

THE FOOD WORSHIPPER

Pauline's Variety & Deli

Eat local, so the chant goes. Sometimes one can neglect culinary gems right in one's own backyard. Pauline's Variety & Deli is one such diamond in the rough.

The atmosphere is modest, with simple linoleum flooring, institutional beige shelving, and abundant, reliable—yet tasteful—fluorescent lighting. Windows on the front of the building open up onto Main Street, providing views of the hustle and bustle of evening foot and vehicle traffic. Listen carefully as those around you scratch at their Count Cashula or Pinball Wizard lottery tickets, and you'll perhaps hear the melancholy wail of the Fitchburg commuter rail train horn.

When it comes to cuisine, Pauline's doesn't pretend to be something it's not. There's no organic, sustainable, or humanely-raised fare here—just simple, convenient food, as one would expect at, well...a convenience store. On a recent visit, I began with a 20-ounce, blue agave-passion fruit, Glaceau VitaminWater Nutrient Enhanced Water beverage. I don't see this offered many places, so when I come across it, I'm inclined to take advantage. It's both scientifically proven to help you "hydrate responsibly," and endorsed by none other than local sports deity Tom Brady. What's not to like? I agonized over my appetizer (so many choices), and finally decided to splurge and buy two of my standby favorites: a one-ounce bag of Wachusett Ketchup Flavored Potato Chips—crisp, with quite a bit of variation in size, shape, and texture, from chip to chip; and a Slim Jim Giant

Slim Tabasco—a .97-ounce stick of tongue lashing, no-holds-barred, spiced meat. Tempted though you may be, don't ask for the wild dandelion salad with toasted hazelnuts, or the spring onion broth with ramp-and-Gruyère (not local!) dumplings, as they no longer offer them.

Pauline's Variety & Deli
67½ East Main St, Ayer
Reservations: A few

The entrée choices at Pauline's are plentiful, and you'll likely have as difficult a time as I did choosing. The Egg Salad on Wheat is hard to pass up—New England eggs, hard-boiled to perfection, combined with full-fat Cain's mayonnaise and some crunchy things I assumed were celery. The fried chicken is also a winner, but be warned that choosing just one portion of glowing fowl from under the bright-orange heat lamp will test your will power. Wear your sunglasses or that old welding mask you have in the trunk.

Finally, for dessert, I went with a Clark Bar and a bag of Squirrel Nut Zippers, both manufactured locally by the New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) in Revere, MA. My total bill for the evening came to \$11.27. Try and find a better meal anywhere within a five-mile radius of town. Eat local, indeed.

Art found in Ayer Road house now known to be forged

After months of intense investigation, forensic art experts and Harvard police have determined that the paintings found in an abandoned Ayer Road house north of Route 2 are forgeries. Last fall, responding to an anonymous tip, police raided the dilapidated house to search for masterpieces stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston in 1990. It was the most promising lead in the theft case in more than twenty years. If the paintings, thought to be Vermeers and Rembrandts, were found to be authentic, the reward offered by the Gardner would be substantial.

Now, however, the experts are certain that the paintings are fakes, done by Bromfield art students as part of a com-

munity service project. In a statement to the *Press* this week, a Bromfield art teacher explained that "it really wasn't the students' idea. The School Committee, knowing that we had several talented student artists, approached us last year with this plan as a foolproof way to fund the school budget. They knew the budget would be strapped, given that we had to hire extra teachers to staff our new masters and doctoral programs." (See related article, page A-2.) School Committee members and administrators were unavailable for comment.

"These kids are wicked good," said one of the forensic specialists. "Any one of them could have a brilliant career in the lucrative field of art forgery."

Creating your own cocktail

Every home needs a house cocktail. To design yours, we'll first choose a base spirit, and then customize your personal cocktail flavor profile.

Fill five small glasses with the following spirits: vodka, gin, rum, cognac, and (my own favorite, but I won't try to bias you) whiskey. Don't mix up your glasses!

We begin by tasting vodka. Let's swirl some around our tongues together. Think about potatoes. Not much flavor in vodka, making it a versatile base for many tipples.

Next, gin—essentially vodka flavored with juniper berries and spices. You might even have your own juniper shrub! Sip some gin, and toast your shrub. Then alternate sips between vodka and gin, gin, vodka. How are they alike? How are they different? Where does gin's flavor pull you? Lime? Quinine? Vermouth?

Now, to rum. Rummy rum rum! Switch between vodka/rum, rum/vodka, several times, comparing them. Rum asserts more direction, suggesting exotic flavors: mangos, oranges, coffee. What can you imagine with rum?

Triangulate all three, refilling your glasses as necessary. Vodka is Siberia on a cold night, a tasteless grease to help caviar slide. Gin is a nasty apothecary concoction. Rum is salt air and sweat, pirates and jigs—sweeter and deeper than vodka, with Caribbean airs, so unlike gin.

