



CITY GUIDE

# Where To Eat And Drink In Long Island City's Dutch Kills And Queens Plaza



Richard Martin

August 15, 2017

Like 8

Share



Il Falco and LIC Market are two of the restaurants serving the burgeoning Dutch Kills and Queens Plaza sections of Long Island City, where high-rise buildings are sprouting everywhere. (Photo by Tony Labriola.)

The area of Long Island City that encompasses Dutch Kills and Queens Plaza features an eclectic mix of neighborhood pioneers and exciting newcomers — with more restaurants, bars, lounges and coffee shops opening almost daily. Why all the buzz? All you have to do is look to the sky for an answer. High-rise condos are going up all around, adding thousands of new residents to a part of town that until recently boasted only one world class

---

Get the Latest!

---

cocktail spot (named Dutch Kills as well), a few old-school Italian joints, two M. Wells restaurants, and not much else of culinary interest. In short, people are hungry. And thirsty.

Of course, the close-to-the-waterfront part of Hunter's Point in Long Island City beat Dutch Kills and Queens Plaza to hot spot status a few years ago, with Michelin-starred Casa Enrique and barbecue stalwart John Brown Smokehouse helping the area around Vernon Boulevard become one of NYC's most vibrant restaurant rows. And Dutch Kills is a short taxi (or Uber or Lyft) ride away from long-established dining draws like Astoria and Greenpoint. But residents in the gleaming new towers and townhouses won't have to travel far for excellent eats and drinks anymore, thanks to places on the list below, not to mention a new offshoot of John Brown Smokehouse, Mothership Meat Company (slated to open at 27-20 40th Ave. in Dutch Kills), and an outpost of Lincoln Center favorite Indie Food & Wine (coming to 43-10 Crescent St.). Here's where to eat and drink in Long Island's Dutch Kills and Queens Plaza right now — and check back as we update this post, given how many new establishments are slated to open soon.

**The Beast Next Door Cafe & Bar** — A developing neighborhood needs a place like the Beast Next Door, which offers multiple experiences under one roof. Behind its windowed façade is a café, live music venue, cocktail bar and gastropub all rolled into one. It's one of the best spots around for craft beer and a charcuterie/cheese plate, while a brick wall and eclectic décor provide a rustic-chic ambiance. 42-51 27th St., 718-482-7507, [thebeastnextdoorcafebar.com](http://www.thebeastnextdoorcafebar.com) <<http://www.thebeastnextdoorcafebar.com/>>

---



Beija Flor offers Brazilian cuisine — and weekends filled with live music and dancing — in a developing section of Long Island City. (Photo by Tony Labriola.)

**Beija Flor** — This casual yet lively corner restaurant excels at Brazilian cuisine, whether it’s flavorful sandwiches at lunch or meaty entrees served at dinner alongside a caipirinha. There’s also live music on weekends, when Beija Flor (Portuguese for “hummingbird”) becomes the type of all-day hang with friends that can often lead to late night dance parties,

---

and of course, more caipirinhas! 38-02 29th St., 718-606-2468, [beijaflorlic.com](http://beijaflorlic.com)

[<http://beijaflorlic.com/>](http://beijaflorlic.com/)

**Burger Garage** — While many LIC residents will want to try the local outpost of the famed Corner Bistro for its burger, available a 20-minute walk away on Vernon Blvd., those in the Dutch Kills and QP neighborhoods have an even closer option in Court Square for excellent burgers, fries and a first-rate selection of craft beers. Burger Garage has occupied the corner of Jackson Ave. and 44th Drive since 2009, when Queens natives and brothers Jim and Adam Pileski pooled their collection of Valvoline stickers and set up shop in a former auto shop space. The theme may have been a hook, but the brothers actually know a lot about meat; their grandfather was a founder of the original Palm steakhouse, and Jim spent a chunk of his career at Smith & Wollensky's. But for almost a decade, they've been focused on Burger Garage, serving burgers, beers and more (hot dogs and shakes, for instance; it's family friendly!). 25-36 Jackson Avenue, 718-392-0424, [theburgergarage.com](http://theburgergarage.com)

[<https://theburgergarage.com/>](https://theburgergarage.com/)

**Crescent Grill** — Billed as a restaurant and art gallery, Crescent Grill features an array of seasonal, sustainable and upscale food and drink options, as well as walls featuring rotating art exhibits curated by the Dougherty Gallery, whose owner is an LIC native. The idea, according to the website, is “to support local farms and local artists.” And it's a hit with nearby residents and visitors alike, who come for what is LIC's most ambitious interpretation of farm-to-table dining, with a menu that highlights vegetables, responsibly raised chicken, beef and pork dishes, and sustainable seafood. 38-40 Crescent St., 718-729-4040, [crescentgrill.com](http://crescentgrill.com) [<http://crescentgrill.com/>](http://crescentgrill.com/)

