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Summer bar scene

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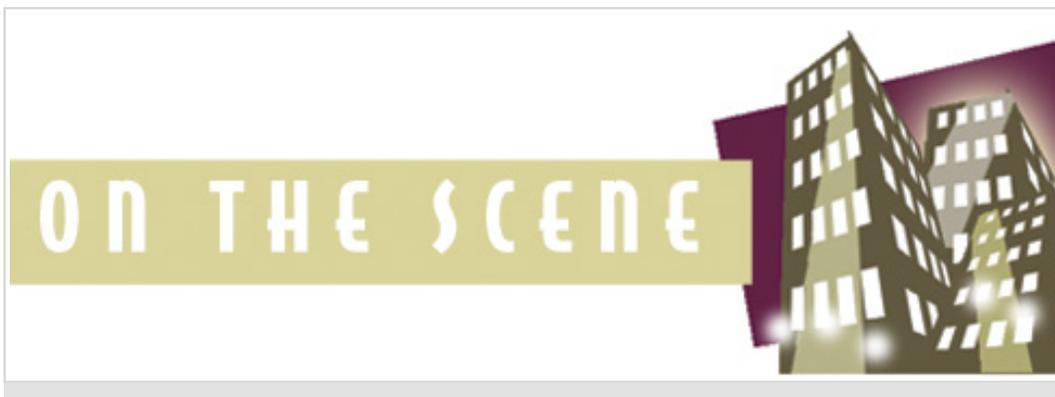


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Summer seems to have hit its stride in the last week, making it the perfect time of year, between thunderstorms, to catch some rays while grabbing a few drinks. Check out some of these top choices from around town.

Cantina Los Caballitos, 1651 E. Passyunk Ave: More than any other spot on the avenue, this Mexican joint's recently paved patio carved into the corner of Passyunk Street and Morris Street pulls in undecided diners roaming the area. On a nice day, it's very difficult to walk directly past the



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consistently lively space. The tequila selection is vast — offering equal numbers of blancos, reposados, and añejos — so start with the introduction to tequila flight that allows one to test their palate. Margaritas, of course, are another way to get that fix, and Cantina serves up a solid array of flavors on the rocks, frozen or served up.

Food wise, it is best to order up a few options to share. A couple of taco selections, an order of pork picadillo empanadas, and platanos machos (fried sweet plantains) to balance things will make for a light but filling meal that leaves room for drinks and won't leave patrons sweating in the summer air.

American Sardine Bar, 1800 Federal St.: Soups, sandwiches, sides and sardines are among what one will find served at this Point Breeze faux-dive bar helmed by Scott Schroeder, who also heads up the kitchen of the South Philly Taproom. Highlighted by what many call the city's best fried chicken, the menu currently includes sweet bologna sliders, a vegan cheesesteak with cheese wiz and a peanut butter covered pretzel with blueberries

The food jibes perfectly with the bar's outdoor space, which one would probably mistake for a residential backyard if it weren't for the giant sardine painted onto the brick above the beer yard. Royal blue and white lawn chairs fill up the space, separated from the streets by only a short fence and flowerboxes. Add in that you're probably drinking from a vibrantly patterned craft can and you might as well be out back at your friend's place.

Xfinity Live!, 1100 Pattison Ave.: More an experience than a bar, especially for those who head down the day of a big Eagles or Flyers game (less so for the Phillies lately), this stadium area complex is every tailgater's fantasy. A turf field stocked with the essential games, a full outdoor bar and a jumbo TV for all the action makes Xfinity almost as fun as being at the game.

PBR and Victory Beer Hall offer their own outdoor spaces separate from the fray, both sizeable in their own right. Victory's rows of park style tables and benches mimics the décor of the interior that features community style seating and one very long central table. Come fall, one of the best seats in South Philly is around the fire pit on a Thursday or Friday night. At PBR, when you aren't riding the bull, you can step out and rest your Jack and Coke on a barrel to grab a breather before going back in for round two.

Stateside, 1536 E. Passyunk Ave.: OK, so things here are a little different than they used to be. Shifting from chef to chef, though each talented, will have that affect on a restaurant. However, some things will never change, and at Stateside that means having one of the best whiskey lists in Philly, pouring dynamite cocktails and wrapping eight seats around the corner of Cross Street and Passyunk Avenue with access to the bar. Floating above the concrete and attached to the pale brick wall, count these stools among South Philly's best to take in the scenes of the city.

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Even if you cannot score one of the ever elusive outside seats, take up a spot at the bar inside, and gaze through the beer taps to watch the fountain. Though sacrilege, give sangria a try instead of whiskey. A potent drinking person's version of the Spanish staple, it will knock you on your heels before cooling you down.

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