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JUNE 17-30, 2026

# QVEGAS

## Sunshine Goes Cosmic!

*Joe Harter Lands at Meow Wolf*



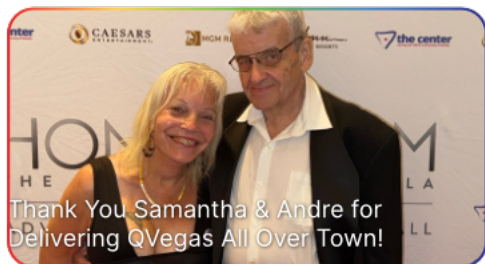


Photo Courtesy Omega Mart

With a proud publishing legacy that dates back to 1978, QVegas has been at the heart of Las Vegas' LGBTQ+ community for over four decades. What began as a grassroots newsletter has evolved into a dynamic weekly publication that informs, celebrates, and amplifies queer voices across Southern Nevada. QVegas is available in print at over 30 LGBTQ+ establishments, community nonprofits, and partner advertiser locations, making it a vital part of the local scene.

Beyond the printed page, QVegas connects with readers through a robust digital presence—on the web, across all major social media platforms, in our dedicated iOS app, and through weekly email blasts that keep the community in the know. Our coverage spans nightlife, entertainment, politics, health, advocacy, and the everyday stories that make up the diverse LGBTQ+ experience in Las Vegas.

As an advertiser-supported publication, QVegas is the most effective way to reach LGBTQ+ locals and visitors alike—offering unparalleled access to one of the city's most loyal and engaged audiences. In an era where equality rights are under attack nationwide, QVegas stands as a strong and unwavering community partner, committed to visibility, representation, and celebrating the power of queer voices.



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## A Pride Month to Remember — Sunshine's Live-Singing Reign, the Arrival of Drag Royale, Dinner at Monzú, and 31 Days of Gayffirmations

**L**as Vegas in June runs hot, bright, and a little surreal — the perfect backdrop for this issue's cover star.

His name is Sunshine, and it's no accident. For Joe Harter, the name is a mission statement: spread light, stay positive, lift the room. Right now you'll find him doing exactly that as Domino, an intergalactic pop diva headlining Phenomenomaly inside Omega Mart at Area 15 — Meow Wolf's wonderfully strange immersive world, where guests don't watch a show so much as wander into one.

What sets Sunshine apart is simple: he actually sings. No lip-sync, no shortcuts — just a trained voice forged in opera houses and theaters, aimed straight at the audience. Nearly a decade into drag (he marks ten years this September), he's still chasing novelty, connection, and the next person walking through the door who hasn't seen what he can do yet. Ask him what he wants people to take away, and the answer is disarmingly simple: that they felt welcome, that they went on an adventure, that it ended in joy. You can catch him close to home, too — every Friday and Saturday at Gipsy, and every Saturday and Sunday at the Rio's Faabulous Drag Brunch. Phenomenomaly runs through August 9th, and the finale alone is worth sticking around for.

Speaking of celebrating our performers: Drag Royale is coming, and we couldn't be prouder of it. Our local drag competition is built to put the city's fiercest talent center

stage, and the artistry you'll read about in these pages is exactly the spirit we're bottling. Watch this space.

Then there's dinner. This issue's review takes you to Monzú Italian Oven & Bar on West Flamingo, where chef-owner Gio Mauro carries on his mother Nora's legacy with a 300-year-old sourdough starter from Ischia and a Chef's Table tasting menu that turns a meal into an event. Eight years in and still quietly extraordinary, Monzú is the kind of local institution worth seeking out — ideally on a Friday, when live jazz fills the room.

One more thing for the beach bag: Gayffirmations, the new book of daily encouragement from Zombie Burlesque's Enoch Augustus Scott. Thirty-one fabulous reminders that you are worthy, capable, and here to take up space — released right on time for Pride.

That's the through-line this month: light, renewal, and the courage to be exactly who you are. From all of us at QVegas, happy Pride Month, Las Vegas. Go be fabulous.



