



BLOCK WATCH

What's new, hip or just plain fun to do on the streets of Vancouver.

Written by *Jennifer Croll*

SASSY MINK Dark, rich, sinfully decadent... We're talking about your latest crush. That's right: Mink Chocolates has opened a café on the park, dedicated entirely to the sweet treat. The blended iced chocolate is sure to give you chills, while the rich chocolate fondue with seasonal fruit might just make you melt. Take away a chocolate bar to stem those mid-afternoon yearnings; we suggest the Romeo and Juliet, filled with half white chocolate and half dark chocolate ganache. Oh, parting is such sweet sorrow. 863 West Hastings Street, 604.633.2451, www.minkchocolates.com

UTOPIAN DEALS The dilemma is this. You want to do a little cosmetic spring cleaning: pretty up those toenails, and maybe get a rejuvenating salt scrub before you bare your legs to public scrutiny on the seawall. But at the same time, you don't want to break the bank on beauty. The resolution? Put yourself through Utopia Academy. This spa school, affiliated with Spa Utopia, offers a full range of services at amazingly low prices. The new location by Stadium SkyTrain station allows you to easily nip in from downtown to indulge. 220-181 Keefer Place, 604.681.4450, www.utopiaacademy.com

PARK LIFE There's nothing better than a sunny afternoon at the park. Birds singing, flowers in bloom and a blanket laid in an area avoided by Canada geese. To complete the experience: a gourmet picnic basket by Provence. Give them a ring to order your wicker basket packed full of things like tapenade, crostini, antipasti, baguettes and brie. The only thing you'll need to make the day complete is a covert bottle of bubbly. 4473 West 10th Avenue, 604.222.1980 and 1177 Marinaside Crescent, 604.681.4144. www.provencevancouver.com

JUST JULES Paris in springtime might be nice, but Gastown ain't so bad either. Especially now that Jules, a delectable little French bistro, is open. The fare is typically French, but approachably casual. Take your meilleur ami and share some moules frites, or for a heartier meal, dig into the beef tenderloin with morel cream sauce, ratatouille and scalloped potatoes. 216 Abbott Street, 604.669.0033, www.julesbistro.ca

BATTER UP If the last time you got excited about third base was high school, maybe it's time to reacquaint yourself with the boys of summer. What we're talking about, of course, is taking in a baseball game with the Vancouver Canadians. It's undeniable fun spending a day lounging in the sun with a cold pint, hoping for someone to hit one out of the park. The home opener is June 19th, officially starting the season for Canada's most popular minor-league team. 604.872.5232, www.canadiansbaseball.com

CLAP YOUR HANDS, SAY FLAMENCO So, you want to get fit this summer but aren't much of a jock. Put your hair in a bun, tuck a red flower behind your ear and strap on those dancing shoes; flamenco might be the answer. Lessons at Centro Flamenco will teach you to stamp your feet and clap your hands to haunting Andalusian melodies. Qualified teachers also provide a cultural, social and historical background on the famous dance. Not sold? This is an exercise regimen that can quite legitimately be followed up with tapas and sangria. 102-2083 Alma Street, 604.737.1273, www.centroflamenco.com