

*About This Site/About Me Page*

# easydayout

because fun shouldn't be work.

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## about this site

### Horses and buggies. Hula hoops. Phone books.

Back in the olden days before the information superhighway – that's what former U.S. veep Al Gore called the Internet in its infancy, for you young'uns – people had only the Yellow Pages, unruly paper road maps, and word of mouth to guide them in their pursuit of recreation.

How times have changed.

Now, it's so easy. Right?

All you have to do is type a restaurant name into Google to find and visit its website, and find beautiful photos of the cuisine, poetic raptures on the mission statement, and links to the über-hip blogs of each member of the waitstaff.

Huh? Where are the hours? Where's the menu? How about an *address*??

### TMI on that superhighway

A few choice words later, and a return to Google, you may then finally learn the emporium's hours, and location. You may also get treated a range of Yelp reviews from the victorious to the vitriolic, and finally learn that the restaurant shuttered last week due to bankruptcy, liquor license violations, and a link to organized crime.

Not so easy.

The information-rich Internet cloud has a tarnished silver lining. The quantity, style, and timeliness of the sought-after data can and often does overwhelm the most practical needs of the user...who just wants to go have a decent bite to eat.

Add to that mix the American way of the crazy busy lifestyle. When a person finally gets some breathing room, and an opportunity to take a date, a friend, or a child out for a day or evening of fun, the choices can be overwhelming.

### The little site that could.

That's where easydayout comes in. I'm starting small, but each week, I'll post another entry of a fun little outing, involving at least two venues, that just might suit your fancy. Everything you need to know to go have your own version of that same good time will be right here, under the teal and chartreuse easydayout website umbrella. Need a map? Hours? Address? Phone? An honest review of my experience? It's all here.

As the entries build up, so will the listings. (Right now it's a little slim!) And yes, you can find just about anything you need to know about these places elsewhere on the Internet. But I've created easydayout – to make it easy. I said it once and I'll say it again. easydayout is here:

**because fun shouldn't be work.**

## about me



### Who?

I'm Rachel Urbanowicz and I love going out and having fun; I love writing and designing; I love being able to find a place and its vital stats without pulling my hair out.

### Master of my domain! Er, Arts.

These passions led to easydayout – which is also the topic for my capstone project for a master's degree! Once completed, I shall hold an M.A. in Strategic Communication Management from Concordia University in St. Paul.

### Want fries with that website?

I hail from the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. I have also lived in Chicago and San Francisco. My day job is creating user interface designs for business intelligence software, and I spent many years prior working as a website and print designer in corporate America. The companies I've worked for have focused on technological innovation, from making fast food drive-thrus more efficient, to increasing the efficiency of the electrical grid around the world.

### Drama Queen

I have also done a lot of community theatre and a dose of professional as well, playing the lead in the Chicago premier of Ken Ludwig's play *Moon Over Buffalo*, and co-producing and acting in Alan Ball's play *Five Women Wearing the Same Dress*.

### Don't be a stranger

I welcome your feedback and comments. Feel free to post your comments on the blog, or email me at [rachel@easydayout.com](mailto:rachel@easydayout.com).

**Cheers.**

## EasyDayOut Sample Blog Entry

# easydayout

because fun shouldn't be work.

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10 August 2013



**Gourmet Oil & Vinegar**  
Olive Oil meets Vinny  
Vinegar: culinary chemistry!  
[read more](#)



**Max's**  
Chocolate, tchotchkes, and  
shiny things -- oh my!  
[read more](#)



**Wolfe Park**  
Wear your shorts for the  
Shakespeare and sports.  
[read more](#)



**Wild Rumpus**  
A furry, feathery feast of  
literary fantasy for all ages.  
[read more](#)



**Tilia**  
If you can take-ia the wait-ia,  
the food is yum-yum-yummy.  
[read more](#)

### Locale 1: The Shops at Excelsior and Grand

#### [Gourmet Oil and Vinegar](#)

##### Point A to Gourmet

We had been curious for a good while about Gourmet Oil and Vinegar, after friends came back from a trip to California's wine country, where they had enjoyed a similar shopping and sampling experience. Fortunately for us, no airfare or body scanning was required to get from Point A to Gourmet.