**Russ White & Garrett Pattiani**  
Publishers, QVegas & QLife Media

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via QVegas





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**LUCKY STARZZZ**

ALL STARS 11 VIEWING PARTY | 8 PM at GIPSY  
SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
+ 1:30 AM at PIRANHA  
MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



**FRI JUNE 12**  
**APRIL CARRIÓN**

ALL STARS 11 VIEWING PARTY | 8 PM at GIPSY  
SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
+ 1:30 AM at PIRANHA  
MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



**SAT JUNE 13**  
**AURA MAYARI**

SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
+ 1:30 AM at PIRANHA  
MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



**FRI JUNE 19**  
**SALINA ESTITTIES**

ALL STARS 11 VIEWING PARTY | 8 PM at GIPSY  
SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
+ 1:30 AM at PIRANHA  
MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



**SAT JUNE 20**  
**JOEY JAY**

SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
+ 1:30 AM at PIRANHA  
MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



**FRI JUNE 26**  
**KENNEDY DAVENPORT**

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SHOWTIMES | 11:30 PM at GIPSY  
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MEET & GREET | 12:30 AM at GIPSY



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# Gayffirmations:

## 31 Days of Fabulous Encouragement



### 31 Days of Fabulous: Enoch Augustus Scott's New Book Lands for Pride

**S**ome books arrive at exactly the right moment. For Enoch Augustus Scott — longtime host and star of Las Vegas cult favorite *Zombie Burlesque* — a new project has been years in the making, even if he didn't know it yet.

Scott, a Duke University graduate who has entertained Strip audiences for more than a decade, has just released *Gayffirmations: 31 Days of Fabulous Encouragement*, a vibrant collection of daily affirmations designed to inspire confidence, self-acceptance, gratitude, and joy. The book is available now in paperback and Kindle editions on Amazon.

#### A Daily Dose of Fabulousness

Part self-help, part celebration, *Gayffirmations* pairs 31 original affirmations with colorful full-color illustrations and a playful, distinctly queer sensibility. Each page is designed to function as a stand-alone reminder that you are worthy, capable, and — yes — absolutely fabulous, exactly as you are.

"Everyone deserves a reminder that they are worthy, capable, and fabulous exactly as they are," Scott said. "This book is meant to be a daily dose of

encouragement and a celebration of living authentically."

The book covers confidence, resilience, gratitude, and self-love, with messages rooted in the kind of queer pride that Scott has channeled throughout his performing career. It is, in his words, a reminder that "the universe is cheering you on."

#### Born from Personal Reinvention

For those of us at QVegas who know something about hard resets, the timing of *Gayffirmations* feels significant. Over the past year, this writer reexamined a complicated relationship with alcohol and got sober — and not long after, faced a medical emergency when my heart went into atrial fibrillation and had to be shocked back into rhythm. Nothing clarifies what matters quite like a cardioversion.

Books like *Gayffirmations* speak directly to those inflection points. When you're rebuilding — whether after addiction, illness, heartbreak, or simply the slow grind of living in a world that doesn't always celebrate who you are — a daily affirmation is not a small thing. It is an act of resistance and renewal.

Scott's own creative reinvention mirrors that spirit. Beyond the sequins and the spotlight of *Zombie Burlesque*, he has quietly built a body of literary work that includes children's books *Dennis the Dolphin* and *The Dragon King's Daughter*. *Gayffirmations* represents something newer and more personal: a direct address to the LGBTQ+ community and anyone who has ever needed permission to take up space.

#### Perfect Pride Month Reading

Released just in time for Pride Month, *Gayffirmations* is the rare gift book that actually delivers on its promise. At 35 pages, it is slim enough to finish in a sitting and substantial enough to return to daily. The square format and full-color design make it as visually appealing on a coffee table as it is useful as a morning ritual.

Whether you're newly sober, freshly heartbroken, newly out, or simply in need of a reminder that your best days may still be ahead, this little book from one of Las Vegas's own is worth your time.

*Gayffirmations: 31 Days of Fabulous Encouragement* by Enoch Augustus Scott is available now at Amazon.com in paperback and Kindle formats.



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**G**ipsy Nightclub's Drag Royale is back for a second season, and the competition is already serving looks, laughs, and a whole lot of Las Vegas realness. Twelve queens are vying for the crown — and a cover shoot in QVegas magazine. We caught up with every contestant on photo night for a quick word. Get to know your Season 2 royalty.

