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# Striking a Chord

FOR ENJOYING LIVE ENTERTAINMENT, SHARING FOOD AND DRINKS WITH FRIENDS, OR SEEKING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, **JOHN & PETER'S** IN NEW HOPE OFFERS AN EXPERIENCE THAT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DUPLICATE.

**J**ohn & Peter's has risen to almost mythic status far beyond its roots in Bucks County. The storied bar and entertainment venue on New Hope's Main Street seems to have its own energy, its own magic, its own gravitational pull. At least that's how it feels to the community of regulars and the parade of performers who have graced the stage over the past 50 years.

John & Peter's, founded by John Larsen and Peter Price, has been helping people from all walks of life make lasting memories since the early 1970s. It has since hosted some true legends





in music and entertainment: Mary Chapin Carpenter, Steve Forbert, Norah Jones, Essra Mohawk, Penn & Teller, George Thorogood, and Tiny Tim, as well as the locally rooted duo of Aaron Freeman and Mickey Melchiondo, collectively known as Ween. Framed flyers of momentous shows adorn the walls. So vast and unique is its place in entertainment history that Morrisville, Pennsylvania-based DiWulf Publishing felt compelled to catalogue its past in the 2023 book *Still Drinkin', Smokin', Rockin' and Rollin': An Oral History of John & Peter's*.

When John & Peter's current owners—restaurant veteran Kevin Rauch, regular-turned-bartender Mike Wieners, and musician and sound technician Chris Williams whose experience with John & Peter's dates back to the 1990s—took the helm in 2018, they promised to preserve the legacy of Larsen and Price. Much of New Hope has adopted an air of luxuri-ance, yet John & Peter's remains defiantly down to earth. It's a comfortable, welcoming place where people can enjoy a show, share drinks with friends, or just feel like they belong to a community.

At the same time, the trio has gone to great lengths to modernize, update, or otherwise improve virtually every aspect of the John & Peter's experience. Examples include a new sound system, a new and expanded tap system for its beer program, and a streamlined and revitalized food menu.

Rauch, a chef by training with a flair for Latin cuisine, used his expertise to create many of the menu's signature items. Some of his personal favorites include the carne asada tacos, the bacon bleu cheeseburger, and the cheesesteaks. John & Peter's has also become well known for its tantalizing appetizers, especially its wings and various iterations of tater tots.

"We've really elevated the level of quality with our food, including by using more local purveyors," Rauch says. "Our tap program has a lot of craft beers you're not going to find in most places, including more local flavor: Alchemist, Founders, Hill Farmstead, Sacred Vice out of Philly.



When John & Peter's current owners—(left to right) Kevin Rauch, Chris Williams, and Mike Wieners—took the helm in 2018, they promised to preserve the legacy of the venue's founders.

It's unique for New Hope."

"Our wings are the best in town," adds Wieners. "For our tater tots, we have a lot of unique ways to dress them up—Reuben tater tots, pulled pork tater tots. The burgers have been historically fantastic, too; they're cooked to order, so you can get them any way you want."

While John & Peter's has evolved quite a bit under the trio's leadership, some things remain the same—namely, the quality of live music and other performers, both new and well established. When touring artists play John & Peter's for the first time, they often balk at the size of the venue. By the end of the show, however, the overwhelming majority of them realize how special the place is and insist on playing the venue the next time they return to the area.

"The intimacy of the venue is difficult to top," Wieners says. "No matter where you are in the room, you're never more than 19 feet away from the performer. Whether it's a singer-songwriter or an international touring act, the warmth is infectious. And if music or comedy isn't your thing, we have the

outside bar and the upstairs bar where you can just hang out."

John & Peter's is, above all, a place for building community, as evidenced by its participation in a pair of philanthropic events from early into 2026: performances by The Billy Hector Band and The Billy Walton Band in collaboration with the Light of Day Foundation to raise funds and awareness to fight neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and ALS; and a 1950s Sock Hop Dance with DJ Ted Jacobs, with proceeds benefiting the Trenton Rescue Mission.

"We have a deep sense of community here," Wieners says. "You can have an investment banker sitting next to a drag queen sitting next to a biker sitting next to a guitar player, and by the end of the night they're all friends. As a bartender, that kind of camaraderie makes my shifts more enjoyable. Those interactions are what drew me here in the first place, and they're what sustain me all these years later.

"I am eternally grateful for having gotten the chance to be part of such a special place," he continues. "This place has become so much more than a home to me. I don't know where I'd be in life without it."

So many others who have entered John & Peter's over the past 50-plus years have likely said the same. And, if the past is any predictor of the future, many more will be doing so for years to come. ■



John & Peter's has something for everyone, including one of the area's best-curated beer programs, elevated pub fare, and communal spaces to enjoy drinks and conversation with friends.

**John & Peter's** | 96 S. Main Street | New Hope, PA 18938 | (215) 862-5981 | [www.johnandpeters.com](http://www.johnandpeters.com)