjoy the people I work with, so it's exciting to think that we may continue to grow and find our way."

For more information, visit peaceloveandlittledonuts.com. 📍

Jennifer Brozak is a freelance writer from North Huntingdon who has a passion for all things Pittsburgh. She contributes to a variety of local and national outlets, and blogs about her family's escapades at onecommittedmama.com.



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What's New?

Continued from p. 7

"We wanted to offer a restaurant that prepared authentic Italian food served in a warm and comfortable environment," says owners Gene DePasquale and Mark Diulus. "Our goal is to provide a relaxing night out, whether to enjoy dinner or a pizza from our woodfired oven," he adds. Albert Romagna, the chef and boyhood friend of Mr. DePasquale, counts over 40 years of experience in pleasing restaurant patrons with his flair for Mediterranean-influenced presentations. Maureen McNulty brings her many years of restaurant-management experience to the new establishment.

Open for lunch and dinner, the new dining spot offers an extensive menu, from a robust selection of Paninis to full-course dinners. The bar stocks a large variety of craft and national beers and wines available by the glass or bottle.

Alida's Woodfired Cucina

3345 Penn Ave. / 412-742-4495
alidaspggh.com

Atelier de Fer Opens in the Strip District



Atelier's owners Matt and Vanessa Marietti.

A new Strip District specialty café is on a mission to provide its patrons with unique and sustainably sourced coffees and teas—along with a healthy dose of French ambience. Atelier de Fer, which loosely translates into "workshop of iron" to pay homage to the Steel City and French cafés, opened for business in the Strip District on December 23.

The café, which is located at 2002 Smallman

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Street, roasts its own coffee in-house, sources its own tea, and offers a small menu and local food products. Specialties include homemade waffles that are made with a touch of espresso in the batter, as well as Chai tea, which they blend from scratch. The café also offers a variety of local food products, including honey from Apoidea and Bedillion, oil and vinegar from Olive and Marlowe, syrup from Paul Family, and meat from Parma and Penn Mac. Pending state approval, Atelier plans to soon sell a small selection of wines, beers, kombucha, and craft cocktails.

Owner Matt Marietti says that after founding the company in 2016, he chose the Strip for its storefront because of the variety of people the neighborhood attracts. "I don't know if there's a better place in Pittsburgh to meet such a diverse group of people," says Marietti. "There is a such an amazing, rich history—a lot of it involving food—that it's truly an inspiring place to work. We are extremely fortunate to have found a home in the Strip."

Atelier de Fer is open Tuesday through Sunday.

Atelier de Fer

2002 Smallman St. / 412-440-8257
 defer.coffee

Courtyard Winery Hosts the Dogs



Officer Rocco

Spotlighting the dogs that help protect us, on Saturday, March 24, the Courtyard Winery in the Strip hosts the city police dogs and their partners from noon to 3:00 p.m. The Winery is donating 20 percent of all wine sales during event hours to the Officer Rocco K9 Memorial

Fund at the Pittsburgh Foundation.

Like cats? The Winery is hosting the Pittsburgh Cat Adoption Team on April 14, noon to 2:00 p.m. Again, 20 percent of all wine sales during the event will be donated.

The Courtyard Winery

Pennsylvania Market
 108 19th St. / 412-408-3237
 courtyardwinery.com

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