

# Spring Arrives on the Row

BY SHARON BOSWORTH

After months of bitter cold, biting winds and foot after foot of snow, Washingtonians are eager for the start of spring. While the tourists descend on the National Mall to see the cherry blossoms and take photos in front of the tulips on the lawn of the White House, the residents of Capitol Hill eagerly line up for a local favorite of springtime rituals: enjoying lunch while sitting outdoors at the best restaurants on Barracks Row.

“People will actually wait 40 minutes for one of the outdoor tables, even when we could seat them inside right away,” says Adrian Barrett, manager at Matchbox (521 Eighth St. SE), a “vintage pizza bistro” here on the Row. The large glass panel windows in the front of the restaurant completely open, providing a seamless flow between the indoor and outdoor tables. He credits the popularity of the outdoor seating to a few factors, but the biggest one, as he sees it, is people want somewhere to eat with their dogs in tow. “We put out two or three dog bowls so they can have water, and the neighborhood residents love it.”

Andreas Xenohristos, owner/manager at nearby Cava (527 Eighth St. SE), says, “People from the neighborhood are proud of the street and the way it’s grown; they want to sit out and enjoy it.” After being here for 10 months, he finds that the Row “gets better every day” and that the quality trees and landscaping on the street make it an attractive option for outdoor dining on Eighth Street. Diners can enjoy the beautiful street life and Cava’s unique Greek-inspired dishes for lunch or dinner seasonally “any day the weather is nice.”

## Hidden Outdoor Seating

Cava offers a hidden bonus upstairs: an open-air bar on a roof deck. “We have heaters for the outdoor deck area – we even had a group who had a New Year’s Eve party up there – to keep customers comfortable on chilly nights,” says Xenohristos. The upstairs outdoor bar is open on Friday and Saturday nights, although it has been so popular that they have considered adding Thursday nights to the mix. Cava offers signature martinis and other libations in this space while patrons enjoy the fresh air. Recently, they’ve entertained the idea of also adding a Sunday brunch to the space. “Brunch is always packed, so if people ask for it, we’d probably start doing it,” he says.

A little farther down the row at Molly Malone’s (713 Eighth St. SE), manager Billie Jo Backert says that when the weather is nice, “The front tables always fill up first.” Especially with outdoor seating for only 12, the waits for the sidewalk seating can run on the longer side, but diners don’t seem to mind. “People will wait for the tables outside, and just have a drink at the bar,” until one opens up.

Lola, a restaurant right next door owned by the same people, only has outdoor seating for four in the front because of DC regulations for sidewalk seating but offers ample addi-

tional outdoor seating with a fireplace in the back. “The fireplace makes it popular in cooler weather,” notes Backert. “It’s a great place to go, even if you’re just stepping out for some fresh air.”

## New Outdoor Options Opening Soon

Backert is also eagerly awaiting the opening of their third restaurant on the row, the Chesapeake Room at the corner of Eighth and E streets SE, just in time to welcome residents and visitors who prefer to dine outside with 40 planned seats on the E Street side of the restaurant. This new location will even feature heating and cooling elements, so it will be comfortable almost all year round. Given the popularity of al fresco dining at Lola’s and Molly Malone’s, the outdoor area at the Chesapeake Room is sure to be home to some of the Row’s most sought-after tables as well.

Of course, many other great restaurants on the Row offer outdoor options. Banana Cafe (500 Eighth St. SE) and Fusion Grill (515 Eighth St. SE) are also popular choices on sunny days. And all of them are eager to reopen the spaces after a long, cold winter.

So, much like the nature lovers who eagerly eye the buds on the trees for the first bloom of the season, keep your eye on the Row for the first sets of tables and chairs to find their way to the sidewalks. All of your old favorites and some exciting new choices will soon be opening their sidewalk seating!

*Sharon Bosworth is marketing manager at Barracks Row Main Street. Call 202-544-3188 or visit [www.barracksrow.org](http://www.barracksrow.org) for more information. ★*