#### Empress the Aries

*"She, DIY-fashionable — that's three words as one."*

The name came from a Filipino soap opera actress her mom used to watch. "She wasn't that great of an actress, but the name stuck," Empress laughs. A self-described country Asian girl, she calls her drag she, DIY, and fashionable — and yes, she will absolutely choose a booted heel over flats any day of the week.

#### Akasha L'Statt

*"Nobody can do an Akasha like Akasha does an Akasha."*

Akasha arrived with an answer for everything — and a signature that she says speaks for itself. "My signature is me, sweetie. You're gonna remember me



when I walk in, when I'm on stage, and when I walk out." On the strip-vs.-fruit-loop debate: "Aren't they the same thing?" Honey, they are not.

#### Kourtney La Roux

*"Gipsy's Nightclub. That's what Vegas drag has that nowhere else does."*

Born in the ballroom scene in Detroit, Michigan, Kourtney came up through ball culture before finding her footing on the Las Vegas stage. Her go-to after-show snack? A fruit roll-up. Her most-played lip sync track? Beyoncé's "Single Ladies." A classic for a reason.

#### Xanadu

*"It requires aliens, meat, and abduction."*

Xanadu's pre-show ritual is delightfully specific: an herbal refreshment, a lot of moisturizer, and a sugar-free Red Bull. What scares her about the stage? "Nothing — I'm blind in my left eye, so no fears, honey." Her dream number, still unrealized, involves elements she's not quite ready to explain. Her most-played track: "Inmcuts" by Ashnikko. Beyoncé or Gaga? "Gaga."



#### Kalli Mauri

*"I wanted a name that was gonna be kind of fishy — remind people there's still tentacle at the end of the day."*

Ten years into drag, Kalli says the art form helped her find her trans identity. "I've sacrificed my family, but I've had to put myself first — and I have drag to thank for that." Her drag is fun, quirky, and spontaneous. Brunch or midnight show? "Brunch. Next question."

#### Dunkentext

*"Low key, in the beginning, I didn't take it that serious. The name was available, so I took it."*

Nine years in and still going strong, Dunkentext traces her inspiration to the first season of RuPaul's Drag Race she ever watched — Naomi Smalls walking out and sparking something. Her signature? "Very passable, always." Most-played lip sync: either "Water" by Tyla or "Supernova" by Kylie Minogue. Sickening or comedy? "Sickening, obviously."

#### Empress Lychi

*"Polished, expensive — I'll cut it there."*

Empress Lychi keeps it refined and sharp.







What does Vegas drag have that nowhere else does? "Showgirls. You can't find performers like Asia, Sage, or Mirage anywhere else." Advice for someone stepping into heels for the first time: "Just do it. You're not gonna look good, but everyone's cheering for you." Most-played lip sync: Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive."

#### Gia Ferrari

*"Three S's before the three P's: shift, shower, and shave before I paint, pad, and perform."*

A SoCal girl repping her drag house with pride, Gia credits Raven and Morgan McMichaels as early inspirations. Her goal beyond the competition is simple: inspire people everywhere and travel the world doing it. Heels or boots? "Boots — with a zipper and lace." Beyoncé or Gaga? "Gaga."

#### Queen Vonni

*"I got the nickname from a boy named Bonnie — and I took it."*

Queen Vonni came to drag watching RuPaul's Drag Race with her grandmother. She's still loyal to her faves — "don't come for me" — and her dream number is something she's not quite ready to reveal.



After-show snack of choice: a cheeseburger and fries. Welcome back to the Jack in the Box cinematic universe.

#### Plushie

*"Describe my drag in three words? Your dad's side piece."*

Inspired by retro toys, anime, and video games, Plushie wanted a name that felt nostalgic and cute — "like a little puppy toy." What does Vegas drag have that nowhere else does? "You can eat after the gig." What scares her most about the stage? "I have legs longer than I can even think for — but I'm doing good tonight." Gaga over Beyoncé, boots over heels, and lip sync every time.

#### Camilla Rayz St. James

*"Do you see me? I'm expensive, I'm gorgeous, and I'm fucking fat as fuck."*

Originally from Idaho, Camilla has two drag mothers — one from her home state and one from Spokane, Washington — and she carries the St. James name with full authority. She's always dreamed of performing in Las Vegas, and now she's here. Comedy or sickening? "Sickening." Beyoncé or Gaga? "Beyoncé." Most-



played lip sync: whatever's on when she gets home and starts cleaning.

