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+FIND IT

ASTORIA, a sprawling neighborhood in northwest Queens, is bounded by the East River, Northern Boulevard to the south, 50th Street to the west and Hazen Street to the north.

BareBurger is a spacious organic burger cafe in Astoria.

(PHOTOS: CAMILO MONROY)

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Astoria: A gem in Qns.

BY LANA BORTOLOTT
Special to amNewYork

It may have been snubbed by its namesake John Jacob Astor, who never set foot in the neighborhood, but Astoria hasn't suffered for it.

Early on, it was the choice of other wealthy New Yorkers, who built mansions in what came to be called Astoria Village.

More recently, this mixed neighborhood has been the settlement for thousands of immigrants — first Italian, then Greek. Today, it seems

+Did you know?

Astoria once had a Germantown encompassing four farms purchased by the German United Cabinet Workers between 35th and 50th streets.

just about every ethnic, social and demographic group is represented.

Blessed with ample housing, Manhattan views and great eats, Astoria attracts urbanites who appreciate its international flavor and hometown feel.

"Astoria is really viable for

a younger demographic, and a lot of people who would go to Brooklyn or Manhattan are finding their way here," said Alia Akkam, founder of theqnote.com, an e-mail newsletter and companion site dedicated to Queens.

"There's this young element and this Old World feel, and they have man-



Astoria has plenty of reasonably priced housing.

aged to peacefully coexist." Frank Arcabascio, a past president of the 30th Avenue Business Association, attributes that in part to second-generation merchants who have infused the family business with

their own know-how.

Increasingly, Astoria is the lure for more Manhattan-style eateries, bars and shops, but locals don't want the neighborhood to become just another dining destination.



Teas come with tasting notes at Himalaya.

TO EAT

Linn

29-13 Broadway,
718-204-0060

Sushi chef Shigenori Tanaka, formerly of Masa, brings his flair — described as "traditional Japanese with a modern French twist" — to this patch of mom-and-pop-occupied Broadway. The presentation is as sleek as the interior (you can watch Japanese movies on a large

screen) and the food is winning borough-wide raves.

Seva Indian Cuisine
30-07 34th St.,
718-626-4440

Fresh ingredients and family recipes distinguish Seva from the typical curry house. Less than a year old, Seva has quickly become a neighborhood institution because of its excellent value, friendly service and menu featuring dishes such as roasted eggplant,

apricot lamb curry and fenel chicken curry.

BareBurger
33-21 31st Ave.
718-777-7011

What looks like your corner bistro is actually the neighborhood's first 100 percent certified organic restaurant. As the menu suggests, burgers are the main draw here, and you can choose from beef, turkey, elk, bison, ostrich, chicken, lamb or portobello mushroom all

available with a number of toppings on locally made bread.

Himalaya Teahouse
33-17 31st Ave.,
718-777-7450

Tucked into the 31st Street strip of eclectic eateries, this serene refuge offers dumplings, soups, organic noodles and salads in addition to its diverse tea menu. The teas come with tasting notes and are available by the cup or pot.

To rent
\$3,000

Three-bedroom, one-bath, single-family attached house with semi-basement, parking and backyard. 28th Avenue and 37th Street.

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CONTACT: ERIC VITHAL, AMORELLI REALTY, 917-447-6655

TO PARTY

Astorians don't have to trek across the river for a craft beer or decent glass of wine.

Sweet Afton 30-09 34th St., 718-777-2570

The gleam isn't yet off the counter of this new bar, named for the Robert Burns poem. Its proposition is earnest: "solid drinks and honest, locally sourced food." The owners are determined to create a friendly place that reflects the soul of the neighborhood and offers a hip but down-home spot away from the clamoring beer-garden crowds. Reclaimed wood finishes, fried pickles and artisanal brews set the pub apart.



Sweet Afton is a hip, new artisan bar that serves food and microbrews in the heart of Astoria. (CAMILI MONROY)

Winegasm

31-86 37th St.,
718-932-3331

The food and wine menu reflects the global interests of the owners – from Mediterranean tapas to wines from the old and new worlds. There's a particular emphasis on good-value wines from Spain and South America, but you can get your Super Tuscan here,

too. Small and large tasting plates can be shared at the long wooden plank table, which dominates the space and is the spot for the two-hour crash course in wines held Sundays from 4-6 p.m.

