

Looking beyond the delicious Mediterranean cuisine, the restaurant known as Lula (225 S. 12th st.) is also a new landmark for the GLBT community of Philadelphia. While more “straight” and “gay friendly” than the reverse, Lula not only offers a refreshingly alternative night spot for the Gayberhood, it carries on the spirit of Philadelphia’s oldest gay restaurant: Judy’s Café.

Many residents of the Washington West area were skeptical when a new restaurant opened on the corner of 12th and Locust. “Until Lula came I always assumed that this location was cursed!” says patron Rory Davis. It is true that multiple restaurants have both quickly come and gone in this location. So how does Lula attribute for its success?

Host/server James Doherty has the answer, “because the owners know what they are doing, they have a great staff, and once we get bodies in the door, they keep coming back.”

Perhaps some of Lula’s success with the gay community has to do with traditions brought from the legendary Judy’s Café. Doherty’s partner, bartender Randy Hedrick was asked by Lula’s owners (James Stephens and Paul McCloskey) to come to Lula after hearing that Judy’s Café was to be closed. Stephens and McCloskey who also own Black Sheep and The Dark Horse wished to create a relaxed but professional environment like Judy’s Café and knew that by drafting key Judy’s Café players like Hedrick, Doherty and server Pat S. Robertson they would create an appealing team. Hedrick states that “At Judy’s Café customers came in regularly, and were recognized in what (the customer) would like to eat and drink. That sort of courtesy and that tradition have been carried down here.”

Because of Lula’s ties to Judy’s Café it has brought with it a community of people.

Gatherings such as Camp Lula (Sundays 9-11pm), includes the screening of *Desperate Housewives* and *Footballers Wives* on Lula’s state-of-the-art television.” *Desperate Housewives* is best enjoyed in a participatory environment,” says Camp Lula regular Philip Moore, “and Lula’s provides such a terrain, where all witness the unfolding drama with appropriate gasps, laughter and camp shock”. Originated by Hendrix, he brought the idea from his time working at Moby Dick’s a bar in San Francisco’s Castro district, where they would broadcast *Dynasty* weekly. Where he says people would “go insane” to watch the weekly catfight between Joan Collins and Linda Evans.

Camp Lula is not the only event to take place in the restaurant however, as Lula’s host occasional gallery openings that are curated by Pat S. Robertson, all which show work from local artists.

Additionally on special events such as the Oscar Awards, Hendrix tends bar as his female alter ego Roxanne Matthews.

Whether you are dining or sitting at the bar, coming from the orchestra or the gym, in Lula you will find an appealing place. A spot chock full of both elegant snacks and eccentric patrons. “You don’t always want to dress down, but you don’t always want to dress up. this is kind of a middle ground.” Says Hendrix. Moore agrees “it is [Lula] the type where you can disappear into on a Saturday afternoon and lose track of time watching the Gayberhood’s early evening characters begin to stir”.