#### Rita Bitch

*"Where Is My Husband by Ray — that's the most-played lip sync song. Don't ask questions."*

A Drag Royale Season 1 returnee, Rita Bitch knows exactly what this competition can do for a queen. "Getting to compete last year pushed me so much further than I thought I could ever go." Her transformation ritual involves a shower, running 10 minutes behind, eating dinner halfway through her eye makeup, and listening to Reddit story podcasts "because it makes me feel like my life is normal." She speed-drives to Gipsy and somehow arrives ready. After-show snack? A taco truck she holds very dear. Live vocals or lip sync? "Did anybody say live vocals?"

**Drag Royale Season 2 is underway at Gipsy Nightclub in Las Vegas. The winner receives a QVegas magazine cover shoot. Follow along each week as queens are eliminated and the competition heats up — this crown isn't going to claim itself.**







# Meet Domino, the Intergalactic Pop Diva Haunting Omega Mart

By Garrett Pattiani

**O**n a Wednesday afternoon inside Omega Mart at Area 15, something unexpected is happening. Amid the surreal shelves of fictional consumer products and the pulsing, otherworldly art installations that make Meow Wolf's Las Vegas flagship one of the most distinctive venues in the country, a self-described intergalactic pop diva is working the room. Her name is Domino. She needs you to take pictures. She is trying to crack the American top 40, and she has arrived via cosmic phenomenon to make sure you know about it.

Behind Domino is Joe Harter, known to Las Vegas nightlife regulars as Sunshine — a drag performer with a decade of experience, a background in opera and regional theater, and a philosophy that starts with his name. "It's not just a cutesy name," Harter says. "It's kind of a mission statement. It's a reminder to myself to make sure that I am maintaining a positive vibe and spreading light with my talent and not falling into the traps that a lot of artists fall into."

## From the Palm Beach Opera to the Strip

Harter's path to Las Vegas drag is not a straight line — figuratively or otherwise. Born into a military family and raised as a self-described "army brat," he moved frequently before settling in a small Indiana town, then decamping at 18 for Florida to pursue a performance career. His first professional gig was singing in the chorus of the Palm Beach Opera

Company under the direction of Kamal Khan. He sang with the company for three years before branching out into bands and regional theater across South Florida.

Drag found him — or rather, a German rock musical did. "I ended up getting cast as Hedwig in a production of Hedwig and the Angry Inch," Harter recalls. "The producers reached out to the local gay bars in Florida and got me booked there to promote the show. I ended up making more money promoting that show than I did performing in it. And that was the beginning of my drag journey."

When he eventually moved to Las Vegas, Harter committed to drag in earnest, building his following at Charlie's Las Vegas before that beloved venue closed its doors. Today, Las Vegas audiences can catch Sunshine every Friday and Saturday night at Gypsy Nightclub, and every Saturday and Sunday at the Rio's Faaabulous Drag Brunch — traditional, high-energy shows that remain close to his heart.

As for the name Sunshine, the origin is equal parts pop culture and autobiography. Shortly after Harter arrived in Nevada — tan, blonde, and fresh from Florida — a friend told him he reminded them of the character Sunshine from the film *Remember the Titans*. "If you remember that movie, you remember the guy who's kind of ambiguously gay," Harter says with a grin. "I'm a little less ambiguous about it."

## Enter Domino: An Intergalactic Pop Diva Lands at Area 15

The opportunity to join Phenomenomaly came through a friend named Keith Manning, who runs the scene shop at Meow Wolf and knew Harter's work. A self-tape audition later, Harter found himself at Omega Mart at 8 a.m. — before the venue opened to the public — for two and a half weeks of intensive rehearsals built around improv exercises, character development, and ensemble storytelling.

Phenomenomaly is a seasonal live performance event embedded inside Meow Wolf's immersive worlds. Rather than being a separate show requiring a separate ticket, it weaves roaming characters, interactive storytelling, puppetry, and theatrical vignettes throughout the existing exhibit. The premise involves a mysterious cosmic event called the Flickerwerm Migration, in which strange creatures and phenomena begin affecting Meow Wolf's worlds. Guests don't watch a show — they walk into one, encounter characters mid-narrative, and become part of the story themselves. The event runs Wednesday through Sunday starting at 2 p.m. inside Omega Mart at Area 15, and no additional ticket purchase is required beyond standard admission.