Rapture 34-27 28th Ave., 718-626-8044

Loungy, sexy and comfy all describe this living room-cum-bar. The Victorian flea-market vibe is accentuated with the deep club chairs, plush couches and eclectically matched tables, making it a favored place to curl up with friends during the daily two-for-one happy hour (5-8 p.m.). Drink

specials are offered every night, and on Thursdays tarot cards are read. If your future is looking bleak, at least the beers are \$3 all night long.

Bungalo Lounge 32-03 Broadway, 718-204-7010

Bungalo packs a lot into its

small space: a menu that gets raves for its Tex-Mex snacks and fondue, salsa dance parties on Wednesdays (free lessons from 8-9 p.m.), live DJs on weekends (the mix also gets star reviews) and a \$5 happy hour. It's a local crowd, so just leave that city 'tude at the door.

THE BUZZ



Studio Square is a new beer garden. (RJ MICKELSON)

The Bohemian Hall, the neighborhood's oldest beer garden, has been dethroned by the upstart Studio Square, a sleek 18,000-square-foot drinking and event space near Kaufman Astoria Studios. With nearly 20 domestic, imported and craft beers and a grill menu that transcends kielbasa and kraut, it opened this summer to significant borough-wide buzz. No attention to detail was spared here: Wenge-wood bars, Belgian block courtyard and art murals elevate the art of drinking en masse. (35-33 36th St.)

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TREETOP

FIELDS



TO SHOP

You can find national chain stores on the main business corridors, but look a little closer and you'll find independent shops that reflect Astoria's mom-and-pop spirit.

The Little Soap Shop

22-07 36th St.,
718-704-4408

Owner Vivian Dritsas' two-year-old shop, a teeny lavender sweet spot, features subtly scented soaps made by traditional methods and cured for six weeks. Dritsas uses fusions such as pineapple cilantro and blood orange bergamot. She also features complementary products such as lotions, Dead Sea salts and aftershaves. All products are 100 percent vegan, paraben- and toxin-free.

Astoria Wines & Spirits

34-12 Broadway,
718-545-9463

Yang Gao's curated wine shop, a new addition to Broadway, features small-production estates (fewer than 5,000 cases a year) that



Loveday 31 is a popular shop that specializes in all things vintage.

(RJ MICKELSON/AMNY)

offer good value and interesting styles. You won't find Yellowtail here, but you'll find hand-designed tasting notes on the bottles that will direct you to intriguing estates. There are some organic vintages here, a good Japanese shochu selection, a few handpicked spirits and Gao's special discovery: a prosecco named Astoria.

Candy Plum

30-98 36th St.,
718-721-2299

Girly girls will rejoice in this unabashedly feminine shop, which features more than 25 designers, most of whom are local women. It's a gift destination with statement bags and baubles, handmade accessories, vintage-inspired dresses

for going out and some guy gear. Here tough girls can buy Heroine Clothing, a New Jersey label favored by punk-band members.

Loveday 31

33-06 31st St.,
718-728-4057

With Kaufman Astoria Studios nearby, don't be surprised to see stylists



United Brothers Fruit Market at 32-24 30th Ave. offers a wide selection of fresh local produce. (CAMILLO MONROY)

+Did you know?

Astoria was named for fur trader John Jacob Astor in a failed effort to have Astor become a financial patron of the area.

Mimi's boutique in the East Village.

Site

35-11 34th Ave.,
718-626-6030

Indie and local designers have a champion in Site, an eclectic home-furnishings boutique that features the work of many Queens-centric artisans alongside other well-designed objects. There are lots of vintage and retro-inspired wares to be found. Some local must-haves: QNS-branded tote bags, bandannas and dish towels.

scooping up the meticulously selected vintage (mostly 1960s-1980s) goods here. In addition to your "Mad Men" wardrobe, you can pick up jewelry, shoes, accessories and advice from owner Ivona Bilicic, a former buyer for Screaming

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