

WEST READING MOTOR CLUB

*Brings Fine Dining to
416 Penn Avenue,
West Reading*

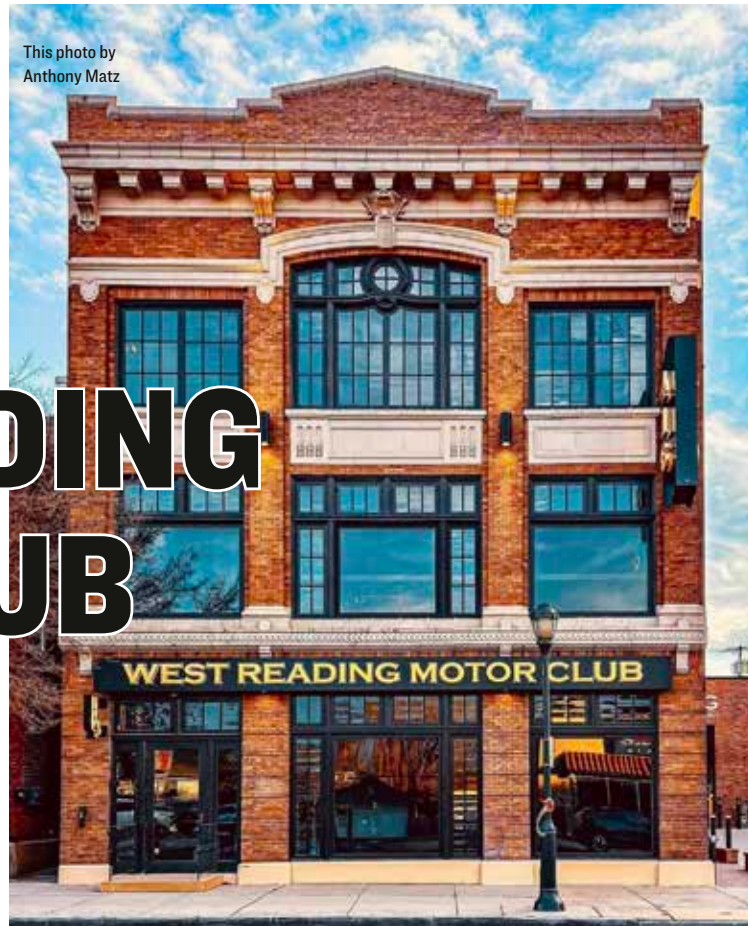
BY AMY MILLER
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MIVILLE, MMIVILLEVISUALS.COM

After a long wait, the **West Reading Motor Club** is open with the aim of becoming West Reading's premier fine dining establishment.

Owner Adam Cocuzza is well known to the local restaurant scene. He and his father Frank also own Say Cheese! at 600 Penn Avenue, and the Nitro Bar, which is located on the second floor of the historic West Reading Motor Club building. Say Cheese! has been a West Reading staple for more than a decade, celebrating all things cheese while serving updated American classics like crab mac and cheese and bacon tomato grilled cheese sandwiches. Next door, their attached Wine & Cheese shop offers over 75

hand-picked varieties of local artisanal cheese, as well as gourmet items to complete your own cheeseboard and over 100 wines to select your perfect pairing. The Nitro Bar, opened in 2019, offers Pennsylvania Dutch style bar food like its Lebanon Bologna "Cheesesteak" and an extensive selection of cocktails, wines, and nitro-tapped (and non-nitro) beer. Nitro Bar has become the epicenter of the music scene on Penn Avenue.

While both have found their niche, Adam is excited to offer something less casual at West Reading Motor Club. "From both a diner and an owner's perspective, I've always loved fine dining. From the slower pace and upscale



atmosphere to the exceptional food and beverages, I'm thrilled to bring that style of dining to the area."

West Reading Motor Club (WRMC) serves European-inspired American cuisine. The menu includes a special classics section that pays homage to mid-century fine dining dishes such as Lobster Newburg, Steak Diane, and Oysters Rockefeller. Diners may also take advantage of a carefully curated wine list and some fantastic signature cocktails.

In addition to outstanding food, guests can expect an elegant atmosphere with subtle nods to the building's original use as a car dealership and hardware store. The massive three-story brick building located on 416 Penn Avenue was built in 1913 to house the West Reading Motor and Hardware Company. From the 1920s to the 1960s it contained several automotive businesses, including Chrysler, Plymouth, and DeSoto dealerships. When naming their new restaurant, the Cocuzzas chose West Reading Motor Club to honor that history.

That history is also incorporated into the décor. The walls are lined with artistic hand-drawn automotive ads from the 1950s, blown up and framed in gold. The leather stitching on the booths is reminiscent of the stitching on leather car seats. And the classics section on the menu harks back to the automotive heyday. "It just felt very appropriate," Adam explains. "We wanted to make subtle nods to the automotive industry wherever we could, while still keeping everything elegant."

Many Berks County residents recognize this building as the former site of the A & Z Vacuum Store. The Light family purchased it in the early 1970s and turned it into a well-known Reading institution. When they relocated their store to Wyomissing in 2012, the building sat empty for a few years until the Cocuzzas purchased it in 2015.

Turning this 110-year-old building into not just one restaurant, but two, was an extraordinary undertaking. Since it had previously been used as a car dealership and a vacuum store, it needed a whole new infrastructure, including a new water line and upgraded electrical system. In 2019, the Nitro Bar opened on the second floor, with plans underway to open West Reading Motor Club on the first floor. Then COVID hit.

Once restrictions started to lift, the Cocuzzas focused on reopening Say Cheese! first, since it was their most well-established restaurant. Due to staffing and safety issues, it was almost two years before the Nitro Bar reopened. Only when both restaurants were





operating at full capacity was the family finally able to move forward with completing the fine dining restaurant they'd envisioned for so long.

West Reading Motor Club is now open Wednesday through Saturday from 4 PM to 9 PM. Reservations are highly recommended, as only a limited number of walk-ins will be accepted. You can make those reservations on the Open Table website or app or by calling 610-743-5951. Onsite parking is available, a premium in West Reading.

Once they've settled into the swing of things, Adam is looking forward to starting an Aperitivo Hour, a refined Italian version of the American Happy Hour. It will be served from 4-6 PM and feature traditional aperitivo cocktails such as spritzes and negronis, as well as caviar and champagne by the bottle.

"The fine dining aspect really sets West Reading Motor Club apart from other local restaurants," Adam says. "Our goal is to create something truly special that diners will return to again and again."



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