The show is running simultaneously at all four Meow Wolf locations around the country, each with its own cast and its own version of the shared characters. Harter plays Domino, a character that





exists at all four venues but is interpreted differently by each performer. His Domino is, in his words, "an intergalactic pop diva fashioned after a bit of a Kylie Minogue type — massively famous everywhere except America, and she is here to be photographed at this event while trying to crack into the American top 40."

"When I say hello to a person, I'm not saying hello to them as Joe or as Sunshine. I'm saying hello to them as Domino, and I'm like, hello, we're on an adventure."

The character design is entirely Harter's own. While he inherited a name and a general framework, the version of Domino that audiences encounter at Omega Mart has been built from the ground up through the collaborative rehearsal process. "I'm not the first person to play this role," he notes, "but I am the first person to play this role in this way."

### **Immersive Theater and the Art of the Unexpected**

For a performer accustomed to scripted productions and the distinct improvisational rhythms of drag nightlife, Phenomenomaly has presented a genuinely new challenge. "There are two things that are very different about this," Harter explains. "One is the improv aspect within the context of a fictional character with other fictional characters where we're creating a story. It's a very different way of doing theater. And the other thing that I'm really finding that I enjoy is the family-friendly nature of it. There are genuinely families — children of all ages, from 8 years old to 80 years old. They are coming in, they are playing with us, they are enjoying it."

The family-friendly dimension is not incidental to Harter — it's something he finds meaningful. LGBTQ+ visibility in

mainstream spaces, he argues, matters precisely because those spaces reach people who might not otherwise encounter queer performers or perspectives. "Visibility is often a tool that is used through the media from bad actors," he says. "They will manipulate the images that people see — through AI, through clever editing — and present a minority in a negative light as if that's how the entire community is. By getting out there and getting our own voices seen and heard, that's the only real tool we have to combat that."

The experience, Harter is careful to note, builds to something he refuses to spoil. There is a finale. It is, by all accounts, worth sticking around for.

### **A Voice in the Room**

Unlike many of his drag contemporaries, Sunshine is a live-singing performer. He doesn't lip-sync. The choice is rooted in a love of artists who built fictional personas around their voices — David Bowie, Lady Gaga — and in the particular power of direct address. "There is an immediacy with having a microphone and being able to directly speak to your audience that has power that I enjoy wielding in what I like to think is a positive way," he says.

His theatrical résumé underscores why he was equipped to take on something as unconventional as Phenomenomaly. Beyond Hedwig, Harter has played the MC in Cabaret — a role he describes with evident gravity — and toured as Rose in productions with the Golden Gays drag parody of the Golden Girls. "The MC in Cabaret is a role that can be interpreted a lot of different ways," he says. "He's been played as a victim. He has been played as a reflection of the attitudes of the German people while fascism rose around them. That is something that I hope a lot of people will think about as they see the

political climate change around them. You do have a vote. You do have a say. You are a part of it."

What keeps him going after a decade? Novelty. Collaboration. The next show, the next show, the next person walking through the door of a venue — or, these days, an Omega Mart — who hasn't seen what he can do yet. "It's the pursuit of novelty and newness that I think is at the heart of art," he says. "Finding new ways to connect with audiences is the thing that keeps it fresh."

### **What's Next for Sunshine**

Phenomenomaly runs at Omega Mart through August 9th. In September, Harter will mark a milestone: ten years in drag, with a celebration he's already looking forward to. Regular shows at Gypsy Nightclub and the Rio continue through the summer and beyond. He can also be found performing at The Phoenix and other venues around the Las Vegas valley.

As for what he hopes audiences carry home from their encounter with Domino at Omega Mart, the answer is characteristically warm and characteristically clear: "The one thing I hope they remember is just how welcome they felt because of her. I hope they feel like they went on an adventure with Domino — that it had a beginning, middle, and end, and that it culminated in something very, very fun. That sense of joy and that sense of adventure is what I really hope people take away."

