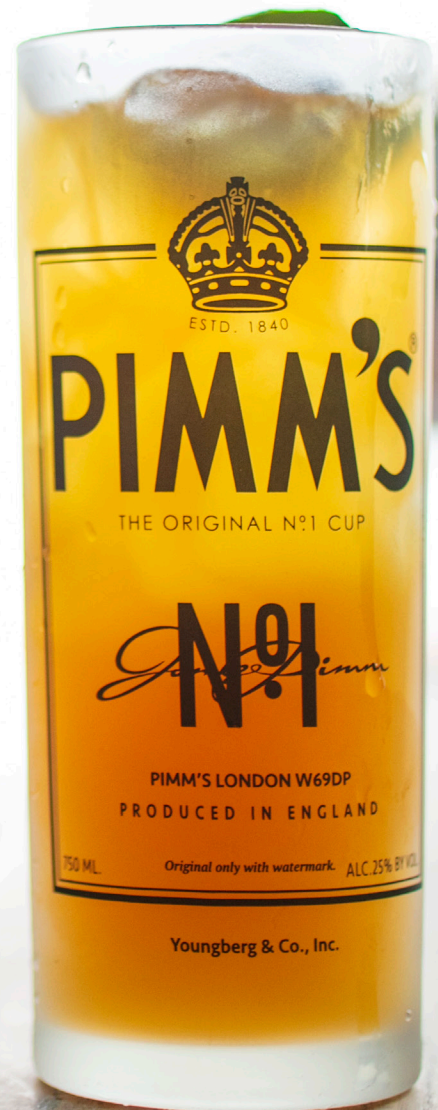


BITS & BAILEY

THE WHO, WHAT & WOW OF THE LUXE SCENE

By JEREMY MURPHY

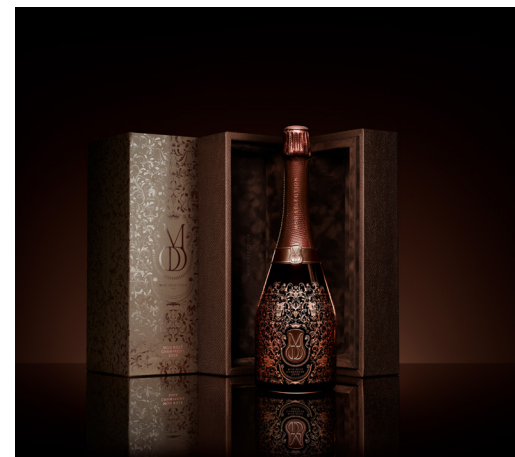
Cheers, dears! March is my favorite month: it's still cozy cold, but signs of spring slowly get us out of hibernation. It's also when I turn a year younger, at least at heart (although with my L.Raphael skincare regimen, I can argue more). The city is still a bit sleepy this time of year, when snowbirds down south are just *thinking* about packing, so you can get a table at 11 Madison without the dreaded "5:30 or 10:30" option (really?) Thankfully there's plenty to do this month, and not just in New York. →



A NEW WAY FOR BROADWAY

For starters, bookmark the swanky **Pierre Hotel** for a dose of Broadway on the Upper East Side. The landmark property celebrates its 90th anniversary this year, with a future dotted with live entertainment and events, like *Broadway at the Pierre*, a cabaret series bringing the best from the stage to its classic and trendy *Two E Lounge*.

Last year, it premiered performances from *Phantom of the Opera*, featuring Jeremy Stolle (The Phantom), Meghan Picerno (Christine), and John Riddle (Raoul). But don't fret, friends: This May, the lounge will host an encore performance—a perfect Mother's Day gift. "More than 30 years after its debut, *The Phantom of the Opera* continues to excite audiences here and all over the world," said the hotel's general manager, François-Olivier Luiggi. "We are thrilled to give fans the chance to hear cast members share songs and stories in the intimate, elegant setting of our *Two E Lounge*." During the performance, guests can indulge in show-inspired à la carte menu items like a dark chocolate mousse with a salted caramel center topped with house made popcorn and garnished with Tahitian vanilla ice cream. Cocktail lovers will enjoy the drama of "Music of The Night," featuring Hudson Rye, cherry Heering, and house made hickory syrup. *Info: thepierre.com/nyc-entertainment.*



