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# THE EAT IS ON

BY ELIZABETH KEYSER

**OUR RESTAURANTS HAD TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS TO WEATHER THE PANDEMIC STORM. EVEN NOW, THEY ARE STILL FINDING THEIR WAY IN THE NEW NORMAL. HERE, WE CHAT WITH PERSONALITIES BEHIND THE KITCHENS AND FILL YOU IN ON SOME OF THE STANDOUT OFFERINGS AWAITING YOU**

**T**alk about the unexpected. What happens when an industry devoted to welcoming people meets a pandemic that causes a complete lockdown? Greenwich restaurateurs responded to the crisis with creativity, determination and safety protocols, plenty of protocols.

The culinary landscape transformed—literally—as driveways and streets morphed into outdoor dining spaces. Out of the pandemic also came a sense of comradery with about ninety local and state restaurateurs joining 9 a.m. Zoom calls hosted by the Connecticut Restaurant Association. They banded together and shared advice.

Greenwich residents responded, too, reaching out, asking “How can we help?” And that’s the fun part. We get to help by enjoying the food these devoted professionals create. Flexibility is the name of the game. Check websites for specials and pop-ups. Call ahead, and be prepared to adapt in these uncertain times. »



Chef Stephen at  
Townhouse fires it up!

# Faces Behind the Plates

LOCAL OWNERS SHARE HOW THEY ROSE  
TO THE CHALLENGES OF COVID  
(HINT: IT HAS A LOT TO DO WITH YOU)

“The COVID experience has been one of the best and one of the worst. PEOPLE CAME TO SUPPORT, REACHED OUT AND ASKED HOW THEY COULD HELP. PEOPLE ARE MORE APPRECIATIVE AND KIND. We see that in the gratuities and the reviews.”

## Adam Zakka

MANAGING PARTNER,  
TERRA AND EASTEND

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203-862-9200  
409 Greenwich Ave.,  
zhospitalitygroup.com/eastend

## Anshu Vidyarthi

CO-OWNER, THE FAT POODLE  
AND LE PENGUIN

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Le Penguin in Greenwich expanded outdoor dining, transforming its side driveway into an outdoor room with all the Provencal feel of the hip French bistro. Anshu explains:

“We painted the driveway orange and it looks fantastic. We painted the window trim navy blue, and painted the Penguin on the wall. We created an ambience with a tent, plants and music. WE WANT TO GIVE OUR GUESTS THE WHOLE PACKAGE. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE SOMETHING BETTER.”

## Dana Cifone

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS,  
TOWNHOUSE

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35 Church St.,  
townhousegreenwich.com

“When you open a restaurant, it's to make people feel welcome. We opened during a pandemic, with these beautiful interiors and Chef Stephen's beyond-talent, and every day is a question mark. You need to predict your business in a new way. Weather, staffing, what guests want, what is their comfort level? WE ARE BEYOND THANKFUL FOR THE SUPPORT FROM GUESTS. IT'S SO NICE AND HUMBLING THAT IN THESE TIMES WE'RE FORMING REGULARS. WE'RE MEETING NEW PEOPLE, AND THEY'RE COMING BACK.”

## Doug Grabe

CO-OWNER,  
LITTLE PUB, COS COB

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“The goal has been to make this bizarre situation as normal as possible,” says Doug Grabe, co-owner. The team designed and built dining pods of reclaimed wood that look like they've been here for 200 years. “FOR US IT'S BEEN A MATTER OF ADJUSTING ON THE FLY, REMAINING NIMBLE AND FLEXIBLE, AND STICKING TO THE MISSION OF KEEPING PEOPLE HAPPY. WE WANT TO PROVIDE A SENSE OF NORMALCY FOR OURSELVES, OUR CUSTOMERS AND THE COMMUNITY. We are living in an era of uncertainty, and we're rolling with it.”