Face it, these three need companions to shine. They're ingredients, not destinations.

Onto cognac. Hail France! Cognac is a brandy, distilled wine, from grapes, and much more complex than those others. Sip cognac, then rum. Ugh, such a downward spiral. Sip cognac, then gin. Disgusting! Why do we suffer through gin? Then to tedious vodka. What's the point of vodka, if we have cognac? Cognac is eloquent, with gravitas. But facts be faced, cognac can be a bit effete.

Pshaw, time to get to business: whiskey! Sing with me, "Whiskey, whiskey, Nancy

Whiskey..." First, sip some whiskey, then some more, and then some cognac. Cognac might be fine for company of a certain prissy refinement, but whiskey is what all spirits aspire to be. It is cool mountains, peat fires, and charred oak casks. Sip it neat, before you consider mixing it into a cocktail, to give it its due respect. Whiskey is a bold leader, helping other little cocktail ingredients to cross the street, like little old ladies. However, whiskey can be brought down by companions of ill repute. Add clean simple syrup and fresh lemon juice to a fine single malt, and you get the BEST whiskey sour you've ever had. Use a cheap sour mix, and you'll get mediocrity. But neat, whiskey is a better drink than any cocktail could ever be. Cocktails' frivolity appeals to our needs for light entertainment over profound meditation. Alas, our existential struggles continue.

Let's toast each defeated contender: first whiskey, then cognac! An interesting alternative, but whiskey wins, for flavor and depth! Whiskey versus gin? Bah, who would sip that swill of juniper, when malted barley and peat abound? Spit it out, spit it out! Now, whiskey, then, oh what was it? Rum? Well, not so bad really, rum, "Yo ho ho!" so danced the pirates. A fine thing to do with molasses, rum is, but still, grossly inferior, to whiskey in the jar. "Whiskey, you're the devil, you're leading me astray!" A barrel of whiskey, and the pirates would have danced a different jig. And vodka? Vvvvvvoka?! Glorified water! Say nay, to flavorless swill, to cosmos, screwdrivers, and TV-commercial concoctions that distract from the true triumphs of civilization: fine single-malt Scots whiskey!

Sláinte! Sláinte! Sláinte!
 Oh no, we forgot tequila! Bah, we'll have to do it all again, from scratch. Same time, same paper, six glasses.... See you next week! <burp>

Not your Granny Smith's ATM

ATM continued from page A-1
 algorithm developed by the Finance Committee. Eubank expects the new approach to dramatically speed up the meeting. "I think we'll be able to wrap up by 2 p.m. easily... maybe even 1:30," he predicted.

Early feedback on the idea from locals has been mostly positive. "Standing in line to speak at a microphone is so twentieth century" said a resident of Elm Street and well-known voice at ATMs. "This will allow me to speak my mind, and then poke the appropriate town officials to make sure they read my post."

"I usually like to sit in the back row and knit," said a Still River resident, "and it's always difficult to see the charts and

graphs displayed on the flip charts and easels at the front of the gymnasium. Viewing them on a 2-by-4-inch screen will be so much easier."

Participants will be able to come and go as they like, since they will be able to keep up with the proceedings using the devices provided. The GPS feature on each device will be auto-enabled to ensure that users are within the geographic boundaries of the town when voting on warrant articles, in accordance with a little-known town voting regulation.

The devices will also be preloaded with the popular game "Angry Birds", to pass the time during Planning Board by-law discussions.

NEW HARVARD LISTING



The coziest house on the market, just right for your growing family. Walk to schools, pond, hydrants, Town Common trees, and trash barrels. Energy-efficient single-room construction, nearly 10 square feet. Floor-to-ceiling walls. Newly defrosted septic approved for up to

eight bedrooms. Radiant heating. Airlock entry to keep out letter carriers and other pests. Lovingly overpriced.

Listing Agent: Dona Frump
 Your hometown realtor!



COLDNOSE BARKER
INTERNATIONAL REALTY
 ON THE COMMON



The vacation you've been dreaming of ...

Cruise season is just around the corner at the end of Pond Road, where the luxurious "Drawdown Queen" waits to take you on the vacation of a lifetime.



Tour the rocky coastline of Bare Hill Pond! Explore the islands! View the wildlife! See the weeds! Watch the water level rise as the snow melts!

Enjoy cocktails* each evening and delicious meals and all-natural snacks prepared by Harvard's own Captain Paul. Everything fresh from the water, except for what's not.



Captain Paul



Departures every Saturday at noon.
 No pets, firearms, or discussion of town politics permitted.

*Not to worry. The pond's international waters are not subject to local regulations.