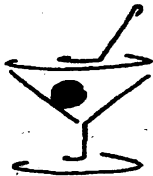


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Fax 617 350 5115
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Maureen McLaughlin

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DINING

ALISON ARNETT

In the South End, a cafe whose simple food captures the moment

THERE ARE NEW RESTAURANTS with glitz; there are newly restored restaurants with pedigrees; there are places with lots of pizzazz. But no restaurant on the Boston scene may have caught the wave, the gestalt of the moment, quite as perfectly as the Franklin Cafe.

Located on one of the broad and forgotten streets of the lower South End, this little place looks from the outside like a dusty, quiet sort of bar. Push your way through the velvet curtain and voila - there's a community inside. Chatting friends meet other friends, a handsome older couple lean intimately toward each other in the window, young guys in baseball caps drink martinis at the bar, girlfriends chat in a deep booth. Low lights, chic gray-green walls with handsome photographs, funky music at a respectable volume - the feeling is cool but not forbidding. It's a neighborhood all its own.

The camaraderie of the Franklin Cafe isn't just in its ambience, though. The food, and especially this food for these prices, has a lot to do with its appeal.

A thick slab of tuna, still very rare in the center, seems to melt when it hits the mouth, all straight flavor with only a splash of lemony sauce to interfere. Spicy dark greens offer contrast but the sea taste of fish is the memory.

Tender lamb slices in a gently spicy rub with a spinach sauce almost like a gentle pesto matches the large kernels of Lebanese couscous. A big veal rib chop needs only the sage brown butter to bring out its sweetness.

The dishes are fairly simple but the effect is sophisticated, a little like the spare but pleasing lines of Italian modern furniture. Chef and co-owner David DuBois said he's finding difficult the challenge of using high-quality ingredients but keeping prices down. So he pares down the plates to showcase the headliners.

Even so, the stars on the menu aren't the luxe ingredients but the homey dishes, which he admits are also the most popular.

There's a roast chicken with

FRANKLIN CAFE

★★

WHERE: 278 Shawmut Ave., South End.

TELEPHONE: 350-0010

PRICES: Appetizers, salads: \$5-\$8; pasta: \$8-\$10; entrees: \$10-\$15

GOOD CHOICES: Vegetarian chili; grilled basil calamari; soy-marinated chicken liver; cabbage, bacon and bleu cheese; turkey meatloaf, spicy fig gravy; lamb with Lebanese couscous; roasted chicken with balsamic gravy.

HOURS: Nightly, dinner: 5-30 p.m.-1:30 a.m. No reservations. Smoking in bar area.

CREDIT CARDS: Visa, MasterCard, American Express.

ACCESS: One step at entrance.

★★★★ EXTRAORDINARY
★★★ EXCELLENT
★★ VERY GOOD
★ GOOD
FAIR

RATINGS REFLECT THE RESTAURANT CRITIC'S JUDGMENT OF THE FOOD, SERVICE AND ATMOSPHERE IN RELATION TO THE PRICE, BASED ON SEVERAL ANONYMOUS VISITS.

an almost syrupy balsamic gravy that's done just right. The skin is crisp and dark, the breast meat moist. The plate is admittedly simple with only chive-flecked mashed potatoes underpinning the chicken, but the tastes are warming, fulfilling.

Turkey meatloaf, two large thick slices for \$10, grabs attention on the menu and carries through on the plate. It's savory and finely textured and then the sparkle of the fig gravy hits the tongue and it's necessary to take a few more bites to ascertain what all those flavors are. And then more bites to match the sweetness to the savory. Mama truly never made meatloaf like this. Although the menu changes often, DuBois says he can't take these two standbys off. In fact, he says he's never worked at a restaurant where so many people call to request dishes they want back or particularly like.

But it's understandable really; the cafe is a personable sort of a

No restaurant on the Boston scene may have caught the gestalt of the moment quite as perfectly as the Franklin Cafe.

place.

So the fact that not everything is uniformly good fades from memory rather quickly. A tomato, pasta and bean soup was thick and rather characterless and the smaller white beans might have tasted better than the big, rather tough kidney beans, and looked better. But then one recalled a lovely, almost smoky-tasting vegetarian chili, chunky in texture, lively in flavor.

The grilled skewered rosemary shrimp over greens were limp and dried out, the greens too rather limp. But then on another visit, grilled calamari sparkled, tender and garlicky. Sweet potato ravioli were mushy, smothered in an almost cloying sauce. But chicken livers, savory with a marinade of soy, rolled against the palate, strong tastes but mellow in flavor. Crunchy fennel salad offered a contrast in texture.

