

Greasy Spoon

R E V I E W

Review by Ken Burke, Rick Janson & David Olie

Maybe it's the leatherette seats. Or the postcard pastoral photograph on the wall. It could even be the food.

For whatever reason, students rarely find their eateries of choice reviewed or mentioned in the establishment press. Finding a meaningful place to get a stomachful has been an occupation fraught with danger, bad advice, and many a bellyache for the average student at Dal. . . until now.

This year *Gazette Arts Magazine* is taking on the responsibility of covering those places with no dress code, a low price code, and quite possibly a few violations of the health code, where students spend their meals. And nothing could be more logical than beginning at the beginning — the greasy spoons of Halifax.

One note about our rating system. First: due to the preponderance of Acropolis photographs on the walls of Halifax restaurants, we were initially thinking of ranking our faves by Acropolises (Acropolii?), but problems with miniaturization scotched that idea. We settled on forks, with restaurants being ranked between five forks (perfect) and none (fill in your own adjective or expletive). Enjoy!

Camille's (2564 Barrington) gets the nod over Mama Camille's other grease-baby on Agricola for its two dining lounges and tasty wall decor of painted-mussels-in-goop. Even so, the fun really begins when you look above the musselmania to the huge menu posted on the inside wall — especially if you don't have much to spend. Camille's made itself a legend over the last four decades by doing the simple things right — good fish, fast service, and the cheapest prices anywhere. The menu's broadened a bit of late to include



stuff that's "not so fishie" (sic) but the seafood's still where it's at.

Whether it's the finger-long juiciness of the breaded shrimp, the light flavour of the liberally-greased haddock portions, or the rich staying power of their large scallops, there's no way to go wrong with these Pisces. The Marine platter, with enough of everything to kill a starving appetite, is one of Halifax's best deals at \$5.95, as is the three-piece fish & chips for a tad over two bucks. The chips are. . . chips, okay?

Camille's is located under the shadow of the Macdonald Bridge on the corner of North and Barrington.

Athens Restaurant (1558 Barrington) offers a selection of — not surprisingly — Greek food in addition to the normal greasy spoon fare.

But it's the baked lasagna that's tops in our books and frequently at the bottom of our stomachs. A large serving in a deep dish comes with a crisp topping covering a cheesy gooey inside. Although the sauce is certainly palatable, it could be enhanced by a little more spice.

Most dishes include large portions and are well served, although the salads could be crisper. The Greek salad in particular could use fresher tomatoes and more feta cheese.

A licensed bar and an uncluttered decor give a pleasant ambience to the Athens. Service is friendly and swift. Weekly specials are *tres* inexpensive.

The Doric (5650 Spring Garden Rd.)

Despite its name, the Doric will not give you the impres-

sion of dining in Greece. Fortunately, neither will you be dining in Greece.

Don't let the decor put you off. Tacky but clean, it's hard to imagine that the Doric has changed much in the last 40 years. They must be doing something right, and in fact they are. If you won't take our word for it, try getting a table at lunch-time.

What the Doric lacks in quality of presentation, it makes up for in basic quantity. If you want a real feed on the cheap, this is the place. The two piece fish and chips (\$2.95) comes with a logjam of fries it would take a lumberjack to wade through. Other popular items are the spaghetti with meat sauce and the milkshakes, still made with their 30-year-old mixers. A few good Greek dishes are also available.

The Commons Grill (2394 Robie St.) is one of the city's classic greasy spoons.

One is assaulted with a visual cacophony of signs immediately upon entering the restaurant. Coke logos on the fridge, a Rothman's cigarette clock on the wall, and a home-made sign warning not to ask for credit confuse the patron in search of the posted menu.

The food itself is mainly meat and potatoes fare. The cans of Campbell's soup clearly visible from the lunch counter give away the fact that not much attention is paid to the haute-ness of the cuisine. But the polyester-set that frequents the grill doesn't seem to mind in lieu of the huge selection and generous portions offered.

Tops on the menu is the pizza. A tender crust and thick layers of cheese make it one of the best in town.

Although not always cordial, service is rapid, almost qualifying it as a fast-food outlet. Prices are consistent with other greasy spoons in Halifax.

Tasty Food Restaurant (1304 Birmingham) is yer basic leatherette dining booth restaurant, with the special feature of existing a ten minute walk away from the Dal SUB down Morris Street.

Geographical convenience isn't Tasty Food's only charm by a long shot, either. The operative word for their portions is *hearty*, although don't go looking for flashy taste on the menu. This is Canadian cuisine all the way.

The hot food — especially the \$3.75 ham'n'eggs plate — is served with blinding speed and should still be hot by the time it hits your stomach. Their menu-stated slogan "choice food prepared as you like it", has nothing to do with their stable of sandwiches, though.

The Submarine (5384 Ingis) ranks with Camille's for an out-of-the-way location (near Barrington) but it scores high for an almost maniacal obsession with that out-of-vogue food, the submarine.

The name don't lie. There's but one food you can purchase in this take-out stand (take-out unless you have a thing for eating while standing) and that food comes in a long white (or beige) bun. Don't confuse this with any chain, either, as these submarine sandwiches are whipped up with some deli-grade contents. You always get a heapin' helpin' too — enough to make closing the sub an effort for the counter staff.

Fries & Co. (2603 Conolly) can't disguise its take-out-only nature by the picnic table shoved in front of the store's hall, but then again, when you serve fish as delicious as *they* do, there isn't much need for artifice.

Basically a chipwagon encased in a bright red shingled house, Fries & Co. can best be located by driving halfway between Oxford and Connaught on Chebucto Road. That trip's not too much to ask for if you're a devotee of lightly battered, very tasty fish.

The price is pretty much average for a standard-sized serving, and the fries are good — but they don't deserve top billing on the marquee next to (deep breath) the best deep-fried haddock in town. The service isn't going to make you either early or late, but at least they stay up late ('till 11 p.m.) on some of the nights you do.