**Dutch Kills Bar (and Hendu's Sandwich Shop)** — Richard Boccato and the late Sasha Petraske opened this craft cocktail lounge in 2009, creating what would become one of the city's most unlikely drinking destinations. Now, the near-legendary spot is poised to take on new life as a neighborhood watering hole complete with a semi-secret sandwich shop within, Hendu's, where a vet of M. Wells is slinging what New York's **Underground Gourmet** [<http://www.grubstreet.com/2017/07/hendus-sandwiches-at-dutch-kills-bar-makes-superb-heros.html>](http://www.grubstreet.com/2017/07/hendus-sandwiches-at-dutch-kills-bar-makes-superb-heros.html) called “the sort of outsize heros you'd expect to find at a longshoreman's saloon, not a genteel temple of pre-Prohibition mixology.” (Pro-tip: the

---

---

heros are available some weekdays at lunch via service window; otherwise, they're available during bar hours.) Still, as befitting a craft cocktail den, you'll need to turn on your smartphone's GPS to find Dutch Kills Bar, as there's little sign from the outside that a masterclass in cocktail making takes place within. 27-24 Jackson Ave., 718-383-2724, [dutchkillsbar.com](http://www.dutchkillsbar.com) <<http://www.dutchkillsbar.com>/>



With its wood bar and tiled floors, Dutch Kills Centraal evokes European neighborhood pubs. (Photo: Tony Labriola)

**Dutch Kills Centraal** — Owners Dominic and Jean Stiller say they set out to evoke a European pub when they opened Dutch Kills Centraal on a corner several years back, and they certainly succeeded. The warm wood tones, tiled floors and long bar offer a gastropub feel, and the menu delivers the goods with seasonally driven cooking that spans pub fare (grass-fed burgers) to healthier options (a tasty lentil salad with add-ons like shrimp or grilled chicken). The indie-folk soundtrack and attentive service add to one of the area's most pleasant atmospheres, and weekend brunch (think omelettes, French toast and biscuits with gravy) draws couples and families, as well as big groups to the the Centraal's communal table. 38-40 29th St., 718-606-8651, [dutchkillscentraal.com](http://www.dutchkillscentraal.com) <<http://www.dutchkillscentraal.com>/>

---

---

**Gordo's Cantina** — What started out as street vending and pop-ups has become permanent on an otherwise food-starved stretch of Bridge Plaza. At Gordo's Cantina, expect a taste of the street food of various regions of Mexico, which means everything from octopus tacos to mole-drenched enchiladas to open-face chicken quesadillas. Though the restaurant could be described as intimate (or small if you're being less charitable), it does offer a mood-setting décor, with art and furnishings sourced from Mexico. *24-11 Bridge Plaza N., no phone, [gordoscantina.com](http://gordoscantina.com) <<http://gordoscantina.com/>>*

**Il Falco** — What would Queens be without its signature red sauce joints? You won't find many better than Il Falco, where two ex-Il Mulino chefs run the kitchen and where the outdoor patio evokes a bit of Tuscany amid the industrial setting. Not that the menu settles in one region; in fact, this is one of those crowd-pleasing places where one diner can revel in a classic ravioli while table mates try our risotto or branzino or a nice scallopini. The interior dining room features the white table cloths, plentiful wine bottles and other standards of the Italian-American restaurant genre. *21-50 44th Dr, 718-707-0009, [ilfalcolic.com](http://ilfalcolic.com) <<http://ilfalcolic.com/>>*

**Levante** — The very latest entry to the area's dining scene is this handsome new pizza-and-more restaurant next door to the recently opened Toby's Estate Coffee (the ace Australian coffee company whose first U.S. outpost is in Williamsburg). A look at the menu during its current soft opening showcased a range of Neapolitan pies, panini and appetizers. There's also a bar inside the high-ceilinged dining room, and a patio out back. Owner Eden Tesfamariam Gaim and her partners already run Luzzo's in Brooklyn Heights, so Levante should be up to speed even in these early days. *26-21 Jackson Ave., 718-392-3885, [levantelic.com](http://www.levantelic.com) <<http://www.levantelic.com/>>*

**LIC Beer Project** — Brooklyn isn't the only borough with its own IPA-specializing beer halls. LIC Beer Project is a relative upstart in the bustling NYC craft beer scene, but it's already earned high marks for its Pile of Crowns, whose name alludes to a Keith Haring piece that was made in honor of Jean-Michel Basquiat (it has a colorful can to boot). This and other inventive beers by head brewer Dan Acosta can be sampled in the Brewery and Taphouse, where trivia nights and special DJ appearances help keep guests entertained (**follow along**