DuBois spent years at Savoir Fare in Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, as a restaurant evolved from what was a deli, and that experience plus travel honed his creative skills. Co-owner Maureen McLaughlin tended bar at Anchovies and other places in the South End. The combination gives a dual role to the Franklin Cafe, where the wait for dinner can stretch on for an hour or so and the lines at the bar are five or more deep.

The wine list is compact but intelligently chosen and priced, but the distinction here is the mixed drinks, signaling a change in style. The crowd obviously appreciates martinis and might even indulge in something really old-fashioned like, say, an old fashioned (sugar, orange, cherry, bitters, rye or bourbon and a splash of soda.) We tried a Moscow mule, a

Alison Arnett is the Globe's restaurant critic.

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FYI

Cover: Fresh cut flowers at Blooms and Greens in Roslindale. Working on arrangements are Leah Denlinger, co-owner June Alexandra, and Debbie Huntley. Globe staff photo/John Tlumacki

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Land of eternal youth

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CALENDAR STAFF

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ART DIRECTOR

Thomas Lauder

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Wendy Chow

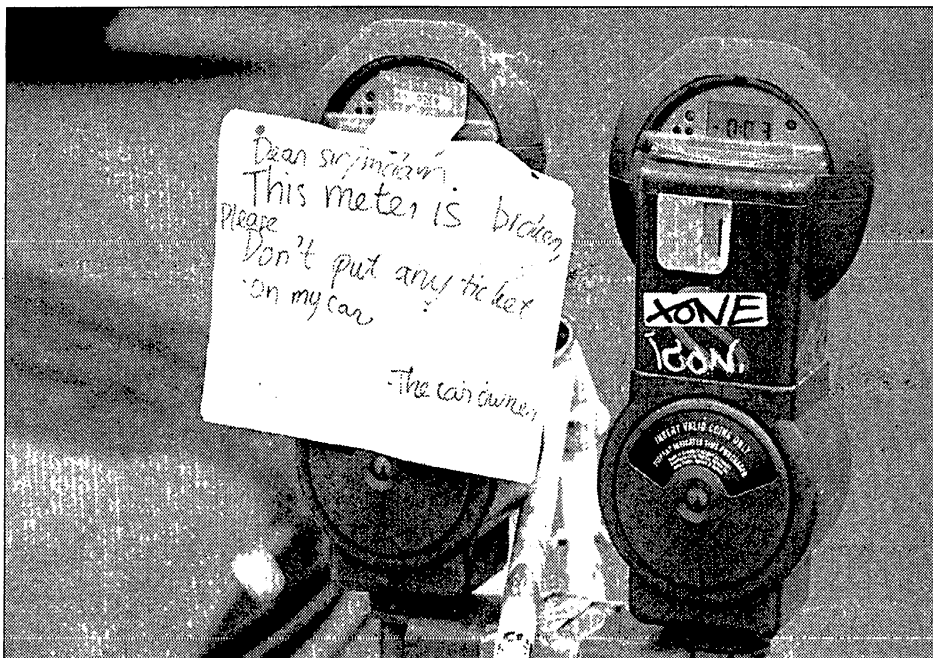
LISTINGS

Jane Curran, Stephanie Lawlor,

Cheryl Sinapis

Telephone 929-2793 for information

STREET SHOT



A HOPEFUL CAR OWNER LEAVES A NOTE ON A BROKEN PARKING METER ON BOYLSTON STREET IN THE BACK BAY. GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/BILL BRETT



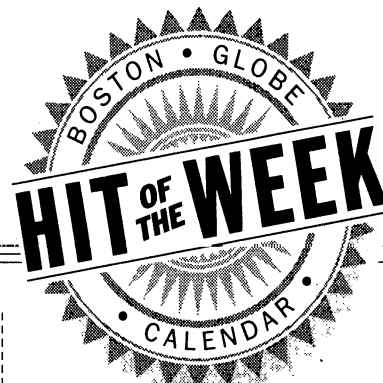
Jazz festival, maple syrup

Cheap Thrills is a weekly selection of activities that cost \$5 or less.

