

Red Maple: Restaurant | Club | Bar | Lounge

The quaint stone steps appear from the outside to be just another boring bank or office building - until the sound of bongos and people laughing floats out onto the street. Patrons of the Red Maple are looking for a breath of fresh air after a long day at work. According to the restaurant's website, "exotic cocktails, artisanal small plates and mod-lounge sounds echoing off of a unique retro-modern architecture are the products of [their] passion for creating a modern lounge vibe."

Nestled in downtown Baltimore's historic Mount Vernon district, this restaurant, bar and lounge combines a variety of global tastes to create a spread of tapas perfect for happy hour. It is located on North Charles Street. The Charm City Circulator, the free Baltimore public transit system, stops just a short walk away from the Red Maple at the bus stop on the corner of Charles Street and Eager Street.

The venue has been around since 2001, offering a wide array of dishes and drinks perfectly suited for happy hour, various social events, office parties and date nights. Elizabeth Large, Baltimore Sun food critic, gives the restaurant 3.5 out of four stars, and CBS Baltimore calls it "the perfect place to come and unwind during the bleak midweek."

The atmosphere is welcoming, sort of an upscale at-home feeling. Couches and futons replace hard wooden or plastic chairs, candles light up each table and music is always playing. The restaurant is divided into four sections in order to accommodate all sorts of diners.

The fireside lounge is a great place for a romantic dinner, with an assortment of futons clustered around low tables, creating an intimate feel. Couples often sit here on date nights,

looking to escape the energy of the bar and steal a moment alone. Two mammoth California style fireplaces create a nice ambiance for the 10-15 diners that the lounge is able to accommodate.

The real fun, however, is in the Rainbow Room. It is used for casual dining or cocktail functions, adjacent to the dancefloor and open air courtyard. Guests come here for happy hour, stopping to grab a drink at the bar. It features a glowing frosted glass bar top that undergoes a rainbow of subtle color changes over the course of each evening.



Fireside Lounge, *This Week at Red Maple*

In this room, the dancefloor is the main attraction. After 10:30 the regular diners clear out and the restaurant transforms into a nightclub. Resident and guest DJs take over the scene on the dancefloor, spinning sounds from all over the globe.

“Once the floor clears out for the night, it’s hard not to get carried away in the music,” says a Red Maple hostess. If you’re lucky, a live band will be in the corner belting out some tunes while keeping time on bongo drums.

Finally there is the garden terrace, a great place to escape the noise and get a breath of fresh air or chat up the person you’ve been eyeing from across the dancefloor. This open air patio

courtyard area is separated by floor to ceiling glass and is the only area of the restaurant where smoking is permitted. This is where you will find the signature red maple tree.

Anywhere diners choose to congregate they will be greeted warmly and taken care of by the impeccable wait staff. Atmosphere is everything when it comes to dining, and it can really enhance the experience. That is only a small part, though, of what the Red Maple has to offer. The food, now that is a different story.

The menu is carefully crafted by executive chef Shiland Township. He upholds a farm-to-table commitment, striving to utilize locally sourced and homemade ingredients.

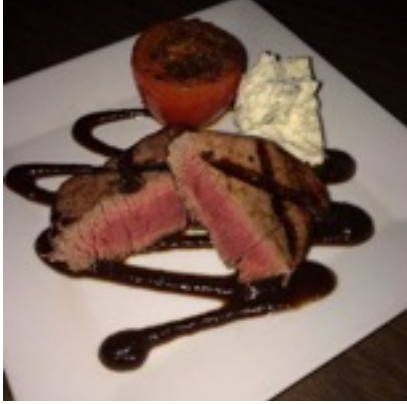
“I try to use only the freshest ingredients,” he says. “That’s half the reason people keep coming back, they like knowing where their food came from.”

The menu is a smorgasbord of tapas, small plates with enough food for two to three people on each plate. As a regular diner at the Red Maple, I recommend getting two to three plates for each person at the table, and splitting them all. The food is too delicious to only try one dish! Everything on the menu is less than \$15, most dishes ranging between \$5-10.

Regular Red Maple goer Tracey Richards said she “thought that the small portions would leave [her] wanting more, but it is really cool that you get to sample a little bit of everything, and it is enough to share, too.” Richards also adds that she likes how diners are able to “experience a wide variety of taste sensations and it is simple yet elegant at the same time.”

Red Maple Crab Dip, RacheL, Foodspotting.com





Glazed Tenderloin, RacheL, Foodspotting.com

If you are looking for a real treat, you can't go wrong with the Red Maple Crab Dip. This dish combines asiago, artichoke hearts, and red pepper miso with crabmeat straight out of the Chesapeake Bay and purchased locally in Baltimore. It is served with triangles of grilled pita and homemade red and white tortilla chips. It is hot and creamy with a slight edge to it that makes your mouth water for more. Another highlight is the glazed tenderloin, served with blackened tomato and gorgonzola and cooked in a Guinness balsamic reduction sauce. The tang of the gorgonzola goes nicely with the flavorful meat, which is so tender it practically melts off your fork.

If you're looking for a more exotic taste, the Thai coconut curry crab is to die for. It is served with water chestnuts and bell peppers, and smothered in a coconut curry cream sauce.

Robert Richards is another regular patron at the Red Maple, and calls the menu a "tour de force of gastronomical delights." Being a chef himself, he loves the concept of a seasonal menu that changes quarterly, reflecting the climate and local ingredients that are available. "It is a perfect blend of sweet, savory and spicy options that use only the freshest variety of both

imported artisanal gourmet specialty foods and locally sourced farm to table products,” he says, in regard to the variety of dishes he has tasted.

So be it for an office party, celebration dinner, happy hour with friends or girls’ night out, The Red Maple never fails to delight diners with its retro-modern architecture and exotic assortment of local dishes. "What a great establishment to visit. Love their setting. Great drinks and tapas," said a Trip Advisor diner last June. Next time you’re in Mount Vernon touring museums or checking out the Historic District, stop in to Red Maple for a nice, fresh breath of air and an experience your taste buds will thank you for.



meetup.com

FAST FACTS

The Red Maple

Founded: 2001

Location: 930 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Mission Statement: “Exotic cocktails, artisanal small plates and mod-lounge sounds echoing off of a unique retro-modern architecture are the products of our passion for creating a modern lounge vibe.”

Price Range: ~ \$5-\$15 a plate

Venues: Restaurant, Bar, Lounge, Club, venue for various social events

Where the food comes from: Locally sourced, farm-to-table fresh ingredients all from the state of Maryland

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