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LOCAL FEATURE

You need some fresh air: Head outside to drink

Take that cocktail and smell the pavement!

By [MATT KALKHOFF](#)
Friday, May 20, 2005

When Mother Nature teased and taunted us with unseasonably warm April weather, tavernkeepers with such precious amenities as patios, backyards and roof decks scrambled to accommodate the swarms of winter-weary patrons anxious to enjoy nature, New York-style.

Despite cooler, monsoon-like conditions that have dominated May, it won't be long until we're complaining about scorching hot subway platforms. Aboveground, though, we have more options than ever to quench our thirsts outdoors.

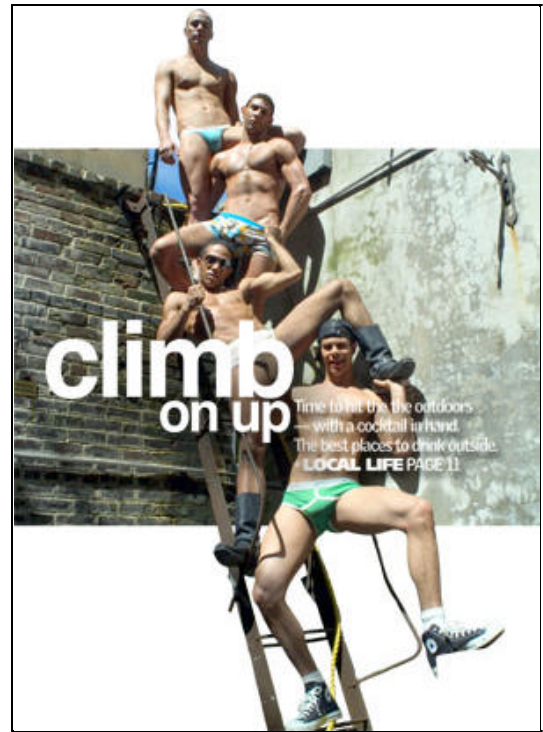
Never one to shy away from a stiff drink, I recently did some intoxicating research to find the best outdoor options around town. Only including primarily gay events and locales are included.

- XES lounge in Chelsea (157 W. 24th St.) boasts one of the largest outdoor patios in the area and is open seven days a week. On Sundays they start with a beer blast from 4-9pm, "Desperate Housewives" afterwards on the big screen TV inside, and then a post-show performance by Cashetta. Because the bar is situated in a residential area, though, the patio closes at 11pm on weeknights and midnight on weekends. But it opens daily at 4:00pm for happy hour and will no doubt host many other festive gatherings throughout the summer.



The garden patio at XES, a little gem hidden on a side street in Chelsea is also one of the bars offering an outdoor space. Careful: It's spacious but gets crowded, especially on Friday nights.

- Metropolitan Bar in Williamsburg (558 Lorimer St., Brooklyn) was voted Best Gay Bar in the



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city by New York magazine this year. Eager to check out Williamsburg's only gay bar, I stepped into a stop owned — as New York noted — by the people behind the “mercifully unstylish Phoenix in the East Village,” but with “the same neighborhood-pickup-joint-friendliness.”

In other words, it's a dive (not that that's a bad thing!). It was fairly empty during a recent Wednesday Happy Hour, but the expansive dual-level backyard was rather impressive. It reportedly gets packed on Sunday afternoons in the summer thanks to a beer blast and free BBQ. If you're looking for a low-key place to sling back a few cheap drinks while cruising and being cruised, then this might be the perfect alternative to Low Tea in the Pines.

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- The Cabanas at the Maritime Hotel (363 W. 16th St.) on Sunday evenings offers a stylish and sophisticated setting. Launched last summer by Erich Conrad and Lincoln Palsgrove, the party was moved inside to Hiro for the winter, where it has enjoyed enormous success. As the weather improves, look for this popular soiree to move back out to the open-air terrace where the See-and-Be-Seen fauna sip their cocktails on display amidst organic flora.

- The Park, just down the street, while technically a restaurant, becomes a homo-filled hotbed of social activity on Sunday nights when Jonny McGovern and JonJon Battles present The Rambles.

