As of September 2021, masks are required for nearly all indoor activities within the District of Columbia. A growing collection of hospitality businesses including bars and restaurants are opting to enforce a vaccine requirement for admission into their facilities. The latest city updates can be found here.

In the minds of many Americans, the District of Columbia is less a city than a physical representation of the country’s polarizing political battles. But the real Washington, D.C., is not the one that’s portrayed on the news. The local populace does not start from scratch when a new political regime does, nor can it be depicted with any semblance of accuracy via the chaos of a single, dark day.

D.C. is a living, breathing place, with a dynamic and diverse population. Its residents—who aren’t represented in the Congressional systems—are a fundamental piece of a booming cultural scene.

The best of D.C. is experienced not only by visiting the many wonderful monuments and museums here, but by the sensory delights of its world-class restaurants and bars, as well as its bustling local arts scene. Washington is a collection of dozens of neighborhoods with distinct personalities, and that and in many ways offer a true-to-life representation of the country as a whole.
EAT & DRINK

From fine-dining to food halls, D.C. has more than enough to satiate any palate. For the former, you’d be wise to start at Masseria, a Michelin-starred restaurant from chef Nicholas Stefanelli serving sublime Italian fare focused on the Puglia region, and for the latter, you’d be equally wise to start next door at Union Market, filled with dozens of standout vendors spanning the culinary spectrum.

One of the best wine bars in the city is the charming French-focused La Jambe in Shaw, where French wine and cheese are served alongside fine-tuned cocktails from only French- or D.C.-made ingredients. Shaw is home to a sweeping collection of the city’s trendiest destinations, from Espita Mezcalería, one of the country’s preeminent mezcal bars, with the Oaxacan food to match, to the Columbia Room, a cocktail program and team that deserves its recognition among the world’s very best. When it comes to whiskey, look no further than Jack Rose Dining Saloon, whose enormous selection of prestige bottlings would make most auction houses blush. Next door to the space is its new sister restaurant The Imperial.

Maketto, a cafe, restaurant, and retail space from chef Erik Bruner-Yang is worth a stop at any hour of the day. Another neighborhood gem which will see you comfortably through from coffee to cocktail is The Royal, in LeDroit Park. Sister restaurant Lulu’s Wine Garden offers a convivial setting akin to a wine-filled soiree at a friend’s home and garden, with southwest-influenced cuisine, such as short rib and fry bread taco platters.

New to the city’s cocktail scene are Silver Lyan, the much-anticipated stateside debut for Ryan Chetiyawardana and the Mr. Lyan team, with boundary-pushing libations designed to surprise; and Allegory DC, which matches its cocktail program to its Alice in Wonderland mural and décor, re-framed through the lens of social justice.

In the new Wharf district, stop into Nara-Ya, where colorful sushi plates and Japanese fare are served alongside boundless sake and Japanese whisky, as well as Moon Rabbit, where chef Kevin Tien serves crave-worthy dishes such as lemongrass pork blade, with chopped pork served DIY with scallion pancakes, lettuce wraps, and sauces. While he may seem more suited to global emergency relief, D.C. nevertheless remains the epicenter of the José Andrés restaurant empire, and any stop among his linchpin establishments is recommended.