ADORE THE POUR

Bailey loves his libations and is obsessed of late with **Mod Selection**, a luxury Champagne produced in the Vallee de Marne region that was previously unavailable outside of France. Until now! The vintage comes to America courtesy of Brent Hocking, wine and spirits industry mogul and founder of **DeLeón Tequila** and **Virginia Black Whiskey**. Prized for its delicate extraction and superior juice selection, the Champagne is produced using precise settling, natural clarification—and rigorous fermentation controls. "The meticulous process and purity of this Champagne throughout all variants are simply stunning," says Hocking. He has been working with a family in Champagne for years to make careful considerations and aging adjustments to create a superior product. Among its selections are a **Mod Sélection Réserve Vintage 2008**, which exudes a noticeable elegance and finesse in the bead and aromas of vibrant, ripe fruit opens beautifully in the glass. Or try the **Mod Sélection Rosé Vintage 2008**, boasting a remarkable deep-salmon hue, emblematic of the rare Saignée method. You'll taste an immediate focus of concentrated and complex fresh red fruit—strawberry, blood orange, and plum. Then, honey, ginger, and sweet spice, true of such a vintage. *Info: modselectionchampagne.com.*

COMPLETE THE CHIC

When you're experiencing Big City extravagance, one must look the part—including a trendy 'do. Look no further than **Arsen Gurgov**, the celebrated hairstylist who rules the roost from his tony East 60th Street studio. Gurgov, who has worked with everyone from Jennifer Lopez to Emmy Possum, has an intuitive understanding of what looks will match what face. It's all about the shape and size of the head, bone structure, color, skin type, and personality. He's also on top of trends (this season it's the "bob," favored by Anna Wintour and sometimes Kim Kardashian). But his special is **Keratin**, an elaborate hair straightening process. It's the best way to manage unruly, frizzy hair. Gurgov, known as "the Keratin whisperer," is the master. "Keratin is a protein that hair misses when it turns frizzy," says Gurgov, who shot to fame for his role in the *Today* show's *Ambush Makeover* series. "The Keratin treatment restores the needed protein and makes curly strands soft and sleek so you can style your hair the way you want without a salon blowout. But it's not just the product you use; it's how it's applied. One size does not fit all hair types." *Info: arseingurgov.com.*

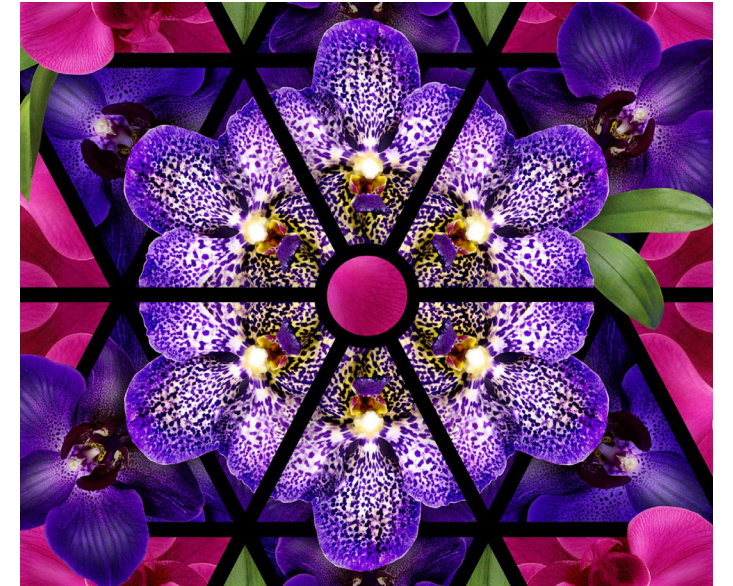


SPOT THIS DOG

Bailey loves a Michelin star experience, but he also loves his creature comforts. Including a cozy pub to spend a cold, rainy day. And his all-time favorite is **The Spotted Dog**, an Irish bar on the Upper East Side. It is a truly local experience, filled with friendly faces, attentive and genuine bartenders and servers, and delicious fare. Think Irish burritos, burgers (beef, black bean vegan, and even "the impossible"), chicken sandwiches, fish and chips, and yes—a hot dog made with beef from Feldman's of Coney Island with braised brisket, mustard, and red tomato jam. A kid at heart (and wallet), I'm also keen to a tomato bisque and grilled cheese — the ultimate guilty pleasure. The setting is casual, relaxing, and pleasing to the eye: a modern-day *Cheers* where you can sip away. Promising "revelry and fare," *The Spotted Dog* is bound to become your favorite, too. *Info: thespotteddognyc.com.*

