



THE RADAR WEEK ENDER

BY KATIE WILMETH

THINGS TO DO IN DENVER WHEN YOU'RE DEMS *Clockwise from top left:* Fort restaurant has hosted presidents from both parties, but its helipad will only be taking Democratic reservations this week. Forgot your ballgown? Head to Mariel. Pick up thank-you gifts for superdelegates at Loft 22. Hotel Curtis and The Corner Office will host the hippest conventioners.

PARTY ANIMALS *Go on the prowl in unconventional Denver and Minneapolis*

Politicos, pundits, A-list celebs and, oh yes, the presidential candidates are all planning to party with purpose this summer at their national conventions. Are you on the VIP list? Then get ready to enter a political fray loaded with hot fêtes, hip shops and culinary hot spots in Denver and Minneapolis.

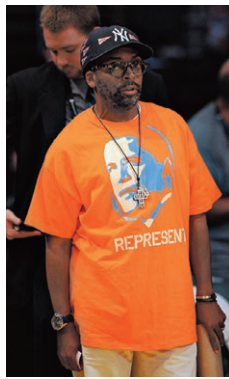
THE DEMOCRATS

So many Democrats are descending on Denver from August 25–28 that we hear even **Oprah** herself couldn't secure a hotel suite. She'll be staying at a private home instead, natch. Indeed, it seems that everyone is crazy for this convention. Beyond swooning over Obama, the city of Denver offers up a host of hip restaurants, bars and shops to check out during your downtime. "What I love about Denver and what I think is so hip and modern about the city is it has held onto its roots," says Adam Brodner, head concierge of the Curtis, one of Denver's kitschiest boutique hotels. "It's held onto its architecture and aesthetics. So even with all these modern and lush martini bars and restaurants and wine bars, you'll find a lot of them in the historic looking storefronts. It's a great juxtaposition of the old and the new."

WHERE TO SHOP Let's face it: Most speeches are, well, not exactly electrifying. So we say, elect to shop instead! Hit the Mile-High City's boutiques and you'll quickly see that there are some chic threads in this mecca of T-shirts and jeans. Larimer Square, steps from the Pepsi Center, has several indie shops with crush-worthy labels. Check out the shops including **Square 1** (www.square1shop.com), **Violet** (www.violetdenver.com), **Mariel**

(303.623.1151) and luxe **Loft 22** (www.loft-22.com). You can vote for the dude ranch vibe, at **Cry Baby Ranch** (www.crybabyranch.com), where you can scoop up boots and belt buckles. And if you want to pick up fashions from the hottest Denver designers, look past Larimer to **Fancy Tiger** (fancytiger.com) on South Broadway.

WHERE TO SIP AND SUP Dining is an experience in Denver, where you can feast on everything from global gastronomy to rattlesnake. **Kevin Taylor's at the Opera House** (www.coloradoeats.com), from Colorado native and local celebrity chef, serves a posh menu and will share space with MTV when they throw their Ballot Bash in the same performing arts center. For something swank but outdoorsy, try **Forest Room 5** (www.forestroom5.com). The restaurant is like a chic camping trip, with fire pits, waterfalls and a stream inside. **Corridor 44** (www.corridor44.com) is Denver's only champagne bar. Those in the know snag the private room in back. Presidents Bush and Clinton have both dined at **Fort** (www.thefort.com), a former Spanish Fort that now has its own helipad for VIPs craving buffalo steaks. If you think you recognize **DC10** (www.dc10denver.com), a club designed to look like a hipped-up jet, you're probably under 40. The aeronautical hot spot was a fave among the Denver season's *Real World* cast. And for comfort food, the Curtis has **The Corner Office** (www.thecurtis.com), a restaurant and martini bar that's frequented by Denver's cool kids.



STAR-SPANGLED BANNERS: Republican Heidi Montag and Dems Zooey Deschanel and Spike Lee.

BI-PARTISAN PARTYING

Although Scarlett Johansson, Ah-nuld and other boldface names have pledged their allegiance to a specific party, the scene-makers are pulling out the stops in both Denver and Minneapolis.

MTV's opening night Ballot Bash promises to be a big ticket in both cities, but the after party, open to only 400 of the music network's closest politically minded friends will be the tougher ticket to get. In Denver, **Wyclef** will headline and many of his like-minded rockers will also take the stage. MTV hasn't announced acts for the Minneapolis event, but details will soon be revealed online at www.rockthevote.com/rocktheconvention.