##### Posh and Yummy

We taste-tested myriad gourmet olive oils and balsamic vinegars, some alone, some mixed together in the handy mini-cups the store provides in addition to the shreds of bread for dipping. Who knew that drinking oil and vinegar could feel so posh and yummy? Recipe cards line the shelves, corresponding to whichever flavor resides nearby. I purchased a small bottle of Cara Cara Orange Vanilla olive oil and swept up recipe cards for Cara Cara Orange Rum Caramel, a heavenly-sounding dessert drink, and Radicchio, Cara Cara and Quinoa salad.

##### Magic Drizzle

My companion purchased Blood Orange olive oil and Dark Chocolate balsamic, which we enjoyed a day or two later, drizzled over Häagen Dazs® vanilla ice cream with strawberries. I know it sounds weird, but the melding of flavors and textures made magic. The strawberries were key; we tried it later with blueberries and it just wasn't the same.

##### [Max's](#)

##### A surprise bonus: unique greeting cards

Gathering our shopping bags of gourmet booty, we wandered a storefront or two to Max's, a boutique offering gourmet chocolates, artistic jewelry, and small, gorgeous pieces for the home such as serving plates, goblets, and vases. I almost forgot! They also have funny, unique greeting cards, a definite bonus if, like me, you're bored with same greeting card offerings in every storefront, for decades now! I always make a mental note of where I can find greeting cards off the beaten path. I could have drooled over the gorgeous jewelry for hours, but out of compassion for my male companion, I kept my perusing to a minimum and purchased a dark chocolate bar with sea salt and pecans.

##### [Wolfe Park](#)

##### When the stage is empty...hop on up!

Gourmet Oil and Vinegar and Max's are part of The Shops at Excelsior and Grand in St. Louis Park. As part of the neighborhood revitalization of this area that occurred from 2001-2007, an [amphitheater](#) and recreation center were built in Wolfe Park, which sits at the end of Grand Way. During the summer months the amphitheater hosts free music acts and Shakespeare plays. We walked down there on a quiet night, and the people watching, ducks, and a small, swimming turtle to provided ample entertainment on a gorgeous summer evening. Then we headed back to the car and drove to the Linden Hills neighborhood of Minneapolis.

### Locale 2: Linden Hills neighborhood, Minneapolis

#### [Tilia](#), part 1

##### Wait...HOW long?!

I had been curious to try Tilia after hearing it praised by accomplished local food critic [Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl](#), and we knew about their no-reservations policies and long wait times (the restaurant seats about 40 patrons), so we were mentally prepared. We went in, got our name on the list, and the hostess took my phone number to call us when our table was ready (45 minutes ahead of her 90-minute estimate). This gave us the freedom to go up the street and take a walk on the Wild Rumpus side.

## easydayabout

### The places

Locale 1 was the Excelsior and Grand neighborhood in St. Louis Park; Locale 2, the Linden Hills neighborhood of Minneapolis.

The spots:

- Gourmet Oil and Vinegar
- Max's
- Wolfe Park
- Wild Rumpus
- Tilia

### Gourmet Oil and Vinegar

3840 Grand Way  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416 [map](#)  
952-303-4220  
[gourmetoilandvinegar.com](#)

Free parking: street and ramp  
On Metro Transit bus routes: 12, 114,  
604, 615

Monday	10am-6pm
Tuesday	Closed
Wednesday	10am-6pm
Thursday	10am-7pm
Friday	10am-6pm
Saturday	10am-5pm
Sunday	Noon-4pm

### Max's

3826 Grand Way  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416 [map](#)  
952-922-8364  
[stylebymax.com](#)

Free parking: street and ramp  
On Metro Transit bus routes: 12, 114,  
604, 615

Monday	10am-7pm
Tuesday	10am-7pm
Wednesday	10am-7pm
Thursday	10am-7pm
Friday	10am-7pm
Saturday	10am-6pm
Sunday	Noon-5pm

