

From the "Better Get There Quick" department

The Food Corner

- with Allan Carter

The quest for Fredericton's premier combination of price, palate, and potato continues...

Tasty Fried Food and a Ninety-Nine Cent Burrito

A large impressive choice of appetizers, a patient and obliging waitress, and the special 99 cent special "recession relief" choices all make O'Tooles Roadhouse (in the K-Mart Plaza) a fulfilling place to eat. The "recession relief" choices at O'Tooles are probably the highlight of the roadhouse and make it unique to many other restaurants in Fredericton. On Wednesday evening, the recession relief special is mini-burritos and, for only 99 cents, they are far from bite size. But while they are a tasty treat, chock full of hamburger meat, peppers and tomatoes, remember, they only make an adequate appetizer or maybe a light, light lunch. Other 99 cent special through the week include: onion rings, mini-burgers (which I am told are a fair size), and garlic cheese fingers.

Now, if you are a health conscious eater you can always order the vegetable crunch which is roughly \$4.00. A wholesome and generous supply of fresh celery, broccoli, carrots, cucumber and every other vegetable that mom grows in the garden is included in this selection. Not surprisingly, the traditional sour cream and chive vegetable dip is served with this platter. Of course, you may be an avid cheese fan like myself and want to try out O'Tooles cheese sticks. This is usually a safe "fried food" appetizer, but, I must admit, I was a bit disappointed. While the sticks were fried to a golden brown and crisp, O'Tooles makes the mistake using plastic to coat the bowl. Therefore, the last few cheesesticks are quite soggy, floating around in all that grease you would rather not remember is there. But, alas, you can always try to redeem yourself by eating the carrots and celery they include in the cheese stick platter. It's quite a nice ironic touch for those you are virtually walking grease pots.

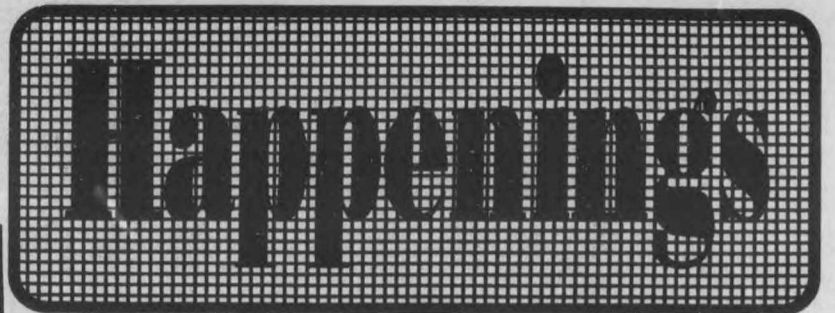
Finally, after what seemed like an unnecessarily long time the main dishes arrived. I ordered the Tex Mex seven oz rib eye steak. This steak is apparently marinated in salsa and spices and the selection includes Jalapeno fried, and an "all you can eat" garden or caesar salad. But if the steak was marinated in anything, I didn't taste it. Furthermore, the meat was too red for my liking and I asked it to be cooked medium. Of course, it is always difficult to determine if your idea of medium is the chef's idea of medium. However, if my steak was cooked medium, I shudder in the thought of what their steaks cooked rare look like. The Jalapeno fries are a nice change from your standard french fries or baked or mashed potato. These fat, thick fries were very crispy and were not at all soggy nor greasy. The single honey garlic chicken wings which one of my friends ordered were a big disappointment. They appeared to be reheated and were very stale. In addition, the size of the portion was not overly generous. My other friend had a hamburger and commented that it was not overcooked and found it to be deliciously juicy. O'Tooles cook the type of hamburger which, upon arrival, you wonder how in heck you are ever going to get it in your mouth without stopping everything from mustard to fresh tomatoes on your plate. Nevertheless, my friend succeeded in devouring the burger and I heard no complaints but only a muffled "delicious" when I asked how it tasted.

