



NITS E-GRAM #106

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Holiday 2007

Celebrate in the Strip

Hi, Fluff here - party planner extraordinaire! This year Fluff is, like, **totally bored** with chain restaurants and clubs and is hungry for a one-of-a-kind holiday party experience. When searching for anything unique in Pittsburgh, the first place that pops into Fluff's mind is The Strip District! So, if you're planning a holiday get-together for family, friends or co-workers, consider the following:



Spaghetti Warehouse – Enjoy the taste of Old World Italy combined with American abundance at the **Spaghetti Warehouse**, 2601 Smallman Street. They can handle events both large and small and your guests will be very happy to find a convenient free parking lot. The **Spaghetti Warehouse** has a banquet package menu available by fax or e-mail. If you already have the location, but need terrific food, **Spaghetti Warehouse** also caters events in other facilities. Fluff just loves the décor in **Spaghetti Warehouse** – particularly the genuine trolley ensconced in the genuine warehouse space they occupy - what a fun place for a party! To arrange your very own taste of Italy, contact General Manager, Chris Beers at 412/261-6511 or e-mail pittsburgh@meatballs.com.



Mullaney's Harp and Fiddle – The **Harp & Fiddle**, 2329 Penn Avenue is available for parties of up to 200 and can set up an area to accommodate groups or are willing to close to the public if the size of the group requires it. The **Harp & Fiddle** offers all the warmth and charm of a traditional Irish pub and a very flexible menu (ranging from traditional Irish pub fare to popular American dishes). Fluff is **very excited** by the **Harp & Fiddle's** reputation for matchmaking! What better way to prepare for the holidays than to begin a new romance (and lay the groundwork for more presents)! And let's not forget about the live entertainment available many nights. The rollicking, upbeat music will set toes tapping across generations. The **Harp & Fiddle** will work with clients to do whatever it takes to ensure a mah-ve-lous affair. For more information or to make arrangements contact David at 412- 642-6622 or davidregan@harpandfiddle.com.

Roland's Seafood Grill – With its expansive two-floor area, **Roland's** can handle larger events or benefits (up to 300 of your closest friends) or smaller office parties and family gatherings. Menus can be personalized to meet your specific needs, ranging from casual buffets to elegant four course dinners. If you prefer to have an event in your office, home, or some other venue, **Roland's** also provides off-premise catering services. Fluff just adores **Roland's** lobster rolls and the lushly expansive seafood bar...not to mention, the humongous selection of bottled beers they have available, along with a full array of popular cocktails and wines. Check **Roland's** online menu and search for additional information at www.rolandsseafoodgrill.com or call 412-261-3401 and ask for Rick or Paul.



And there are so many more wonderful places to party in the Strip, but not enough time, space or information. Fluff has never gone wrong planning an event in the Strip. Fluff's guests have always been dazzled, delighted, charmed and enchanted by the venues, menus, ambiance and excellence of Fluff's events. But, in all humility, Fluff cannot take all the credit. Much of the acclaim must go to the splendid surroundings and the focus on first-rate service and quality dining that pervade the Strip District.



Happy Holiday Planning!

Easter Seals 2007 Ornament Features the Cathedral of Learning



Easter Seals Western Pennsylvania's 2007 holiday ornament showcases a renowned Pittsburgh landmark, *The Cathedral of Learning*. The three-dimensional ornament is brass dipped in 24K gold, and makes a wonderful gift your favorite Pitt alum or anyone interested in distinctive Pittsburgh attractions. Funds raised from the sale of the ornament benefit more than 19,000 individuals with disabilities in 20 counties in Western Pennsylvania. For more information, visit the Easter Seals website at <http://westernpa.easterseals.com>

The Best Holiday Shopping Ever!

An Editorial Opinion

The holiday shopping season is upon us with all the perils of gift-buying that portends. Sometimes we are lucky enough to know exactly what the potential recipient wants and exactly where to get it (six-year-olds are particularly good at providing this information). But mostly we're flying blind...will (s)he like it? will it fit? will it be a duplication? can it be returned? does (s)he need it or will it just be another piece of clutter that will end up in a garage sale after a year or so?

I spent the weekend after Thanksgiving prowling several major discount retailers in the suburbs and the following weekend scouring the malls and I was truly uninspired. Each year the range of choices grows narrower and I, for one, am tired of a few major corporations deciding what it is that I (and the recipients of my beneficence) want and need...lowest-common denominator shopping at its worst. To me, gift buying is an art – I would rather give no gift and apologize than give a thoughtless desperation gift. Each gift is carefully selected to fill a unique niche on my shopping agenda and I consider no holiday to be completely satisfactory unless I make at least one person sob because of the exquisite perfection and thoughtfulness of the gift I have given them.



Next weekend I will be shopping in the Strip – my never fail source for the exceptional, engaging and eternal gift. Actually, when I shop in the Strip I wish there were more people on my gift list (as it is, at least half of my gift list this year is composed of individuals with fur and paws). So here is a small segment of my ideal gift buying list:

Caution: This list is only the opinion of one very small person and is not intended to demean or disregard any of the many other fine options available in the Strip. In fact, in many cases, the decision was excruciating...it's a nasty job, but someone has to do it.

