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# Love & Lobster

For singles, is this the summer you'll remember forever?



Eric Bettencourt Trio

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July 25: Patio Movie:  
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7 pm

July 26 **MELLYN & BREAU** 12:30 pm  
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July 31: **DOMINIC LAVOIE & FRIENDS**  
7 pm

July 26 **MELLYN & BREAU** 12:30 pm

August 3 **MUDDY RUCKUS & THE BURNERS** 12:30 pm

August 7 **JOINT CHIEFS**  
12:30 pm

August 9 **ERIC BETTENCOURT TRIO**  
12:30 pm  
**NOW IS NOW** 7 pm

August 25 **THE PROFTONES** 6 pm

August 29 **BAND BEYOND DESCRIPTION**  
7 pm

BY OLIVIA GUNN

## Tuesday:

A storm looms overhead, but we've got faith it will hold off for one—just one—drink at **The Garden Café at 21 Milk Street**. The air is thick but cool, and it's keeping us from bailing for the nearest AC. Shannen and I arrive to find several groups and couples sitting at the iron patio sets with umbrellas up, not for shade but for the potential downpour. Ruby, our server, offers us cushions for our

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## For couples seeking magic:

With the motto, “Stay sexy, Portland,” Timber appeals to couples who may not go out every week but want to do it right when they do. This usually means the Old Port. Timber is an “American steakhouse” that prides itself on serving the best of the best from 100% Certified Angus Beef to seafood and to-die-for dessert. Inside, you’ll find the bar and tables are built of hefty cross-sections from local maples, giving it a masculine-yet-surprisingly-sleek look. The outside patio is an intimate spot for drinks during the 4- to 6-p.m. happy hour. Walled in by vintage bourbon barrels, you can imagine what the right breeze could bring to your sexy night out.

*(Continued on next page)*

Glowing steakhouse lounge: the bar at Timber.

chairs and assures us we have a good half hour before the rain starts. The Garden is shaded by tall maple trees, veiling the small drizzle that’s already started. String lights line the fence along the tables, Louis Armstrong croons in the distance, and it feels as if we’re exactly where we’re meant to be. “Do people ever dance here?”

“Dance?” Ruby seems surprised.

“Yeah, do couples ever dance here?”

“No, but you definitely should.” Shannen and I laugh, both wishing our significant others were here. One couple has

starts to sprinkle, Ruby asks if we’d like our checks, “...in case you need to make a run for it?” A moment later we do indeed, over the cobblestones, up the street, laughing through the summer rain.

### Wednesday

“You look like the type of woman who would dance if asked.” I’m taken aback as the gentleman reaches out his hand.

“Oh, no. I just ordered a beer and I’d

**“You look like the kind of woman who would dance if I asked.”**

turned two chairs toward the dolphin statue just to sit and people-watch. Their only contact is a brush of their hands or a slight smile confirming happiness. I imagine returning alone in the next few days with a book. Maybe I’m a dewy-eyed romantic, but a classic—*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *Pride and Prejudice*—seems fitting. No company is needed when the spot is this good, and I come to the conclusion that The Garden Café may be my hiding place this summer. When the clouds grow too heavy and it

MEAGHAN MAURICE

Take a break with a local brew and a slab of your own at Slab.

## Out&About





A quiet chat at the mellow Little Tap House.

## For Singles: A Taptastic & Gay-Friendly Corner

If ever there was a city block with something always going on, it might be Spring Street between Park Street and High: two popular pubs, a soon-to-be dumpling palace, and an anticipated reincarnation of the stylish little box formerly known as Miyake Diner.

**Flask Lounge** is a spot to catch an afternoon drink outside before dinner or dancing the night away afterward. With an event—karaoke, open-mic comedy—happening almost every night of the week, it's hard not to meet someone new, but stopping in after a long day at work, you're sure to find company with any of the regulars as well. The bar welcomes diversity and you'll never feel alone, so take a take chance, walk in solo, and make your move.

If you find it hard to find love on the dance floor, or if you're in search of something a bit more low-key, but still up for a chance meeting check out **Little Tap House** on High Street. They've got a great selection of beers and there's usually someone willing to suggest his or her favorite. What's a better conversation starter than that? With low lights and strategic seating, nothing cramped, there's a chance you'll leave the bar for a table for two sooner than you think.

“It’s hard to find love anywhere, and if you’re searching for Mr. or Ms. Right on Wharf Street, then you’ve got more than one problem, love.”