Phenomenomaly runs Wednesday through Sunday beginning at 2 p.m. inside Omega Mart at Area 15, 3215 S. Rancho Drive, Las Vegas. No additional ticket purchase is required. Catch Sunshine at Gypsy Nightclub every Friday and Saturday night, and at the Rio's Faaabulous Drag Brunch every Saturday and Sunday.

*Photo Courtesy Gypsy Nightclub*





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# Inside Monzú

## *300-Year-Old Sourdough and a Family Legacy*

By Russ White and Ward Billeisen

**T**here is a particular kind of restaurant that Las Vegas does not always do well: the kind where the owner's family history lives in every dish, where the bread is made from a 300-year-old starter, and where the sommelier spent the afternoon in a study group before arriving to pour wine tableside with the confidence and warmth of a close friend. Monzú Italian Oven & Bar, tucked into a strip mall at 6020 West Flamingo Road, is exactly that kind of place — and it has been quietly earning devoted regulars for eight years now.

Chef-owner Giovanni "Gio" Mauro is the oldest son of Nora Mauro, whose legendary Nora's Italian Cuisine operated out of this very space beginning in 1991. When Nora's eventually relocated to a freestanding building down the road, Gio could not bring himself to surrender the lease. "There's too much history," the restaurant's sommelier explained during our recent visit. "Too many events happened here. He said, you know what, I'm just going to open up a spot." That decision became Monzú, which opened in 2018 and was immediately named Best New Restaurant of the Year by Desert Companion.

### **A Room Full of Memory and Intention**

The dining room still carries the warmth of its origins — six front doors where there was once just one, the space having

expanded over the years as neighboring tenants came and went. The atmosphere is intimate without being precious, lively without being loud. On Friday and Saturday evenings, live jazz from some of Las Vegas's finest musicians fills the room until 11 p.m., transforming dinner into something closer to an event. The staff moves with the easy confidence of a team that genuinely enjoys one another's company, a tone that clearly flows from the top down. During our visit, Chef Gio was present, attending to the details of his restaurant with the quiet attentiveness of someone who understands that a dining room is a living thing.

"You can always tell when the owner is a kind, good person," one of our guests observed, "because that trickles down throughout the entire restaurant. Everyone was happy, enjoyed each other's company, worked well together."

### **The Chef's Table: Let Gio Decide**

For first-time visitors — and frankly for anyone who wants the full Monzú experience — the Chef's Table tasting menu is the move. It begins with an antipasti board and proceeds through salads, pasta, pizza, two proteins, and dessert, the kitchen making selections that showcase what is freshest and most inspired on a given evening. Wine pairings are available and strongly recommended: the sommelier, who has been running the program for a year and a half and is

currently working toward his next certification, brings an infectious enthusiasm to the table that elevates every course.

The evening opened with Monzú's house sourdough, served with whipped ricotta, black pepper, and olive oil. The bread's starter, the server noted, is 300 years old — a recipe originating from Ischia, the Neapolitan island — and the result is a loaf of extraordinary depth, its crust giving way to a tender, complex interior. The ricotta, silky and almost ethereal in texture, bears no resemblance to the grainy supermarket variety. "It was so creamy it was almost like a butter," our guest said. "I've never liked the grittiness of ricotta, but this I really enjoyed."

### **What Grows Together, Goes Together**

The antipasti board that followed was a lesson in Italian regional specificity. Cheeses included a classic Parmigiano Reggiano with aged balsamic, a truffle-infused sottocenere with black ash rind, a rich palagio cow's milk cream cheese, and an orange-infused gorgonzola. The salumi selection featured mortadella with pistachios, sopressata infused with fennel seeds, and a spicy Calabrese salami. Standouts included the torta frita — fried pizza dough that the server described as best consumed wrapped around a slice of prosciutto di Parma — and bacon-wrapped dates stuffed with Parmigiano





Reggiano and finished with balsamic. Both were gone within seconds.

The sommelier paired the board with a Lambrusco, arriving with a small speech about its undeserved reputation in the American market. "Take every perceived notion you have about Lambrusco and throw it out the window," he said. "The high acid and slight effervescence cut right through the fattiness of the meats and cheeses. When you have the meat and cheese in your mouth, put a little Lambrusco in there — it's going to affect the wine, the wine's going to affect the food." He was right.

