



Birthdays? Get your name on the board at Jimmie Kramer's Peanut Bar.

Fill Your Plate

Yes, you can still get great mushrooms and German-influenced food in this region of Pennsylvania. But Berks County's ever-changing immigrant population and well-traveled chefs now have much, much more on the menu.

Bistro 614

Gourmet brunch, lunch, and dinner indoors and out. Menus change daily. Try the Guinness French onion soup, and do not miss dessert. 614 Penn Ave., West Reading; 610-375-9900; bistro614.com.

Rest Your Head

Virtually every major U.S. hotel chain has a foothold in Berks County. But the area's storied past has also left it with a rich trove of mansions that have been converted into boutique hotels. Here are some interesting smaller hotels to try:

Adrienne's Inn at Centre Park

A 129-year-old stone gothic manse with lavish woodwork, stained glass, and plaster reliefs commissioned by its third owner, the founder of Glidden Paints. Two suites and one guest room, all with private baths. 730 Centre Ave.; 610-374-8557; adriennesinnatcentrepark.com.

Bed & Breakfast on the Park

Built in 1887 for Jonathan and Julia Mould, who would later give Reading its distinctive hilltop Pagoda. The Queen Anne-style mansion, located in the Penn's Common Historic District, has four guest rooms and a carriage-house cottage. 1246 Hill Rd.; 610-374-4440; parkbandb.com.

Chat-A-While Inn

Two restaurants at the same location, Simpatico, with an extensive Italian menu, and Bistecca, a steakhouse featuring Kobe beef. 237 Butter La.; 610-779-9906, chatawhile.com.

Judy's on Cherry

This funky former warehouse serves up oven-fresh focaccia, pizzas, and salads. In a renovated log cabin next door, The Speckled Hen offers traditional pub grub. 332 Cherry St.; 610-374-8511; judysoncherry.com.

Hong Thanh Restaurant

A favorite with the downtown business crowd, this Vietnamese restaurant certainly gets down to business. Go for the classic soup, pho. 22 N. Sixth St.; 610-374-0434.

Jimmie Kramer's Peanut Bar

Forget what your mama told you about spilling food: It's OK to drop the shells here. Regulars get their birthday announced on a chalk board over the bar. 332 Penn St.; 610-376-8500; peanutbar.com.

Ocean Blue Bar and Grille

You can almost feel the sea breeze in its open dining room and outdoor terrace. Try the crab brulee or innovative surf 'n' turf. 600 Penn St.; 610-372-5300; oceanbluebarandgrille.com.

The Ugly Oyster

This transplanted English pub marries Reading's signature snack, the pretzel, with crab and cheddar. Yum. 21 S. Fifth St.; 610-373-6791; theuglyoyster.com.

— Compiled by Virginia Citrano

Living Spring Farm B&B

A 200-year-old stone farm house on 32 acres at the southwestern edge of Berks County. Three guest rooms and an 1860 cottage bedroom suite, all with private baths and locally made quilts. 1737 Alleghenyville Rd., Mohnton, 610-775-8525; livingspringfarm.com.

Wing Pointe Resort

A resort for sport shooters just ten minutes from sporting outfitter Cabela's. Hunt pheasant and partridges on 200 acres from September through March, or try the sporting clays and skeet course year-round. Four luxury suites in the main lodge, and a nine-guest hunting retreat. 1414 Moslem Springs Rd., Hamburg; 610-562-6962; wingpt.com.

Stirling Guest Hotel

Recently restored to its 1892 grandeur as the private residence of the Sternbergh family. Nine suites in the main mansion and six in the adjoining carriage house, all with private baths, air conditioning, and fireplaces. 1120 Centre Ave.; 610-373-1522; stirlingguesthotel.com.

— Compiled by Virginia Citrano

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