

# (epicure)

## mini-review ) Button-Down Bliss

As Tierra, 100 Old Gulph Road was a playground for the culinary elite—a special-occasion restaurant too expensive for many Main Liners. But when the name switched to **Savona**, things loosened up—a little. For some, though, the crisp, white tablecloths, formal service, European-trained staff and *Wine Spectator*-caliber cellar were still a bit daunting.

Now this formerly posh gastronomic wonder has tossed off its tie, donned a leather jacket and, well, put on a party hat. The newly renovated **Bar Savona**, with its plush outdoor dining space and edgy soundtrack, offers up an official—but still low-key—“scene,” and a whole lot of good food, wine and spirits. Most of the bar entrées are under \$20, with

the priciest being a 28-day-aged prime sirloin steak for \$26. The delicate pastas balance made-by-Grandma rusticity with chef Andrew Masciangelo’s contemporary and, at times, masculine panache.



## in the drink

### SODA SHOPPE SPIRIT

You’ve tasted birch beer, but you may not know that one of the world’s most popular soft drinks was conceived in America during Prohibition as an alternative to the alcoholic root tea (a popular recipe taught to settlers by Native Americans in the 1700s). Now, Philadelphia-based Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction has revisited the origins of birch beer with **Root**, an authentic American liqueur. But don’t confuse this with an immature kids’ drink: Root packs a wallop at 80-proof, and it’s been heralded by some as one of the most invigorating new elixirs in recent memory. Its aromatic blend of birch, peppery herbs, baking spices and vanilla delivers a clean taste with lots of flavor. Root is 100-percent USDA-certified organic. Its ingredients—which include anise, pure cane sugar, spearmint and other North American herbs—are all natural. It can be enjoyed on the rocks, as a shot, or mixed with Scotch, beer or clear spirits. To learn more, visit [artintheage.com](http://artintheage.com). —Adam Polaski

SAVONA: JASON VARRIEY

## (quick bites)

### news & notes From Creole

**to Español:** Those who’ve been gone all summer might be surprised by the change that’s taken place next to the **Bryn Mawr Film Institute**. Drama-hound **Carmine’s** took its last gasp in mid-July, and has since been reborn as **Verdad**, a “Euro-Latin” tapas bar that’s also long on wine, tequila and beer. Carmine’s owner **Howard Taylor** is still in the picture, but the new chef is **Nick Farina**, who also owns nearby **Blush**. Both a managing partner and executive chef Farina is experienced in tapas, having adapted Blush’s menu to offer several small plates in early 2009. In case you’re wondering, Verdad means “truth” in Spanish. **>> New gig for Guillermo: Señor Tellez**, whose résumé includes Chester County’s **Northbrook MarketPlace** (most notable for its lovely farmhouse table dinners), has been tapped for **Square 1682** restaurant at Center City’s new **Hotel Palomar** (17th and Sansom streets), which is set to open next month. Tellez definitely has the credentials for what’s sure to be a high-profile job. His background also includes stints at **Striped Bass** and several restaurants owned by **Charlie Trotter** —D.E.W.



Bar Savona’s wood-fired Duroc pork chop

(*Orecchiette* with homemade fennel sausage and broccoli rabe, guys?)

A simple plate of spinach and ricotta ravioli *Napoletana* paired well with a *piatti caldi* of steamed littleneck clams. Both were an excellent follow-up to a hearty vessel of creamy polenta topped with chewy, earthy mushrooms. Unofficial house specialties include savory fried artichoke hearts; pappardelle Bolognese; wild salmon with escarole, white beans and pancetta; and the brawny, ultra-juicy Duroc pork.

If all that’s too rich for your blood, you’ve still got pizza. Light, thin, cracker-crisp and large enough to share, it’s straightforward yet notably aromatic and flavorful. 100 Old Gulph Road, Gulph Mills; (610) 520-1200, [savonarestaurant.com](http://savonarestaurant.com). —Dawn E. Warden

(Dawn E. Warden dishes on the local dining scene in her foodie blog, **boconcini**, at [mainlinetoday.com](http://mainlinetoday.com). Want Warden to check out a restaurant, bar or market? E-mail her at [dwarden@mainlinetoday.com](mailto:dwarden@mainlinetoday.com) or post a comment on **boconcini**.)