Find Styxx few blocks down Spring from Little Tap House and Flask, a bar with something for everyone. Two levels of dance floors!



Bask in the evening glow at El Rayo.

only slow you down. You look too good out there!” He shrugs and, with a wink, finds a partner who’s confident she can keep up. Tonight, **Primo Cubano** is playing outside at **El Rayo**, and the place is grooving. I sit at the bar watching sultry couples move about the lot in front of the band. It’s easy to get caught up in watching salsa, and I soon find myself choosing which couples should fall madly in love and...whew, it’s hot out here. A friend invites me to dance, but I’m too content watching and I don’t want to ruin the moment with my white-girl overbite and

awkward side step. It’s lovely to see these women in dresses and heels, the men taking lead. By my second beer, I’ve convinced myself to take salsa lessons. There’s no room for wallflowers at this joint, Portland.

### Thursday

“Something sweet, but not necessarily fruity.” The three bartenders exchange a look. “You should try the Birthday Cake Martini,” says Michaela, manager at **White Cap Grille**. “I found it on Pinterest.” Shannen grins from ear to ear hearing she’ll be the first to try this new concoction: a white Pinnacle froth with a rainbow-sprinkled rim. “Wow, it’s not even my birthday,” Shannen says while posing for a picture.

“It’s always your birthday if you’re drinking.” We sit and chat with the two remaining staff members, Johnny and Jamie. Both have been working all day and, though the place is near empty, are in good spirits. **White Cap** sits where Market meets Middle and has great, shaded wraparound seating—perfect for date night or a lunch hidden from the hot sun. The bar inside faces a wall of windows overlooking Middle Street, and as some Portlanders dart by to escape the warm rain, a few stop in for shelter and a stiff drink. “How did you get into writing?” Jamie asks me. “You write good?” He laughs at himself and we get to chatting about life and its many roads.

“Well, I’m quitting and moving to Aruba,” proclaims Johnny as he dries a pint glass.



Can't stop the music: Pearl Ultra.

“Why Aruba?”

He shrugs, “It sounds good.” For a moment we’re all lost in a tropical beach fantasy and it’s not until the rain pours that reality sets in. Shannen downs the last of her slice and we head to the street, promising a return. ’Til Aruba, boys! Or at least the next birthday!

## Friday

**I** look out at the bridge and the giant crane looming over us, representing, to me at least, the industrial overtake, the never-ending building up. Are there better views? Of course, but within my block, on the outskirts of downtown, there is no better spot than **Outliers** for an evening glass of wine and a good venting with friends. Debby and Rachel arrive, and I’m reminded of my mother and older sister back home. These two women have become somewhat of my Portland family, and tonight I need nothing more. The air is warm, the drink is fine, and we proceed to solve world hunger, the modern man’s condition, and our own inadequacies. A young couple tries to pacify their toddler and work hard to enjoy their evening spirits. Eventually we’re the only ones on deck and conclude the evening with a laugh over my mother’s recent confession that “There were many-a-night when I thought of ending it all at the kitchen sink.” Obviously too heavy for your average café, but if you can’t share a morbid laugh at Outliers, the

lone spot away from the rush, the push and pull, I’m not sure where you can.

## Saturday

“It must be awkward.”

“What?”

“Being our third wheel tonight.”

“Well, thanks.” It wasn’t until they mentioned it that I found myself feeling incredi-

bly alone on a dance floor full of couples and potential one-night-stands at **Pearl Ultra**. Lately, I’ve been solo on most of my ventures, and any single or loner will tell you that Saturday can be the loneliest night in town when the Old Port finally wakes from its sleepy week and the lovers fill the streets. Couples stroll down Exchange arm in arm, and new acquaintances play a guessing game: “Do I ask for her number?” “Would it be wrong to go to his place?” “Do I buy her one more drink?”

“What would mother do?” They say it’s hard to find love in our town, but let’s be honest, that’s any city’s complaint outside of Paris or Rome, where even the garbage cans ooze *amore* when the moon hits your eye. It’s hard to find love anywhere, and if you’re searching for Mr. or Ms. Right on Wharf Street, then you’ve got more than one problem, love. We all have fun hopping from joint to joint—**Oasis**, **Old Port Tavern**, **Amigos**—but we’re all there for a good time, and the good time doesn’t tend to last past Sunday brunch.

