

FOR YEARS, THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT of New Orleans languished. But with the Louisiana World's Fair in 1984 kick-starting development, the area has blossomed into a mix of restaurants, bars, hotels, art galleries, museums, condominiums and stores crafted from former warehouses, industrial buildings and townhouses.

### MORE THAN A PLACE TO REST YOUR HEAD

One of the most recent additions is the **Virgin Hotel New Orleans**, an \$80 million project that opened in August 2021. The hotel has 236 rooms, including two penthouse suites. New Orleans design firm Logan Killen Interiors, which worked with the Virgin to localize the property with unique touches, created its playful interiors.

The hotel's Commons Club restaurant, helmed by Chef Alex Harrell, is participating in COOLinary New Orleans. (COOLinary, which happens in the month of August, is when restaurants citywide offer multi-course, prix fixe meals at special prices.) Other events at the hotel include: Aug. 3: Core & Cocktails with Club Pilates at the Pool Club (the hotel's rooftop bar, restaurant and pool area); Aug. 14: Shabram & The Fam, performing during brunch; and Sept. 2: Diva Drag Brunch.

The **Kimpton Hotel Fontenot** opened in May 2021. The 202-room boutique hotel is also home to the Peacock Room where visitors can enjoy craft cocktails, food and entertainment. Da Lovebirds — Robin Barnes and Pat Casey — are continuing their Thursday musical residency, and a new performer, Joshua Starkman, will be bringing his "Have a Great Day" showcase on Aug. 10. Sundays will showcase the Jazz Brunch series with Rachel Murray and Joe Bouchá and Jelani Bauman.

### TOUR DE EAT

**Gianna** is the latest in the [Donald] Link Restaurant Group empire, which includes Herbsaint, Pêche Seafood Grill, Calcasieu, Cochon and Cochon Butcher, all located in the Warehouse District, as well as La Boulangerie in Uptown. All have distinct culinary personalities with Gianna serving food your Italian nonna would make. New this summer is brunch Saturday and Sunday, featuring dishes such as pasta Bordelaise, eggs alla Gianna (farm eggs, chilies, tomato soffritto and fried ciabatta), ricotta gnocchi and an heirloom tomato panzanella.

When asked about why **Annunciation Restaurant** has lasted 10 years in the Warehouse District, Director of Special Events Kristin Sparks mentions the restaurant's "traditional Creole dishes" as a favorite for locals and out-of-town guests as well as its proximity to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, located by the Mississippi River.

Annunciation is participating in COOLinary. It will offer a three-course dinner with choices including watermelon salad, veal Sorrentino and bananas Foster.

Annunciation also offers innovative takes on Creole dishes on its regular menu with two popular selections including fresh drum Yvonne, which is drum topped with artichoke, mushrooms, green onions and served with Brabant potatoes and broccoli, and soft-shell crab Monica served with



crawfish, green onion and garlic.

**St. James Cheese Company**, which opened its first location Uptown, spread its wings to a second, the Warehouse District location in December 2015.

"Our menu is designed to reflect the type of casual food we ate while living in the U.K. and traveling in Europe, and is of course, cheese-centric," says Danielle Sutton who owns this cheese emporium/restaurant with her husband Richard. "We use high-quality ingredients to serve fresh and grilled sandwiches, hearty salads and cheese and charcuterie boards."

Among the other items: "Our popular Cantal salad which was inspired by a salad I had in the Auvergne region of France, with Cantal cheese, julienned ham, walnuts and our housemade Dijon vinaigrette," she says, adding, "the grilled Mozzarella, salami and pesto sandwich was a sandwich I ate all the time living in London at little Italian cafes."

The duo also finds inspiration from their staff who have come up with specials, as well as some menu items, such as Hook's Cheddar and the Il Mostro, that are now on the everyday menu.

Sutton added that they are, "on the cusp of launching our new private events menu in the early fall for the Warehouse District shop (and Uptown). We are getting more and more requests to rent our Warehouse District store out for events."

The restaurant's summer hours are extending through September, Mon.- Sat. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Happy Hour will run during that time with \$5 draft beers, \$2 off >>



Opposite page: The Commons Club at the Virgin Hotel New Orleans  
Top: Degas Gallery. Above: The homespun Italian cuisine of Gianna.