An open bar from 10 to 11 p.m., “Mr. Joe's XXX Go-Go Patrol” and a hot tub on the second level make this a decidedly more decadent affair. But perhaps its biggest draw is the two large outdoor patios where frisky patrons of the younger and cuter persuasion gather in droves and seem to have no qualms about starting the workweek off with a hangover.

- The Eagle (554 W. 28th St.), also located in West Chelsea, caters to the leather- and Levi-crowd. It boasts a quite respectably sized rooftop bar of its own.

Sunday beer blasts here are legendary. It begins at 5 p.m., and there's just no telling what kind of naughty activity takes place up on the well-concealed private patio under the moonlight's glow. When the Folsom East Fair hits town on June 19, this venue will surely be the heart of the action for many of the surrounding events.

- Gym Sportsbar (167 Eighth Ave.), may be the new kid on the block, but it's made a touchdown. Only open since March, it seems to have filled a major void, considering its popularity thus far. Whether there are truly enough gay sports enthusiasts to keep the place packed regularly remains to be seen, but two forthcoming additions to the narrow space should certainly help.

A large basement area (with showers and locker room area? We can only hope) will soon be unveiled as will an outdoor patio in the back. There is currently a small patio up front for smokers (this is a gay sports bar), but the other will apparently be much larger.

Daily happy hour from 4 to 9 p.m. and beer blasts on both Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 9 p.m. make it even more fun to be an athletic supporter.

- Beige at B-Bar & Grill (40 E. Fourth St.) is the East Village spot where the Maritime/Cabanas crowd poses on Tuesday nights. A long-running staple of weeknight revelry, this offers your best chance to spot a celebrity (or celebrity wannabe) mingling among the gays and their many beautiful, fashionable friends.

I'm sure they do allow less attractive people in at the door, but you won't see too many of them inside. Or out on the lovely patio where the trees are illuminated in our signature rainbow colors. Sure, it's a trek from the West Side and your bar tab might kill your buzz, but even the most casual among us can use a good dose of glamour every once in a while.

- O.W. Bar (221 E. 58th St.) sits farther Uptown but still east. This relatively small East Side bar is known among size queens for having the “longest gay bar in the city.” The patio may not be quite big enough to stage shows or large parties, but it does offer a nice respite. Kenny “Bingo Bitch” Dash emcees Bingorama on Mondays with other live entertainment throughout the week and a digital jukebox that's just overflowing with tunes.

- Posh (405 W. 51st St.) may be the only option for those of us who dwell in the netherworld of Hell's Kitchen. The front patio may be tiny and usually overwhelmed by smokers, but on busier nights, the crowd will overflow to the sidewalk so you might be able to commandeer one

of the two tables and avoid freebasing second-hand smoke. Happy hours are usually busy; on Fridays, my very own party-chasing posse often takes over one or more of the couches in the back.

Now, onto the outer boroughs!

- Park Slope: Although I've only been to one of the following outer borough venues, I felt it was important to include them since not all readers are Manhattan snobs, and some might even live near one. During an excursion out to Park Slope, I stopped by the very cute Excelsior (390 Fifth Ave.). Another local hangout is Ginger's (363 Fifth Ave.), which caters mostly to women. I have no idea what their patio is like, but they definitely have one. So check it out and let me know what I'm missing.

- Astoria: If you find yourself in this increasingly popular gayborhood, you might want to swing by the Bohemian Hall & Beer Garden (29-19 24th Ave.). While not a primarily gay venue, I include it both as a nod to ale aficionados (it's apparently the last remaining beer garden in New York City) and the many homos who call Astoria home.

It also attracts a Euro crowd, so I guess one could say it's at least gayish. I've also been told, "There is something that's just a little gay about drinking at a picnic table at sunset under big pretty trees." I'll buy that.

- The Bronx: Lest you think we've explored as far as our passports will allow, there's one last place I should mention — in the Bronx. If you're still reading, that must mean that you're interested in (or at least mildly curious about) The Warehouse (141 E. 140th St.).

Attracting an ethnically diverse but mostly black gay crowd, this multilevel dance club offers everything from house to rap music and hot dogs to fried chicken. I'm not sure how the outdoor area works into the picture, but I believe it's where food is served. Sounds like the former Tracks in Washington, D.C. I wonder if they have a volleyball court, too.

As you can see, there's simply no excuse for sobriety this summer. So get out there and enjoy the weather.

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