So, where does one find love in the Old Port? It’s the late night burger you grab at **Five Guys** with your best friends. It’s passing the Love Locks fence and feeling that little bit of warmth. It’s cheering for the Sox

Get serious about tap sampling at Novare Res.

**Out&About**

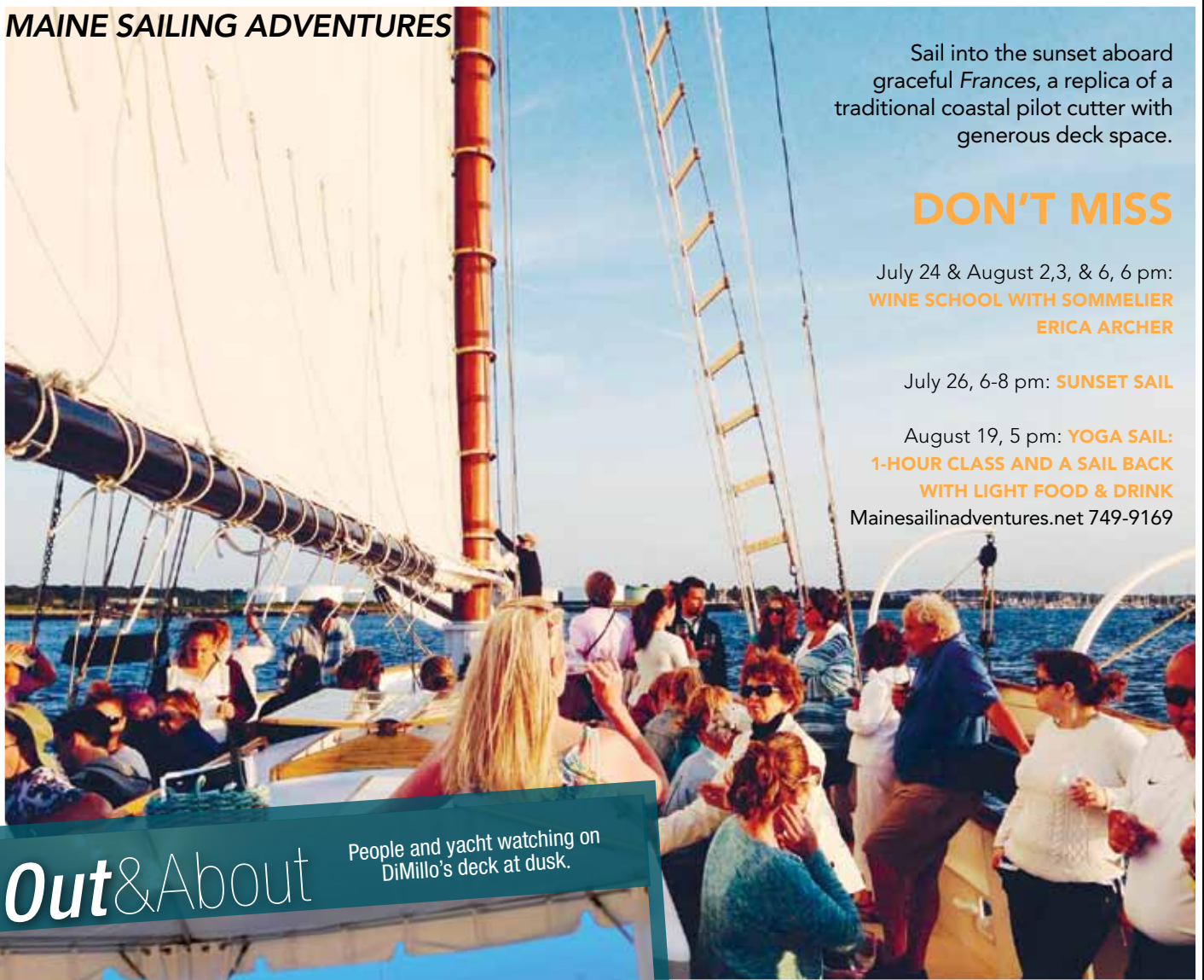


JULY/AUGUST 2014 53

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## Out&About

People and yacht watching on DiMillo's deck at dusk.



with a room full of strangers at **Foreplay**, and it's every time you feel lonely realizing that in a city like ours, you're never really alone.