---

---

on twitter <<https://twitter.com/licbp?lang=en>> for event news). 39-28 23rd St., LIC, 917-832-6840, [licbeerproject.com](http://licbeerproject.com) <<http://licbeerproject.com/>>

**LIC Market** — Sharing a wall with Il Falco on the bottom floor of a rare stretch of brownstones on 44th Dr., LIC Market is one of the few restaurants in the area that — intentionally or not — nods to the neighborhood’s long-ago farming past. The team behind LIC Market is too sharp to call this a farm-to-table spot, but with its distressed walls, mismatched tables and seasonal menu, that’s what it is. There’s also a stellar list of natural wines and a selection of craft beers as well. At a recent lunch, I enjoyed a fresh-tasting BLT with avocado on ciabatta paired with a zippy white wine from the Languedoc. 21-52 44th Dr., 718-361-0013, [licmarket.com](http://www.licmarket.com) <<http://www.licmarket.com/>>

**M. Wells Dinette** — Long before it was hip for museums to install a chef-driven restaurant off the lobby, MoMA/PS1 tapped husband-wife team Hugue Dufour and Sarah Obraitis to match their avant-garde dishes to the cutting-edge art exhibits. The result is a curious mash-up of neighborhood restaurant (museum admission isn’t required) with culinary fireworks in a homey setting. Dishes in Dufour’s repertoire include foie gras grilled cheese, a steak tartare sandwich and boundary-pushing salads. And the Dinette’s long been part of in-the-know New Yorkers’ idyll of a summer Saturday afternoon: during the long-running **PS1 Warmup series** <<https://www.moma.org/calendar/programs/106?locale=en>> , which features world-class DJs and art installations, the Dinette serves cocktails and special menu items are offered in the courtyard. 22-25 Jackson Ave., 718-786-1800, [magasinwells.com](http://magasinwells.com) <<http://magasinwells.com/>>

**M. Wells Steakhouse** — Following the success of their Dinette, Dufour and Obraitis took on trying to subvert the conventional idea of the steakhouse, opening in a converted auto body shop next to a loading dock. The menu nods to Dufour’s Quebec heritage and his past work as a chef at Montreal’s famed Au Pied du Cochon, so there’s lots of nose-to-tail meat preparation, but also items like a recent special of fried zucchini blossoms stuffed with cheese curds. The speakeasy-like feel of the place set a tone when it opened in 2014 that’s fast becoming a hallmark of the neighborhood: underneath the gleaming glass towers, some dining experiences with ambiance await. 43-15 Crescent Street, 718-786-9060, [magasinwells.com](http://magasinwells.com) <<http://magasinwells.com/>>

---



Long Island City's Oro offers a refined take on Italian cuisine, with dishes like gnocchi with Bolognese sauce. (Photo courtesy of Oro.)

**Oro** — Just around the corner from Queensboro Plaza is one of Long Island City's most crowd-pleasing upscale restaurants, Oro, with an emphasis on refined Italian dishes — though pizzas and a burger are also available. Father-son team Walter and Mike Celic have a Croatian background, but it's dishes from neighboring Italy that reign here, with hand-rolled gnocchi offered with Bolognese or pesto, chicken preparations like parmigiana and marsala, and many other favorites from the Italian-American restaurant playbook. The sizable space accommodates up to 160 diners, and a glitzy lounge area serves cocktails and bites as well. *41-17 Crescent St., 718-729-1801, [orolicrestaurant.com](http://orolicrestaurant.com)*  
<<http://orolicrestaurant.com/>>

---





Unico Global Tacos showcases international flavors on a tortilla, such as the Korean-style Incheon taco. (Photo: Courtesy of Unico.)

**Unico Global Tacos** — Founded with the idea that Mexican tortillas are a proven base for international flavors, Unico has garnered a lot of buzz for items like its Incheon taco — Korean-style short ribs, kimchi, gochujang and salsa verde. Unico served up first-rate

---

options on a recent visit, including a fish taco special and a vegan taco option, Shimla, mingling potatoes and onions with Indian spices and raita. Owner Roni Mazumdar notes that he's now working closely with LaGuardia College across the street to give hospitality program students opportunities in restaurant management. *31-31 Thomson Ave., 718-433-3888, [unico.nyc](http://www.unico.nyc/) <<http://www.unico.nyc/>>*

*This post presented by [ARC](http://www.arclivinglic.com) <<http://www.arclivinglic.com>> , Lightstone's new residential development in Long Island City.*