Because everyone else was stuffed and I am a pig, I ordered the Belgian chocolate mousse cake. The waitress informed me that it was not fattening. I like that - someone who tells you what you wish to hear. Unlike many chocolate cakes in restaurant, this cake was not overly rich or sweet. In other words, you could eat and enjoy it without getting a swooning headache. One drawback was that the cake serving was stingingly small and O'Tooles was fortunate that I was very full from my meal or I would have been very upset.

The 99 cent burritos, single honey garlic wings, and tea came to \$9.78 with taxes. The cheese sticks, 99 cent burritos, steak platter, cake and tea came to \$25.99 with taxes. And the vegetable crunch, burger platter and coffee came to \$15.67.

The atmosphere at O'Tooles is relaxing and comforting. The seats in the booths are high, adding to greater privacy and the fireplace which is situated in the middle of the dining area is a nice homey touch. However, I advise you to sit near the fireplace on a cold night because the windows beside the booths at O'Tooles are very breezy. It is clear that an attempt is made to create an even cozier atmosphere at O'Tooles by providing low lighting. But it does not work. For me, the lighting was too low when I came into the roadhouse and it was only a greater irritation when the lighting was turned down lower later in the evening. Another thing which irritated me was the slow service. Sure, I enjoy an evening out, but I like to go somewhere besides just a restaurant.

O'Tooles is certainly not the most expensive restaurant in Fredericton, but it doesn't fall short. However, you do get all the added frills at O'Tooles. Almost everything is served with celery and carrot sticks, many of the platters are served with all you can eat salads, and the 99 cent specials are a cheap treat which one cannot help but try. In addition, the manager may visit your table upon request. We were delighted in meeting the gentleman and I held a small tinge of hope that I would not have to pay for the meal. But, alas, he proved to be a disciplined man who wanted his restaurant judged fairly with no risks of a biased review just because the reviewer received a freebie. Nevertheless, for those restaurant managers out there that won't lose any sleep over giving a reviewer a free meal - just ask, I am patiently waiting.



The Caribbean Circle presents Caribbean Night '92, Saturday March 14th in the SUB Cafeteria. Come enjoy the best of Caribbean cuisine, culture and music. A big dance will end the evening. Also, a general meeting of the Caribbean Circle will be held on Sunday, February 16th in room 206 of the SUB at 2:30pm to discuss plans for Caribbean Night '92. All are welcome.

Gallery 78 presents two exhibitions in the new season. Metal-smith **Brigitte Clavette**, a NSCAD graduate in Fine Art, has received national recognition for her work, and has won numerous awards including special commissions, and her work is among many prestigious public and private collections. Painter **Stephen Scott** has studied at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, and at Mt Allison in Sackville. He has won the Elisabeth Greenschild Foundation Fellowship which allowed him to study further in Antwerp, Belgium to study paintings by Europe's great masters. Numerous solo exhibits, commissions, and awards make this artist's work worth viewing. This exhibition will be on display at Gallery 78 until February 29, Tuesday until Saturday, 10am to 5pm.

Politics on Stage will be the theme of the February 26 presentation of *Theatre in the Bag* at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. Michael Shamata, Artistic Director, and Micheline Chevrier, Assistant Director, will talk about dramatic presentations mirroring politics of the day. The presentation takes place at 12:30pm in the Art Gallery, and coffee will be served. For more information, please contact Caroline Walker, Education/Communications Officer, at 458-8545.



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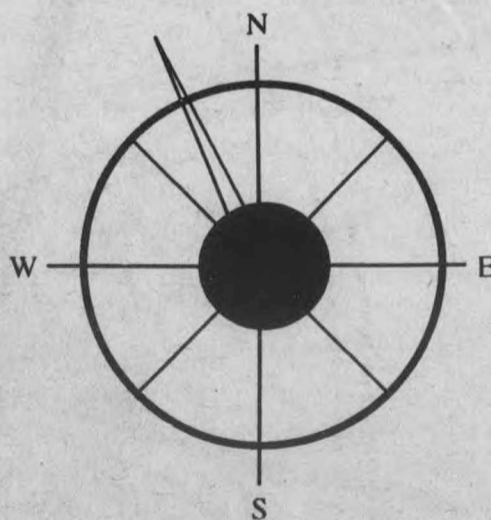
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