- For the neighbors who mow my lawn, watch my cat, and generally make my neighborhood an agreeable place to live even though I really don't know them all that well (in other words, the typical Pittsburgh family): **A Family Membership in the Heinz History Center and Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum.**
- For a cousin who moved to another state 25 years ago, but left his heart in the Steel City: **A Steeler, shirt from Mike Feinberg to wear while he forlornly watches the "home" team from exile.**

- For another cousin I plan to visit around dinner time on Christmas Day because she is an excellent cook and generally has so many guests she will be unfazed by one more: **A gift box from Penzey's with all of her favorite spices or a spiffy and unique new kitchen gadget from In the Kitchen.**
- For a professional colleague who believes that gifts are inappropriate, but who has never been known to refuse a fine bottle of wine: **A custom gift from Palate Partners in their signature gray box** (when it comes to choosing wine I will be more than happy to have the assistance of a Palate Partner designer to "customize my vision.")
- For an overstressed friend: **12 classes at Schoolhouse Yoga and a box of truffles from Mon Aimee Chocolat.**
- For all the pampered canines in my sphere of influence: **Doggy Biscotti from Enrico Biscotti**
 - For the sibling entering her fifth decade who is still whining about how I got to take dance lessons when I was five and she didn't: **Tap shoes from Dancer's Pointe and a promise to attend her first recital (Gift Card: \$3.50; Tap Shoes: \$65.00; Attending Dance Recital: Priceless!)**
 - For the couples with too much stuff (which includes pretty much everyone else on my shopping list): **A gift certificate (or two or three, depending on how much I like them) to one or more of the Strip's fine restaurants (Eleven, Kaya, Lidia's, Rolands, Spaghetti Warehouse, to name a very few)**
- For my coffee aficionado friend: **A membership in the La Prima Espresso Coffee of the Month Club**
- And finally, for myself (because my friends and family always give me stuff like teddy bears and nightgowns and nobody gives me what I really want): **Jewelry from Collage**

I could go on and on, but you have your own gift list to plan. Here's one final great idea that will satisfy all your gift-shopping challenges...buy a bunch of baskets at **Sam Zukerman and Sons**, then stroll up Penn Avenue and down Smallman Street, stopping in shops along the way and trusting that serendipity will guide you to just the right mix of wonders for each person on your list. It always works for me!

This year I recommend that you alter your perception of gift buying...just keep repeating "It's not a chore, it's a joy" and, if you're shopping in the Strip District it will be!



The Yum Report:

Yum loves the holiday season because at no other time of the year is there such an abundance of cooking (and opportunities for eating) going on. Mouthwatering aromas fill the air and tantalize the taste buds. And Yum has found that whether your holiday menu trends toward treasured traditional family recipes or to cutting edge culinary marvels, the Strip is THE place to shop.

If you're reading this, chances are you already know that "when you can't find it anywhere else, try the Strip" and you visit frequently. But since minds can get muddled with the approaching holidays, Yum will remind you:

Wholey's – All the seafood for your own Feast of the Seven Fishes and much, much more

Penn Mac – Everything else for the Feast of the Seven Fishes (not to mention the feast of the five hundred cheeses)

Stamoolis Brothers – For all the accoutrements of a great Greek feast, plus so much more

McKees Rocks Bread – Fresh from the oven to your holiday table

Euro Greetings – Truly superior pierogi and pelmeni and hard-to-find European delicacies

Sunseri's – For everything Italian

Strip District Meats – For a fresh holiday turkey, a special cut of meat or specialty meats

Benkovitz Seafood – In addition to the magnificent seafood, they have appetizers, entrees and side dishes for the gastronomically challenged

Penzey's Spices – Make the flavors in your cuisine POP!

Mon Aimee Chocolat – Carries a full line of baking chocolate including award-winning E. Guittard Pastry Chef Collection (not to mention all the taste treats you will need to fill all the Christmas Stockings hanging from your mantle

Enrico Biscotti – Simply sublime...once you catch the aroma of the baked goods, you'll never want to leave

Reyna's – Everything for your Mexican and Latin American meals (stock up on their homemade black and gold chips and salsa for holiday bowl games)

And, lest we forget, the fine coffee in the Strip District is going a long way toward making Pittsburgh the Seattle of the East. So finish your holiday meal with a fine coffee from **Fortune's** or **La Prima Espresso**. And, while shopping in the Strip, enjoy a cup at **21st Street Coffee and Tea** or **Leaf and Bean**.



Events

December 31, 2007 – New Year's Eve Chef's Tasting Menu at Eleven. Eleven will offer two special Chef's Tasting Menus on New Year's Eve, along with a limited regular menu. This special evening will cost \$85 per person (additional \$45 per person for wine pairings). For menu and reservation information, visit

<http://www.bigburrito.com/eleven/index.shtml>

December 31, 2007 – New Year's Eve Chef's Tasting Menu at Kaya. Kaya is also offering two fixed price menus for New Year's Eve, with optional wine pairings at a cost of \$55 per person (additional \$23 for wine pairings). For menu and reservation information, visit <http://www.bigburrito.com/kaya/>

December 31, 2007 - New Year's Eve Party at Mullaney's Harp & Fiddle. Champagne toasts at 7 p.m. and midnight and music by Red Hand Paddy from 9 p.m.

Welcome!

Welcome and thanks to the New and Renewing Members of Neighbors in the Strip:

Members:

Eleven
Kaya
The Midwife Center
Mon Aimee Chocolat
Penn Avenue Pottery
Pittsburgh Decorative Center
Markowitz Communications
Schoolhouse Yoga
Schorin Paper Company



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We wish you and yours a joyous holiday season. And if this isn't a holiday season for you, we encourage you to adopt a holiday. It's always a good thing to celebrate with friends and show appreciation for those we love. If it takes a holiday to remind us of that, well, we say grab on to as many holidays as you can.



See you next month...Cindy

P.S. If you have any questions, comments or news about the Strip, please e-mail me at cynthiahelffrich@yahoo.com