

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

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by KATE BETTS



Williamsburg

The New Brooklyn



Andrew Tarlow, an artist who waited tables at Odeon in the mid 1990's, moved to Williamsburg 17 years ago for the cheap rent and abundant studio space, but he couldn't find a convenient place to get a meal. Even the bodegas were off-limits, mostly because drug dealers ran them. So in 2000 Tarlow opened Diner, on Broadway in South Williamsburg, and served organic, locally sourced food in a simple setting. Like Samuelsson, he had been inspired by the power of restaurants such as Odeon to establish a neighborhood and bring together the community. "The idea was that anyone could come," Tarlow says. He followed Diner's success with Marlow & Sons, another restaurant and shop, and Marlow & Daughters, a butcher that serves locally sourced beef and

poultry. Although he is loath to agree, Tarlow is considered the unofficial mayor of Williamsburg's artisanal food movement. He's also a great champion of the community, using craftsmen and resources from the area for most of his projects. The cramped shelves of Marlow & Sons are stocked with Mast Brothers chocolate bars (their factory is just a few blocks away), McClure's pickles, and Goldie's soap.

Last spring, in partnership with Australian hotelier Peter Lawrence and DUMBO developer Jed Valentas, Tarlow opened his fifth Brooklyn restaurant, Reynards, in the new \$32 million Wythe Hotel, a 1901 former barrel factory on Williamsburg's more industrial northern edge. Much like Tarlow's restaurants, the Wythe Hotel has a very local vibe. Most of the interior wood in the original building was salvaged and used to create beds and ceilings. The wallpaper in each of the 72 rooms was custom-made by Flavor Paper, in Brooklyn's Cobble Hill. The toiletries are from Goldie's and



Clockwise from left: At Mast Brothers Chocolate, in Williamsburg; a guest room at the Wythe Hotel; Williamsburg pioneer Andrew Tarlow at the Wythe Hotel; the intersection of North Seventh Street and Bedford Avenue.

the mini-bars offer fresh granola from Marlow & Sons, small-batch booze, and house-made ice cream. There's a bar on the sixth floor with an enormous terrace and a killer view of the Manhattan skyline. Bands who come to play in the neighborhood or at the annual summer music festival can crash on the second or third floor, where rooms with floor-to-ceiling bunk beds go for \$175.

Originally, Tarlow liked the site because it had a desolate feel, not unlike Broadway when he opened Diner. But in the time it's taken them to renovate, the area has filled in with music halls like Brooklyn Bowl, a design studio that turns into a Swedish-inspired restaurant called Frej three nights a week, and another hotel, King & Grove Williamsburg, from the team behind hot spots in Miami and Montauk. When Tarlow first moved to Williamsburg, there were no amenities. In fact, it was cheaper to buy pressed white shirts from a thrift store than it was to

take his shirts to be cleaned in another borough.

Although Bedford Avenue, the main artery of Williamsburg, is now lined with restaurants, nail salons, bodegas, and Laundromats, many more esoteric stores can be found on side streets stretching down toward the river. Moon River Chattel and Sprout Home on Grand Street sell refurbished antiques and do-it-yourself terrarium kits. At Pilgrim Surf & Supply, a new surf shop around the corner, owner Chris Gentile sells Andreini surfboards, M. Nii Makaha board shorts, and a dizzying array of DVD's and books. Gentile, an artist, took over the former motorcycle shop last winter and built the interior out of reclaimed wood he found on site.

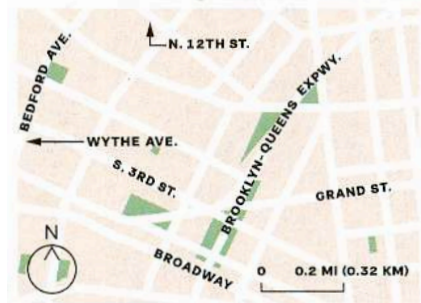
Everyone in Williamsburg seems to be making something—whether it's fixed-gear bikes, organic

soaps, or chocolate. Michael and Rick Mast of Mast Brothers Chocolate were among the first to support this idea of local manufacturing. In 2006, they began creating chocolate from scratch. Soon they were selling their handmade bars at markets and doing special orders for weddings. Now they have a booming chocolate business out of their North Third Street factory, where they roast, crack, and grind cocoa beans imported from Central and South America. Derek Herbster, a resident chocolate expert at Mast Brothers who has lived and worked in the area for two years, cannot get over the changes to Williamsburg. "It's weird to me to live in the biggest city in the world and have it feel like a small town," he says.

On an early Friday evening in June, I had dinner at Reynards with some friends. The cavernous bar room, with its black Thonet café chairs and exposed-brick walls, was already hopping with Brooklyn foodies dressed in floral-print minidresses, flip-flops, and shorts with plaid shirts. Was it possible that every diner in this restaurant was 26? Tarlow, in a cotton suit with too-short pants, was manning the maître d's desk, smiling at drop-ins as he politely turned them away. A tattooed waiter with peroxide-blond hair explained that the menu changes every day and the water is carbonated in-house. The plainspoken menu, which includes bluefish, lobster served with snap peas and vanilla, and grilled chicken, belied the rich and delicious flavors of the seriously fresh food.

When Tarlow dropped by our table to chat, we pressed him on his idea to open a restaurant that was a strange juxtaposition of fine dining and neighborhood joint serving food grilled or baked in a wood-burning stove—"touched by fire," as he put it. How had Tarlow known that Upper East Siders would trek all the way across the bridge for a meal? He shrugged. Many of the neighborhood's pioneers, including Tarlow, have already fled to the more residential Greenpoint. Artists like Gentile have moved their studios to the Navy Yard. And when I asked Tarlow where he might venture for his next restaurant he shrugged and said, "the Upper East Side." We all burst out laughing. "I'm not kidding," he said with a sheepish smile. "It's a wasteland." +

Williamsburg Guide



STAY

King & Grove Williamsburg
160 N. 12th St.;
kingandgrove.com.

\$\$
Wythe Hotel
80 Wythe Ave.;
wythehotel.com. \$

EAT

Frej 90 Wythe Ave.;
frejnyc.com. \$\$

Marlow & Sons
81 Broadway;
marlowandsons.com.

\$\$\$
Reynards
80 Wythe Ave.;
wythehotel.com. \$\$\$

DO

Brooklyn Bowl
61 Wythe Ave.;
brooklynbowl.com.

SHOP

Moon River Chattel
62 Grand St.;
moonriverchattel.com.

Pilgrim Surf & Supply
68 N. Third St.;
pilgrimsurfsupply.com.

Sprout Home
44 Grand St.;
sprouthome.com.