



> Liquid

## Off the Beantown Path: A tale of four suburbs

by Sara Faith Alterman, 04-07-2008



SOMETIMES I forget that there's life outside of Boston and its surrounding urban communities. But recently I was reminded that I have cultural tunnel vision. I'd found myself in the suburbs (gasp!) after dark, craving a cocktail and a decent meal. Clearly, I reasoned, I was doomed, resigned to skulking into a chain restaurant decorated with manufactured "antiques" and servers in blinking earrings and pins that screamed things like "Food and fun for everyone!" I'd probably have to sit in a striped vinyl booth and drink watery tap beer or cocktails smothered with whipped cream.

I was jolted from my snobbery when I discovered a darling little bistro that featured a bar swarming with hot young hipsters. And a voice spoke to me: Wake up, Sara. People live here. People like you. People like your readers. And even if they don't, surely there are plenty of Bostonians who are sick of the see-and-be-seen crowd, and the pain-in-the-ass process of getting dinner reservations, and the lines to get into anyplace that's worth getting into on a Saturday night. Having a place to go that's not in the heart of the Hub might appeal to, well, everyone.

Just a short drive up Route 1A lies Lynn - Lynn, City of Sin. True, it ain't no Vegas (not even close), but this North Shore community has its own draw, namely **Gulu-Gulu Café** (56 Central Square, Lynn, 617.848.5967), a coffeehouse-cum-bar-cum-music venue where you can Czech yourself and then wreck yourself. Owners Steven Feldmann and Marie Feldmannova met and fell in love in Prague (Feldmannova's native city), in an eclectic café known as ... Gulu Gulu. When they moved to the US, the couple decided to open an American version of their beloved meeting spot, one that offered the same artsy vibe and a taste of the Czech Republic. Done and done. Try a Krušovice Imperial lager (\$5) from the Czech Republic, or a Zywic (\$5) from Poland. There's an array of Belgian and American beers, too, for those who like to stick with what's familiar, and the versatile wine list more than hints at greatness, with selections from Portugal, Italy, Argentina, and Spain. Don't miss the Svarené Vino (\$5), a traditional Czech mulled wine, and if you're hungry, the tasty paninis, crêpes, and small bites. The Utopenec (\$6), marinated sausage stuffed with onions, pepperoncini, and pickles, and served with grilled bread, is pleasingly sour perfection.

Over in Salem, day-trippers, students, and witch enthusiasts are being treated to a cultural renaissance of sorts, thanks to coffee shops and bistros cropping up amid the Wicca stores, old-timey pubs, and colonial-style restaurants serving ye olde American fare. The most recent, and sleekest, addition is **Sixty2 on Wharf** (62 Wharf Street, Salem, 978.744.0062), which opened in February. The large bar area feels surprisingly intimate, thanks to low banquettes and a rich, woody color scheme; and the dining room hums with sex appeal. On a recent visit, they'd yet to obtain a full liquor license (they should have one by the time you are reading this magazine), so they were limited to wine, beer, and cordials. Most bartenders would relegate their amaretto and Baileys to coffee drinks, but not these guys. A full-scale cocktail list featured incredibly inventive drinks, like Nectar of the Gods (\$13), with Moët & Chandon Nectar Champagne, house-made ginger ale, and fresh mint; or the 62 Side Car (\$11), a twist on the Art Deco classic that morphed Tuaca (a vanilla brandy) with Frangelico, Cointreau, and fresh lime juice. The Frangelico gives the drink a warm, nutty finish that dresses up this old favorite with a new kick in the palate. The Cointreau might give way to Grand Marnier when the full liquor license comes through, but assistant general manager Myron Potter will probably leave most of the cocktail list as is, making additions, not cuts. Potter sees the same type of clientele coming into Sixty2 on Wharf as he did at Mistral, his former place of business. "We're bringing in people who want to go out for atmosphere and long dinners," he says, "and we want people to really dine, not feel rushed."

"We want to attract people from the area who are sick of having to go to Boston for a good meal," adds general manager Mike Pappas, who visited bars, restaurants, and lounges in New York for menu and décor inspiration. "We'll follow food and drink trends, but be selective. Not everything that flies in Boston will fly in Salem." What does fly, though, are homemade sensibilities; chef Antonio Bettencourt makes everything in-house, including the purées and non-alcoholic bases used at the bar.

Heading south, Quincy is a Boston sub-hub with character, charm, and style. A quick jaunt on the Red Line lands you right in the heart of downtown Quincy, where pubs, restaurants, and cute shops await. Gastropub the **Fat Cat** (24 Chestnut Street, Quincy, 617.471.4363) opened a few months ago to rave reviews, thanks to its inventive and gloriously gluttonous menu and fresh vibe. The cat-themed drink list helps, too. Try a glass of Fat Cat Cellars pinot noir (\$8) with

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your decadent plate of lobster mac 'n' cheese (\$16), or sip on a kitty cocktail like the Alley Cat (\$8), made with Belvedere vodka, Cointreau, fresh-squeezed orange juice, cranberry juice, and a lime garnish. You can also kick up a martini with house-infused vodkas (\$8): choose from hot pepper, melon, and Jolly Rancher infusions. Meow!

Newton goes virtually unnoticed by many Bostonians, which is a damn shame, because it's a vibrant community with a lot to offer, even at night. Specialty beers, seasonal sangria, killer cocktails, and a thriving bar scene should be enough reason for you to drag your urban butt to **Union Street** (107R Union Street, Newton, 617.964.6684). A quick trip on the Green Line and you'll be sipping a Mint Ginger Drop (\$9), house-infused ginger vodka, muddled mint, and fresh citrus in a honey-glazed martini glass, or a Pear Sidecar (\$9), pear brandy, orange liqueur, and fresh citrus with a cinnamon-sugared rim. Now that the warmer weather is approaching, you'll appreciate this off-the-urban-path joint even more, thanks to an unrivaled patio that'll make your drinks that much more refreshing.

Now that I know there are incredible bars beckoning from out of town, I'll never again be thwarted by my Boston-centric tendencies - and neither should you. Why let the city set your limits? @

[Photo by Ion Sokhos]

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