### Wolfe Park

3700 Monterey Drive

## EasyDayOut Sample Blog Entry (continued)

### [Wild Rumpus](#)

#### [Chickens and rats and ferrets and cats](#)

Wild Rumpus is a dreamy store for book- and animal- loving kids of all ages. From the minute you walk in – either through the purple Alice-in-Wonderland-type door, or the grown-up size door that encompasses it, you need to watch your step to not collide with the cats or chickens that wander freely (the other animals are in humane, cage-like spaces), which isn't too difficult considering the vast collection of books that will having you doing the routine of walk two steps, stop, read for ten or more minutes, repeat. My companion paged through a graphic novel or three, while I became engrossed in (and ended up purchasing) Sheila O'Connor's novel, [Where No Gods Came](#). The cell phone rang, signaling dinner time, so we walked past the caged ferrets and birds and over the glass-enclosed rat cage, under the ceiling designed like a winter-ice-cracked lake, and back out to west 43rd street for the short walk back to Tilia.

### [Tilia](#), part 2

#### [I want a glass of red wine and that dress.](#)

Tilia has amazingly delicious food but be ready for crowds and loud. Once you settle in and accept that reality, it's easier to enjoy it. The waitstaff has a dress code that seems to be "express yourself" with a little bit of structure, and I have to say I was envious of our hostess' rockin' vintage dress. From where I sat, a glass jar of homemade cookies was visible. Patrons have the option of table or bar seating, the latter providing a good view of the open kitchen. We sat at a table not far from the bar, where I had a perfect view of all the food that came up, including many Fish Taco Tortas aTilia favorite that have their own [video](#) on the Travel Channel website.

#### [What exactly is dukkah?](#) →

We started with the Grilled Flatbread, Olive Oil & Dukka at a reasonable \$4. It was perfect for our aspirations of having something to enjoy with our wine that wouldn't leave us too full for dinner. The grilled flatbread was a nice variation on the typical restaurant bread plate, and the diced olives in the dukkah were yummy.

#### [More, please](#)

My companion enjoyed the Copper River Sockeye Salmon and I tried the Trout – Rainbow trout, that is, with couscous, mushrooms, salsa verde and crème fraîche (my memory isn't that good – I copied this straight from their [menu!](#)). The food practically melted in our mouths, but we also felt that the portions were small for the price point and we were not fully satiated, when all was said and done. Perhaps we should have gone with a larger appetizer, or one of their salads or soups – which [Ms. Grundahl says](#) are not to be missed.

### [Locale 3 – Home](#) ♥

The silver lining to having a little room left for dessert, is having a little room left for dessert. What better way to cap a romantic evening of olive oil tastings, park wanderings, book perusing, and dinner – than a lovely glass of red wine accompanied by a shared praline and-sea salt gourmet chocolate bar from [Max's](#). Heaven!

St. Louis Park, MN [map](#)

### [Wild Rumpus](#)

2720 West 43rd St  
Minneapolis, MN 55410 [map](#)  
952-922-8364  
[wildrumpusbooks.com](#)

Free parking: street  
Metro Transit bus route 6 (1/2 block walk)

Monday	10am-5pm
Tuesday	10am-8pm
Wednesday	10am-8pm
Thursday	10am-8pm
Friday	10am-8pm
Saturday	10am-5pm
Sunday	Noon-5pm

### [Tilia](#)

2726 West 43rd St  
Minneapolis, MN 55410 [map](#)  
952-922-8364  
[wildrumpusbooks.com](#)

Free parking: street  
Metro Transit bus route 6 (1/2 block walk)

Kid-friendly  
Wheelchair-accessible  
Wine and beer only  
\$\$

Monday	11am - 1am
Tuesday	11am - 1am
Wednesday	11am - 1am
Thursday	11am - 1am
Friday	11am - 1am
Saturday	9am - 1am
Sunday	9am - 1am

