



FOODCHESTER

Birdsall House

Eating and Drinking in the Niche of Peekskill History

By Abby Luby



It's a place that holds a chunk of local lore - reaching back over half a century, where shots of whiskey and drafts of beer were slapped down on

about a public comfort zone. A smoky glass divider subliminally separates the bar from the tables and booths - in one booth a young mom and her tot sat enjoying an early supper with a friend.

A "must-have" is the Hemlock Hill Beef Burger and Fries with house-made ketchup, porter and caraway mustard, malt vinegar mayo, carrot pickles, caramelized onion, mesclun greens.

Entrees include such palate pleasers as Goat Cheese En Croûte is a puff pastry made with goat cheese, roasted pumpkin, portobello mushroom, and spinach with mesclun salad and Dijon cream. The 9-Spice Roasted Pork Loin is a

great winter dish that comes with sweet



Birdsall House on Main Street in Peekskill, NY.

potato and cheddar mac-n-cheese, braised brussel sprouts and topped with a delicious home made smoky tomato marmalade.

For vegetarians there is the popular Deep-Fried Soft-Boiled Egg with Mascarpone Wild Hive soft polenta, wilted spinach, roasted mushrooms and spicy sofrito, or the Beet and Grain Burger with wilted spinach, caramelized onions and apples, goat cheese, honey mustard. Desserts are just as creative as the rest of the menu - like the Maple and Bacon Ice Cream with a corn meal waffle, apple butter, bourbon caramel and candied pecans or the scrumptious Chocolate Pecan Pie with nutmeg whipped cream and milk chocolate sauce.

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Interior of Birdsall House, Peekskill, NY.



(L-R): Chef Matt Hutchins and owner John Sharp of Birdsall House in Peekskill, NY.

the sturdy mahogany bar and hearty grilled fare sated the palettes of regular patrons. In its heyday, it might be a place where you could get a shot of whiskey with a breakfast. The 1940's tavern known as Connolly's is now the newly renovated Birdsall House in Peekskill. Last March Birdsall House opened its doors to a space that held on to the history but updated the list of libations along that match the innovative, nouveau cuisine menu.

The new owners are John Sharp and Tim Reinke. Reinke owns the Blind Tiger Ale House in Greenwich Village which sports an extensive list of special beers, a list that is replicated at Birdsall House and includes 20 different drafts plus several micro brewed and craft beers. Chalked on mounted blackboards are such brews as Kelso Kellerfest, Captain Lawrence Pumpkin Ale, Empire Cream Ale, Smuttynose Winter Ale.

Birdsall House has become popular in less than a year and is warm, casual, neighborhoodie. On a recent Wednesday night the place was packed - a good sign in a recession. Just about every seat was filled at the very long bar whose traditional front curved sweep stretches to the back of the restaurant and where women friends sipped wine - a positive statement

Helming the cuisine is Chef Matt Hutchins, a Culinary Institute of America (CIA) graduate who cooked at the infamous Chez Panisse in California. Hutchins slaves in his tiny kitchen with Sou Chef Denis Fewer and Pastry Chef Janet McGraw-Fisher where the trio pumps out amazing and varied plates of food. A great pairing with beer is Cajun-Spiced Popcorn, Assorted Pickles and Chips and Tomatillo Salsa. If you're not that hungry but would like to nosh, "Small Plates" offers such dishes as White Bean Spread with Cannellini bean puree, smoky tomato marmalade, rosemary oil, whole wheat crostinis and Four Brothers Goat Dairy Farm Feta. Another "Small Plate" is Barbeque Pulled Pork Nachos made with Black bean puree, cheddar cheese, apple salsa, sour cream, blue corn tortilla chips, roasted jalapeño. There's the charcuterie plates - tiny smorgasbords of meats and pâtés such as pork and fennel sausage with porter and caraway mustard, Brovotto Farms green peppercorn Tilet, chicken terrine wrapped in bacon and mesclun.

The Blackened Organic Chicken (or Tofu) Sandwich for lunch is made with fennel and caper relish, baby arugula, Wild Hive onion roll, Cajun rémoulade, mesclun salad, mustard-sherry vinaigrette.



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The most expensive item on the menu is \$22. Hutchins rotated dishes every week when Birdsall House first opened, but people were calling for repeats such as the Deep-Fried Soft Boiled Egg or the Sweet Maple-Glazed Pork Belly.

"We had people calling from New Jersey to see if we had the beef burger," said Hutchins, who later decided to change up his menu seasonally.

Hutchins is also a localvore and buys fresh organic meats and vegetables from such places as Red Barn Produce in New Paltz, Hemlock Hill Farm in Cortlandt Manor, Wild Hive Farm in Clinton Corners, artisanal cheeses from Old Chatham Shepherding Company in Chatham. Local beers include Defiant, Captain Lawrence and Southampton.