#### **Pasta Worth Traveling For**

The crespelle al forno — Monzú's take on a baked pasta — arrived as layered crepes bathed in béchamel and a house milk bolognese, finished with peas and basil. It looks, at first glance, like a compact lasagna; it tastes like something altogether lighter and more delicate, each layer of crepe absorbing the sauce without becoming heavy. A wine pairing here moved to a fuller-bodied Artimino blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, the richness of the wine matching the dish's depth without overwhelming it.

The gnocchi, served in a gorgonzola cream sauce, was a revelation for anyone who has been burned by dense, chewy versions elsewhere. These were pillow-



soft, the sauce coating each piece with a salty, tangy creaminess that the sommelier paired with a 100% Pecorino from the Marche region — a coastal wine with a briny salinity that cut cleanly through the richness. "That saltiness and acid cut right through the creaminess," he explained, "very similar to what the Lambrusco did with the meats."

The Roman-style pizza — rectangular, about the size of a folded menu — came with two sauces: a garlic mascarpone described as "kind of like an Italian ranch" and a Calabrian chili oil. The pro tip from the server: combine them. It works beautifully.

#### **The Proteins**

A hanger steak arrived over cipolline onions and sautéed potatoes, finished with a salsa verde that managed the rare trick of complementing rather than overpowering the meat. "Normally chimichurri can override the flavor of the steak," our guest noted. "This complimented it perfectly." Lamb chops followed with a mint pesto sauce and the same potatoes — classic preparation, flawlessly executed, the kind of dish that reminds you why simplicity is its own form of ambition.

#### **The Dessert That Ends Everything Perfectly**

The dessert course brought sesame



cookies, housemade cannoli in pistachio and classic versions, and — the unanimous favorite — the sfinigi: a Sicilian doughnut of light puff pastry filled with sweetened ricotta, topped with candied orange and acacia honey. The sommelier paired it with a Marsala aged 24 months in oak, its notes of apricot, fig, and acacia honey mirroring the dessert in a pairing that felt almost theatrical in its perfection. "A match made in heaven," he said, and he was not wrong.

#### **A Local Institution Worth Seeking Out**

Monzú does not advertise itself loudly. It sits behind the traffic of Flamingo Road, easy to miss unless someone has told you to look for it — which is how the best restaurants often work. But eight years in, with a James Beard-worthy depth of intention in every dish and a team that makes guests feel genuinely cared for, it has earned its reputation as one of Las Vegas's most beloved dining experiences.

Monzú Italian Oven & Bar is located at 6020 West Flamingo Road, Suite 10, Las Vegas, NV 89103. Dinner is served Sunday through Thursday, 4:30–9:30 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 4:30–10:30 p.m. Live jazz every Friday and Saturday, 8:30–11 p.m. Reservations are available at [monzulv.com](http://monzulv.com) or by calling (702) 749-5959. Lunch is available for catering and group reservations only.