The Creative Coalition and Target have turned to their celeb supporters to host a series of events throughout the conventions, including a concert on the third night in each city. In Denver, **Quentin Tarantino, Spike Lee, Zooey Deschanel** and **Susan Sarandon** will be among the stars supporting the Dems. **Annette Bening** will also be on hand in Denver to break bread at a luncheon honoring female senators. **Tim Daly** (lately seen in *Private Practice*) and **Kerry Washington** will walk the political line by leading the Creative Coalition Delegation in both cities. For details on this, visit www.thecreativecoalition.org.

MySpace will host several star-studded events, including invite-only late-night parties in Denver and Minneapolis. The social networking site will also sponsor MySpace Cafés in conjunction with the nonprofits Declare Yourself and El Voto Latino. With celebs like **Jessica Alba, Hilary Duff** and **ScarJo** attached to Declare Yourself and **Rosario Dawson** to El Voto Latino, you may find yourself star spotting on your coffee run. In Denver, scope out the late-night party at Mile High Station (www.milehighstation.com) and MySpace Cafés will be at The Corner Office and at Leela European Cafe (303.534.2255). In Minneapolis, the late-night party will be at Fine Line Music Café (www.finelinemusiccafe.com).

Wonks **Mary Matalin** and **James Carville** will hold dueling parties for their respective parties in Denver and Minneapolis with the nonprofit Friends of New Orleans. Each will host the "New Orleans All Star Jam-balaya," a fund-raiser starring a lineup that reads like a who's who of NOLA standouts, including **Tab Benoit, Marcia Ball** and **George Porter**. The Denver show is on Aug. 24 at Fillmore Auditorium and the Minneapolis event is on Sept. 1 at First Avenue Nightclub. For details visit www.friendsofneworleans.org.

One of the hottest tickets in town, will be **The Daily Show**. Jon Stewart and his "Best F*cking News Team Ever!" will broadcast live from both conventions. Catch them in Denver at the University of Denver's Byron Theatre and



Take a break from the platform to find the perfect platform bed at Roam.

in St. Paul at the History Theatre at McNally Smith College of Music. For tickets, visit www.thedailyshow.com.

THE REPUBLICANS

Don't count out Minneapolis as a capital of cool this Labor Day weekend. Just because **Heidi Montag** is one of the bigger celebrity supporters of the Republican Party doesn't mean the Twin Cities won't be swinging.

"I think that Minnesota has an undeserved reputation of being kind of laid-back and being in bed by 10," says Scott Mayer, a Minneapolis event planner, who's organizing Spark24, a past-your-bedtime 24-hour, citywide music event for the convention. "Midwesterners are excited to show the country their own unique twist on partying."

You can believe the hype. Hipster travel mags have said the city that's early to bed and early to rise has the hottest cultural scene in the USA right now and could give the city that never sleeps a run for its money.

WHERE TO SHOP Is it possible to travel to the twin cities without setting foot in the Mall of America? Um, yes. The Twin Cities are home to a number of boutiques that boast A-list-approved labels. **Len Druskin** (www.lendruskin.com) carries clothes you see regularly on the red carpet with labels like Trina Turk, Rock & Republic Jeans and classics like Calvin Klein. While **Ivy** (www.shopivy.com), which hosts a DJ-spinning art opening once a month in its sparse space, caters to Twin City scenesters with a host of fashionista-friendly labels. **Styledlife** (www.styledlife.com) is all about accessories and offers everything from

high-end designers to hard-to-find vintage pieces. A fixture at the Minneapolis Macy's for years, style maven Keith Elsworth Borsett is getting buzz for his brand-new men's boutique, simply called **Elsworth** (612.339.0763), which stocks local designers and national labels. For environmentally friendly furniture, check out **Roam** (612.374.5555). The sleek, eco-aware store carries modern home accessories and furniture, including Minnesota's own Blu Dot Furniture.

WHERE TO SIP AND SUP After a long day of patriotism, perhaps your first post-convention cocktail should be at the **Red, White and F*cking Blue Bar** (yes, that's really the name, minus the star). Located in The Chambers Hotel (www.chambersminneapolis.com), you can down a much-deserved drink and then head to the hotel's restaurant, celeb chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's **Chambers Kitchen**. Some of the best restaurants are located on Loring Park, just a short walk from the convention center. Both **Nick & Eddie** (www.nickandeddie.com) and **Café Lurcat** (www.cafelurcat.com) offer a bustling bar scene. Or soak up the scene from the brand new W Hotel's **Prohibition** (www.whoels.com) a 27th-floor bar with sweeping views of the city. ■



Jean-Georges Vongerichten's sweetest taboo.



Patriots will party at the Red, White and F*cking Blue.