★ The BERKLEE HIGH SCHOOL JAZZ FESTIVAL

takes place Saturday at Berklee Performance Center, Recital Halls and the Hynes Convention Center in Boston from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. About 2,000 student musicians from the East Coast will compete for trophies, plaques and scholarships. The festival features nearly 170 jazz ensembles who, aside from competing, will take part in jam sessions and clinics. Highlighting the afternoon will be a 1 p.m. performance of the New England Grammy All-Star Choir followed by the New England Grammy All-Star Band. The High School Grammy Bands will present their concerts at the Berklee Performance Center, 136 Mass. Ave. Other events take place at the Hynes Convention Center, 900 Boylston St., and Berklee recital halls, 1140 Boylston St., Boston. Free. 747-8608. ★ Get out your waffle iron; it's maple sugaring time! Join the Friends of the MDC Breakheart Reservation for their **MAPLE SUGARING PROGRAMS** offered this Saturday and Sunday, and next weekend. Guided tours are offered at 10 a.m., 1 and 3 p.m. The tour features discussion on identifying trees in winter, tapping maple trees for sap and boiling the sap to make maple syrup. Participants can help cut fire wood with a two-person saw, see a wood splitting demonstration, and sample the sweet syrup on mini-pancakes and popcorn. Preregistration required. \$2 adult, \$1 children. Sugaring programs for school groups are scheduled for March 10-14, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The programs are free but call to register. At 177 Forest St., Saugus. 233-0834. ★ Get in the mood for St. Patrick's Day by joining the Irish folk group **TRADITIONS** at the Newton Free Library on Sunday for a concert of authentic Irish music, dance and poetry. The free concert begins at 2 p.m. and features harpists Mairead Doherty and Kathleen Guilday, fiddler and vocalists Jim Buchanan and Mary Carson, and flutist Jim Gleason. Niamh Doherty will recite poetry and dancers from the Harney Academy of Dance will perform. At 330 Homer St., Newton Center. 552-7145. Seating is limited.

—STEPHANIE LAWLOR



YOGI TEA

This energizing though caffeine-free beverage isn't really tea, as in Lipton. But neither is it conventional herbal tea. Rather, it's an exotic blend of spices and herbs, packaged loose. Devotees make a quart at a time, measuring out the dry elixir, boiling it in water, adding a pinch of black tea, a substantial dose of milk and honey, heating, straining, then serving. This may sound time-consuming, but it is actually time-expanding. The process is delightful, the results sublime.

Our favorite is Original Yogi Tea, available at health food stores and natural supermarkets. Its ingredients are based on the teachings of Ayurveda, Indian holistic medicine.

Through Yogi Bhajan's sealed plastic envelope and cardboard box, you can smell the Indonesian cinnamon, sweet green cardamom, golden ginger root, Madagascar cloves and tiny splash of pepper. As Yogi Tea simmers on the stove, it emits a luscious fragrance that lingers for hours, part of why we love preparing it.

Quick versions are available, if you insist. The flavors are still pleasing, though less smooth and complex.

Yogi Tea teabags are available in an array of flavors: Tahitian vanilla, Egyptian licorice, hazelnut cream, cinnamon spice, maple royale, and mango passion. Cinnamon spice tastes most like the original Yogi Tea, and we are also partial to maple royale, delightful with a bit of maple syrup and milk.

Yogi Bhajan's Yogi Tea, 3 oz., about \$3.50 in natural food stores, \$1.99 at Trader Joe's. Box of 16 teabags, \$2.99, at Cambridge Natural Foods and Bread & Circus.



City of Cambridge

14.

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 31, 1997

COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO
VICE MAYOR BORN
COUNCILLOR DAVIS
COUNCILLOR DUEHAY
COUNCILLOR REEVES
MAYOR RUSSELL
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: The **Franklin Cafe**, a new restaurant at 278 Shawmut Avenue, is one of the "hottest" new restaurants on the restaurant scenes, with rave reviews from customers and restaurant critics; and

WHEREAS: The **Franklin Cafe** is owned and run by former Cambridge resident David Dubois; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record congratulating **David Dubois** on the success of the **Franklin Cafe** an informing him that Cambridge looks forward to the eventual opening of, The Franklin II Cafe in Cambridge; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to **David Dubois** on behalf of the entire City Council.

In City Council March 31, 1997

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

D. Margaret Drury

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

Councillor Galluccio

14.

Resolved:

That the City Clerk McAnd Chereky is requested to prepare a suitable resolution congratulating former Cambridge resident David Dubois on the success of The Franklin Cafe, his new restaurant at 278 Shawmut Avenue in the South End.



City of Cambridge

14.

IN CITY COUNCIL

March 31, 1997

COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO

WHEREAS: The **Franklin Cafe**, a new restaurant at 278 Shawmut Avenue, is one of the "hottest" new restaurants on the restaurant scenes, with rave reviews from customers and restaurant critics; and

WHEREAS: The **Franklin Cafe** is owned and run by former Cambridge resident David Dubois; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record congratulating **David Dubois** on the success of the **Franklin Cafe** and informing him that Cambridge looks forward to the eventual opening of, The Franklin II Cafe in Cambridge; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to **David Dubois** on behalf of the entire City Council.

Entire Membership
R-454
19

Consent ORder #14

Councillor Galluccio re: Congratulations
to former Cambridge resident David
Dubois on the success of the Franklin
Cafe, his new restaurant at 278 Shawmut
Avenue in the South End.

In City Council March 31, 1997

ORDER ADOPTED