Complimenting the beer list is a selection of Single Barrel Bourbons such as Woodford Reserve, Basil Hayden, Blanton's and Knob Creek. Irish Whiskeys include Jameson 12 Year and Jameson Gold. Among the Single Malt Scotches is Highland Park 15 Year (Orkney), The Macallan 12 Year (Speyside) and Lagavulin 16 Year (Islay).

The atmosphere is congenial and quiet with subliminal distractions: there is only one TV at the far end of the bar, a nice touch is the wall above the booths serves as a screen for silent films – the black and white moving images evoke the era's mood, images that were perhaps viewed by Connolly's patrons several decades ago in the Paramount. An old clock over the front door labeled "Radio 1390 WLAN" is stopped at 3:44 – a time that is correct just two times a day.

The front wall brandishes a dart board which Sharp said is much used by a local Tuesday night team. Flanking the dart board is a wide array of pictures of Peekskill streetscapes in the 1940's, pictures of Sharp's and Reinke's parents, one of Connolly himself holding up the front page of the Daily Mirror, circa 1942.

Birdsall House has an extensive and informative website where it posts the latest menus.

Birdsall House

970 Main Street, Peekskill
(914) 930-1880
www.birdsallhouse.net

MAYOR MARVIN COLUMN

GOVERNMENT



A Silver Lining

By Mary C. Marvin

Despite the challenging financial conditions facing Village government, there is a silver lining. Faced with declining revenues and increased obligations from the State, the entire staff at Village Hall has been aggressive in seeking out grant opportunities at every level and at every price point. Thanks to their efforts, we have been more successful than ever in getting funding for projects from sources other than Village property tax revenue.

Several months ago we requested funds from our State representatives for refurbishment of our public spaces. Assemblywoman Paulin helped us get a grant for \$175,000 to refurbish Sagamore Park and Senator Klein assisted us with a \$100,000 grant to clean up the Maltby Field area. These two grants alone would constitute a 3.5% tax increase if we did these projects through a property tax levy.

Through the efforts of Senator Klein, our police department was successful in getting grant monies for a police car that saved taxpayers \$25,000. In addition, the department received a Selective Traffic Enforcement, or STEP, grant from Westchester County to target speeding and aggressive drivers as well as a grant through the County Stop DWI program. At the State level, we received \$35,000 for a license plate reader via an application to the Department of Criminal Justice Services and we have recently applied for a grant for seat belt enforcement through another New York State program.

The Village judges and staff in our Village Court have been vigilant in seeing

what grant opportunities were available for our court operations. We have received monies for equipment upgrades, office support items, security systems and even new court furniture.

Our front office has received grants to improve our Records Management system so we can now catalog birth and death certificates electronically. We have also received new computers and support equipment to update our technical infrastructure through grants from the State Archives Office.

Just last week, we learned that we are in the running for a flood abatement grant from the Federal government that could result in millions of dollars coming to the Village's way.

These grant applications are extremely time consuming and add to the staff workload and I applaud their efforts on our behalf. They appreciate our financial predicament and have truly risen to the occasion. We apply for many more grants than we ultimately receive, but every little bit has helped take the burden off our property tax payers.

Our Village organizations and individual residents have also stepped up to help the Village with donations of time and money. The Bronxville Beautification Council along with the Boulder Ledge Garden Club and the Working Gardeners give thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of volunteer time to make our Village so beautiful. They have even added a very successful fundraising "Garden Tour" to generate more funds for beautification.

In a similar vein, the Friends of the

Nature Preserve have single-handedly transformed a former construction debris landfill into a beautiful Village park, all through private funding. The Friends of the Library have undertaken multiple fundraising activities to raise money to help offset the funding cuts we were forced to make in last year's library budget. Not only have they helped with library programs, but this year they even donated funds to help increase operating hours at the library. The Friends have also partnered with Womrath's Book Store. Currently, Womrath's has a wish list of books to be purchased for our library. The last time they partnered with our bookstore, generous residents purchased every single book on the library list.

Our local Rotary Club donated all of the recycling cans you see throughout our Village and we are in discussions with them to hopefully partner again on a Village project.

Our own Parking Commissioner, Bill Murphy, not only volunteers many hours a week as an unpaid employee, but the Murphy Foundation has quietly donated to the Village to help maintain the Scout Field for residents' enjoyment.

Individual residents have enthusiastically supported our street tree fund and every new tree or park bench has been donated by one of our neighbors.

This is but a sampling of the efforts by staff, organizations and residents to help in maintaining our Village at the quality level we all desire while not further burdening our Village tax payers.

Mary C. Marvin is the Mayor of the Village of Bronxville.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Thanksgiving and Giving



By Peter Swiderski

Heading into the Thanksgiving season, we are all grateful for the benefits we enjoy, whether good health, the love of our

families, the food on our table, the good fortune to be born in this country at this time of relative domestic peace.

But not all in our area are as fortunate. I would like to describe several strictly

local ways you can help those that could really use it.

Hastings Helps the Hungry

This dedicated local group of volunteers, going strong now for 23 years, gets together monthly to provide a full and nutritious meal for 200 at the Sharing Community in Yonkers. They need \$360 a month to feed that large crowd,

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