## Sunday

**I**t's been close to an hour since I took my perch on the top deck of **Dogfish Bar & Grille**. It overlooks an empty parking lot, but if you keep your eyes to the sky, face to the sun, it can feel like some exotic penthouse rooftop. Add a pomegranate-infused vodka lemonade (or two) and, voilà, you're catching rays with every babe in Portland. Today the sun is hot, and my plan is to get as much of it as possible before my legs and arms become much more translucent, a fear many she-Mainers live with. The

FROM TOP: MAINE SAILING ADVENTURES; MEAGHAN MAURICE

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## PORTLAND AFTER DARK

beach babe sitting upwind of me, a bearded dockworker, has lit a particularly potent smoke, and after a gust or two, I decide it's best if I head in for Open Mic before I really start imagining things. Several musicians roll through, all just background music for the many diners chowing down on ravioli or a fancy salmon salad. It's not until 13 Scotland Rd. tunes up and the lead vocal, Bill Binford, starts in on a sweet, throaty song about a dream lover that the room quiets, all recognizing the story we're about to hear. "She came to me in a dream, prettiest thing I'd ever seen..." With that, I order a glass of Malbec, sit back, and swoon. When 13 Scotland Rd. wraps, everyone seems to release a heavy, lovely sigh. Binford got us where we wanted to be, and there's no turning back. Next up is Uke'n'Smile—two musicians, Dave Jacquet and Keith Kitchin. The guys play fun medleys and covers and get the crowd even higher with Bob Marley and with their own song, "Butt Naked on the Porch." Born and raised in Pennsylvania, it's been a while since I've witnessed fist-pumping to Johnny Cash, but as soon as Jacquet starts in on those "Folsom Prison Blues" chords, there is no stopping this crowd.

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"Did you ride solo or do you have a horse in the race?"

I turn to find one of the earlier musicians seated behind me. "Oh, I, uh, solo, I guess. I don't have a horse here."

"Right on."

Uke'n'Smile opens the floor to requests, but everyone seems satisfied with their set already and by the end of it, we're asking for a couple more. Walking home from the Dogfish, my mind starts playing 13 Scotland Rd.'s "Dream." The stars are out, leading me home, and I come to realize how comfortable and safe I feel in Portland. What I thought was an escape from New York, what I mistook for a simple affair, is now proving to be the real thing. I'm not expecting you to say it back or anything, I know it might be too soon, you may not be ready, but Portland, I think I love you. Turning the corner on to Danforth, Binford's song plays in my head, "She came to me in a dream. Prettiest thing I'd ever seen. Seemed to have everything, she was all I ever wanted. Come sit by me, my dream. Let me play you a melody. Just don't let me wake up from the dream." ■



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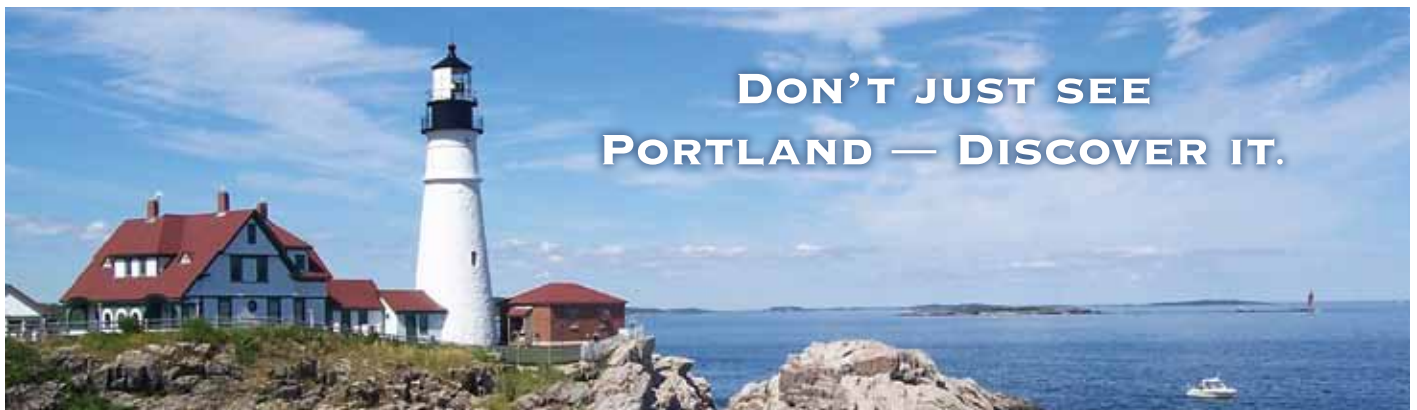
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