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thecenterlv.org

**ACLU**  
aclunv.org

**ADL**  
lasvegas.adl.org

**ALCOHOLICS TOGETHER**  
alcoholicstogetherlasvegas.com

**BEARS LAS VEGAS**  
bearslv.org

**HENDERSON PRIDE**  
hendersonpride.org

**HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN**  
hrc.org

**IMPERIAL ROYALE SOVEREIGN COURT OF THE DESERT EMPIRE**  
ircdei.org

**LAMBDA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**  
lambdalv.com

**LAS VEGAS MEN'S CHORUS**  
lvmenchorus.org

**LAS VEGAS PRIME TIMERS**  
lasvegasprimetimers.com

**LEATHER UNIFORM CLUB OF LAS VEGAS (LUC OF LV)**  
thelucoflv.com

**MAMA DRAGONS**  
mamadragons.org

**NEVADA GAY RODEO ASSOCIATION**  
ngra.com

**THE PRIDE TREE**  
thepridetree.lv.com

**SILVER STATE EQUALITY**  
silverstateequality.org

**SOUTHERN NEVADA ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER QUEER SOCIETY**  
snapiqs.org

**YOUNG: EQUAL**  
youngequal.org

## **Wellness Resources**

**THE GAVIN J. GOORJIAN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER**  
thecenterlv.org

**AFFINIDERM**  
affiniderm.com

**COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA**  
cccfsn.org

**FARABI WELLNESS CENTER**  
hplv.com

**HUNTRIDGE FAMILY CLINIC**  
huntridgefamilyclinic.org

**PARCS DENTISTRY**  
parcsdentistry.com

**SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTH DISTRICT**  
southernnevadahealthdistrict.org

**UMC**  
umcsn.com

## **STI/HIV/AIDS Resources**

**THE ARLENE COOPER COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER**  
thecenterlv.org

**AID FOR AIDS OF NEVADA (AFAN)**  
afanlv.org

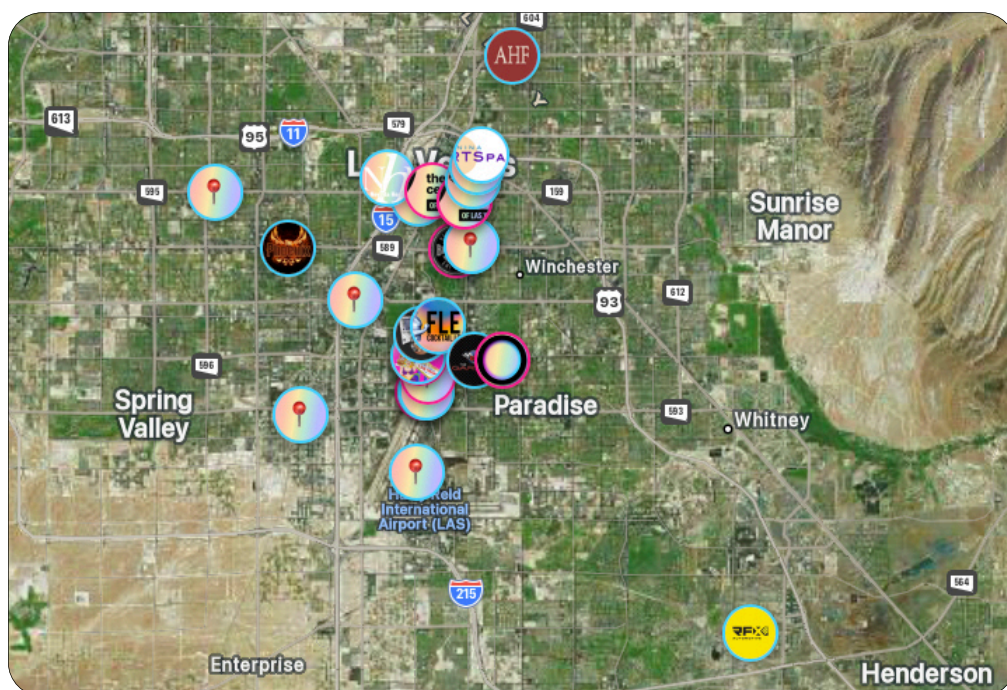
**AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)**  
aidshealth.org

**CAN COMMUNITY HEALTH**  
cancommunityhealth.org/las-vegas

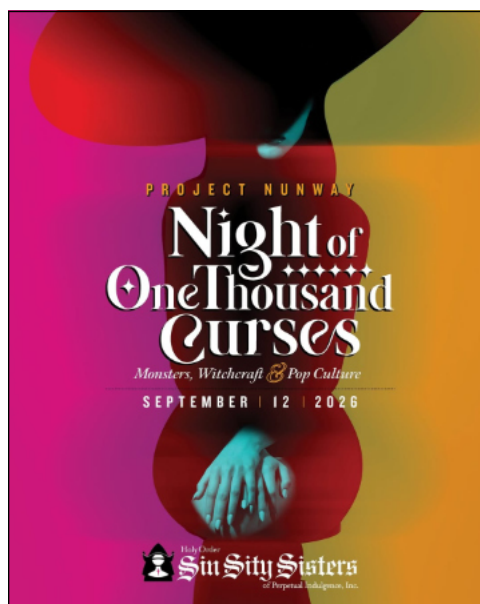
**GOLDEN RAINBOW**  
goldenrainbow.org

**SIN SITY SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE**  
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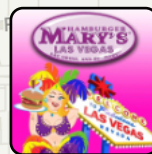
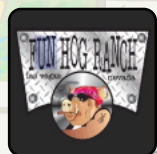




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