

WATERING HOLES

LOOKING FOR A CLEAN, COOL PLACE FOR AN AFTER-WORK DRINK OR A POST-BUSINESS DINNER NIGHT CAP?



“There’s no real yuppie scene here.” So I’m told by a contact in Halifax as we chat about various venue options for a reasonably professional after-work drink. He might be right. While there are any number of higher-end restaurants that might be geared towards those in business attire, the “business bar” is not a niche that’s spoken about in Atlantic Canada.

That said, no one wants to take a visiting colleague to a dingy watering hole – not even if it’s the place you’ve been frequenting since you were a teen (certainly not on a first meeting). But for those in search of slightly more relaxed conversation with co-workers, over a cocktail or nice glass of wine, the East Coast options are endless and ever-changing.

A TIME FOR SCOTCH

In the mucky month of March, nothing thaws the gullet like a wee dram. How about this description of the 42nd St. Lounge (125 Sydney St.) in Charlottetown, PEI: “It offers comfy couches and wide chairs in a really cozy atmosphere. And a great drink list and an extensive Scotch list. It’s a great place for after work or to bring a date.” I can add that the exposed brick walls and well worn wooden floor are the perfect antidote to a day under fluorescent lights. The venue has recently added The Loft, a new private dining room. There are also Scotch tastings and wine & food pairing classes at times, if you’d like to learn while you schmooze.

ECO-AWARE

While doing your part for the earth may not be at the front of your mind when you set out for a cinq-a-sept, Halifax’s Wooden Monkey (1707 Grafton St.) is a perfect choice should you be entertaining anyone with a green streak. Three kinds of organic tequila, local beer from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and “what may be Halifax’s only MSG-free Caesar” are all on the drink menu – as are all the more pedestrian favourites. “The Wooden

Monkey’s a great place for out-of-towners with an eco-consciousness,” says one Halifax resident who does his fair share of entertaining colleagues from away. “And the Rolling Stones love it.”

SOME (LOCAL) CHEESE WITH YOUR WINE?

Here’s a way to sample some East-Coast fare that does not come from the sea. Happinez Wine Bar (42 Princess St.) in Saint John, NB, has recently built on its considerable charms (stone walls, a gorgeous wine cellar) by offering artisan cheese from Fond des Bois and meats from la Ferme du Diamant, both New Brunswick operations. They’re also excellent party planners, and their small space works for relatively small gatherings or wine-tasting events.

MUSIC MEN

For those looking for something different, try The Carleton (1685 Argyle St.) in Halifax, newly opened in 2009. A swank, yet accessible, spot for a beverage, dinner or late-night snack, this is more of a “listening room” than a club on music nights. The Carleton showcases new and established singers and songwriters on selected evenings in a place where you can actually hear the music while you dine or sip. Owned by music lovers Mike Campbell and Mike Rhodes (you might remember them as the hosts off *Mike & Mike’s Excellent Cross Canada Adventures* in the late ‘80s on MuchMusic), it’s not surprising that this is a quality music venue, and, as I keep hearing, a cool place to hang out.

BREW PUBS

If you fancy some local brew, the Big Tide Brewing Company (30 Princess Street) is brand new to Saint John and the four or five beers it brews on site have all been heartily reviewed by beer lovers (especially the stout). The YellowBelly Brewery (1 George St.) in St. John’s is also fairly new, set in a carefully restored historical stone building and boasting impressive beers of its own. 

Is your favourite spot for a happy-hour confab or a perfectly prepared night cap missing from this list? Let me know and I’ll be more than happy to pass along some of your suggestions in an upcoming issue. Until then, cheers all. Stephaniejporter@gmail.com