

Level III soars above the streets of the 'loin, inside the newly revamped JW Marriott

Swank in the Tenderloin

Written by Sydney Pfaff

The Tenderloin has a bad rap. Sure, its not the most luxurious 'hood in this fair city, but a little grime never hurt anyone, right? Although the area has its share of gritty gutters and deafening street sounds, not every restaurant and lounge is worth passing by. Here, we'll point out some of the finer sides of the often-misunderstood neighborhood.

Urban Tavern

Brand-spankin' new on the outskirts of the TL, Urban Tavern is the latest venture from Christopher Condy and Laurent Manrique. Inspired by Mediterranean gastro pubs found throughout the South of France, the tavern's focus is on the grilled meats, which are ordered first, then followed with the customer's preferred sauce choice (we recommend the black pepper and Armagnac) then the dish is completed with a side of potatoes, vegetables or beans. Round out the evening with a glass of one of their many wines and consider it a job well-done — unlike the cooking of the tender, orgasmically delicious marinated rib eye steak.

333 O'Farrell Street, Tenderloin
415.923.4400 | www.urbantavernsf.com

Bourbon & Branch

Exclusive and elusive, Bourbon & Branch was one of the first speakeasies to make their comeback into the 21st Century, right back to the area that was once so famous for them during the prohibition. While some might not be keen on the house rules or required secret password for entry, the refreshing cucumber gimlet is enough to make one completely forget about the strict regulations. No corruption here, just good ol' libations with a glimpse back on the roaring twenties.

501 Jones Street, Tenderloin
415.346.1735 | www.bourbonandbranch.com

Level III

We know, it's in a hotel — but not all hotel bars are bad, we promise. We also know that counting Post and Mason streets as the Tenderloin might be stretching it, but many a night on this block could easily be considered TL-esque. JW Marriott revamped their digs this summer and revealed Level III, where customers can choose from small plates or full entrées of modern American cuisine from Executive Chef Ben Mattman's menu. Opt for the large communal table, where the restaurant encourages social activity while eating —much better than mom's old rules.

500 Post Street, Nob Hill | 415.929.2087 | www.levelthreesf.com



McTeague's Saloon

From the guy that brought us North Beach classic O'Reilly's, this newcomer to the scene is just what Lower Polk Street needed — aren't there enough art galleries and semi-gay bars already? McTeague's is an old-time saloon offering the longest happy hour in history — guzzle down \$3 beers and well drinks everyday from noon to 7 p.m. To top things off, they have free Wi-Fi, making this the best "I'm-working-from-home-today" spot in the city.

1237 Polk Street, Nob Hill | 415.776.1237

The Ambassador

The word is out about Vintage 415's beloved lounge, the Ambassador, and it's flat-out fabulous. Brick walls line the main room, marble glazes the stocked bar and a VIP balcony overlooks the whole scene — and believe us, it truly is a scene. Whether you're looking for appetizers and cocktails or a burger and a beer, the menu is set to please. The boys really did a number on this one: plush booths with phones for calling neighboring patrons, 31 — count 'em, 31 — glistening crystal chandeliers and a gorgeous bar to boot.

673 Geary Street, Nob Hill | 415.563.8192 | www.ambassador415.com

farmerbrown

On one of the ultimate seedy corners of the TL sits the soulful farmerbrown. Owner and Chef Jay Foster adamantly supports local farmers by using sustainable, biodynamic and organic ingredients in FB's fresh soul food dishes. The good-looking rustic space is decked out with hammered tin wall panels and African-inspired artwork, with live jazz for Sunday's Southern brunch. Pay no mind to the



intense action awaiting on the streets, just pour some more of their homemade hot sauce on the fried chicken. Buy a five-dollar bottle of their secret green sauce on the way out.

25 Mason Street, Tenderloin

415.409.3276 | www.farmerbrownsf.com

Brick

Brick was transformed from an old greasy-spoon diner into a chic art-friendly restaurant and it was about time. Not that there's anything wrong with a good dive-like diner, we love them as much as the next pancake lover, but the corner was badly in need of a facelift. The multi-level restaurant includes the newly all-too-familiar communal table, an exhibition kitchen, wraparound copper-topped bar and a rotating gallery of art work just off the main room. Oh, the décor? Well, the space is surrounded by walls of, well, brick — hence the name.

1085 Sutter Street, Nob Hill

415.441.4232 | www.brickrestaurant.com

The Owl Tree

Not so much swank as it is historic, the Owl Tree saw a grim time last year when it was closed without much hope of a future. What was once a truly bizarre, yet comforting dive bar was on the verge of collapse after owner Bobby Cook passed away. Luckily, the right people came along to revamp and reopen the place in honor of Bobby and his avid fixation of owls — plus a few new bottles of high-grade libations and pricier cocktails, and minus the impressive collection of porcelain and wooden owl tchotchkes.

601 Post Street, Nob Hill | 415.359.1600