IN BLOOM

Anyone who has ever visited Paris' **George V Hotel** knows Jeff Leatham. The American florist, famous for his unabashed explosions of color and creativity, is a celebrity in his own right, and his fame extends far across the Atlantic. Now the most in-demand florist, he designs events for celebrities like Oprah, Cher and Tina Turner, in addition to the **Four Seasons Hotels** in Beverly Hills and Philadelphia. But this spring, you need not stay at a five-star hotel or buddy up to a celebrity to see Leatham's genius. Through the season, he will be exhibiting *Jeff Leatham's Kaleidoscope* at the **New York Botanical Garden's** annual *Orchid Show*. His surprising, captivating designs, using thousands of orchids, will transform each gallery of the exhibition in NYBG's historic **Enid A. Haupt Conservatory** into a mosaic of color. Leatham will use orchids of every conceivable shape and provenance, including rare and iconic specimens. "Color is the first and most important aspect of my work, always," the artist said. "I want every gallery to be a different color experience for visitors as they move through them, like looking into a kaleidoscope. I loved kaleidoscopes as a child. You start dreaming as you look through one. I want people to look through them like never before." The exhibition will go through April 19th. *Info: nybg.org.*



EASY PEASY

Outside of New York, I was dazzled by another destination recently, and one place in particular: **The International House** in New Orleans, a boutique hotel steps away from the **French Quarter**. Housed in a Beaux Arts-style building dating back to 1906, the hotel effortlessly blends that history with a modern vibe and artistic flair. The hotel, owned by NOLA entrepreneur Sean Cummings and designed by LM Pagano, is a feast for all with art and international influences like a tufted ottoman covered in a swirling garnet brocade in the lobby, an array of velvet slipper chairs and brocade club chairs, a vintage West African carved mahogany King Bench, two large African drums that serve as side tables, and a richly carved Walga throne from the Ivory Coast. And that's just the lobby! The guest rooms are spacious, modern, and convenient as well. Most interestingly, the hotel has gained local and national prominence for its embrace of the arts and culture, including a recent celebration of writer Charles Bukowski, whose books captured the soul of New Orleans like no other. Next time you're in NOLA, be sure to stay (or stop by at least!). *Info: ihhotel.com.*

The Big Easy is also home to the **Napoleon House**, a restaurant and bar housed in a 200-year old building that stands tall in the **French Quarter**. The setting shows its age—patinated walls, uneven tile floors, and old wooden bar—but that doesn't stop locals and visitors from congregating in this neighborhood favorite, which was painstakingly restored by NOLA's venerated Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group. And it's not just the scenery that brings crowds by the busloads. Chef Chris Montero has infused his Creole roots into its menu, including the legendary New Orleans classic Muffuletta, a hearty sandwich of cured meats and cheese, slathered with a tangy olive salad dressing piled onto a sesame-crust Italian loaf. You also can't leave without savoring a Pimm's Cup, a gin-based aperitif mixed with fresh lemonade, 7-Up, and a sliver of cucumber. *Info: napoleonhouse.com.*

WAG THE FLAG

Heading to Florida? Don't miss the 11th annual **International Gay Polo Tournament** April 2-5 in Wellington. Why not enjoy a weekend getaway filled with parties, polo matches, and capped off with a Sunday brunch at members-only **Mallet Grill**? Hailed as a "chic destination fête for wander lusters and polo enthusiasts alike," this year's tournament is sponsored by Douglas Elliman Real Estate and benefits **SAGE**, the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to serving and advocating LGBT's older adults. "I am so proud and thankful to our supporters for ushering us into our 11th year," says founder and player Chip McKenney. "This event is a global sensation, but we have also turned the game of polo into a platform for human rights. It is a feel-good event in every way and one that is not to be missed!" *Info: gaypolo.com/tickets.*

