

MOXIE



THE GREAT GRILL SLINGIN' IT AT THE LEGENDARY DINER GRILL

A PLACE LIKE DINER GRILL, 1635 WEST IRVING PARK, makes you appreciate the city of Chicago and all she gives us in this time of iPods, cell phones and email. Surrounded daily by so many things that are ever-changing, it's refreshing to walk in, sit down at one of the twelve stools the food counter offers and ingest the smell of an attitude that refuses to succumb to financially motivated ramifications. And there are smells of bacon, burgers and fresh coffee, too.

Everyone here knows each other...*everyone*. Or at the least, they know Ricardo Hernandez, the diner's manager-cook-resident-bad-ass. "I've been working here for seven years," Hernandez says, having to think about it for a moment. "And this place is owned by the same owner as Arnold's [at Irving and Broadway]. It's been passed down through his family."

An actual streetcar, Diner Grill has been anchored at its depot for seventy years and offers a refined list of breakfast foods, pork-chop combinations, burgers and fries. And...the infamous "Slinger." If you don't know what a Slinger is, come and feed your hungry eyes upon the make-shift sign on the wall: "Don't Ask—Just Eat...\$7.50." Seriously, if you finish one you get a certificate of proof.

"I've been coming here for over thirty years," says Bill Strickland, Chicago native, atop groans in lieu of NCAA action broadcasting from the diner's thirteen-inch TV. "My dad used to take me here when I was a kid—they used to have these little franks...and beans." He's shoveling a Slinger—it includes eggs, hash browns, burger patties, cheese and chili—with ease.

Bacon cackles on the flat grill, four feet from your seat; eggs quickly "Go-Go-Gadget" into Denver omelets. The double cheeseburger is phenomenal.

To the right, a gentleman opts for simplicity. "I come here about once a week—or bi-weekly," Paul McDonald says, a Chicago resident who lives not too far down the street. "I get bacon, scrambled eggs and coffee. It's cheap and fast."

But don't think that because breakfast is a specialty here that operating hours are pre-dusk only. They keep it cooking 'round the clock.

"Our busiest times are nights and all through the weekend," Hernandez says. He pauses for a smile. "At night, most of the people who come here are drunk." (Kevin Baum)

READING RIOT

Local literacy foundations Rock for Reading and Book Worm Angels have given Chicago Public Schools a massive donation—more than 30,000 books have reached eighty-seven schools. Thanks to a million-dollar donation from Linda Weigl and Weigl Publishing, the largest donation 4-year-old Rock for Reading's received, the books given are educational, image-heavy and fun, which is vital when encouraging children to read outside of the classroom. "Children are often not allowed to take the classroom books home," says Mike Ban, executive director of Book Worm Angels. "We encourage the exact opposite." "Her donation is in a sense a springboard," co-founder of Rock For Reading Hugh Haller says of Weigl's generosity. Weigl has since called on another book-publishing colleague to get involved and give a second donation "hopefully within a couple of months," according to Weigl (the donation still not finalized, she wouldn't name the other publisher). A thank-you event for donors will take place April 5 at Harold Washington Library, and features a musical performance by Rock for Reading's Alice Peacock.

BROWN'S CATS

Chicago-based comic artist Jeffrey Brown has focused his latest work on cats. Yes, cats—quite different subject matter that has dominated Brown's previous books and honed his seemingly innate ability to capture the small moments that make up our lives and our relationships. The book, aptly titled "Cat Getting Out of the Bag and Other Observations," was released by Chronicle Books in February. "For most people they don't have spectacular events to center their life around," the "Clumsy" author explains, who also admits to being a "cat person" and reading "Garfield" as a kid. "There's no grand heroic or tragic event that drives them. Most of our lives are spent with these everyday things. I think that's where we find meaning in our lives." Brown discusses his new book at the Webster Place Barnes & Noble on April 7.

CROBAR CRAZE

OWNER JOEY V. CELEBRATES A BIRTHDAY

CROBAR OWNER JOEY VARTANIAN CELEBRATES HIS BIRTHDAY AND HIS TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR IN THE INDUSTRY LIKE A KING AT AN EXCLUSIVE, VIP RECEPTION. Guests are greeted by distinguished door staff wearing suits and ties, handed gold crowns and goodie bags and treated to forty-ounces of Bud in paper bags, buckets of ice filled with Jell-O shots and passed hors d'oeuvres.

The intimate VIP section of Chicago's Crobar is dark and sexy. Glamorous girls perch on swing barstools, waiting for a drink. The DJ plays classic new wave and electro tracks as guests smile and dance and flirt—throwing their hands up in the air when they hear a familiar track.

A relaxed Joey V. greets his guests, saying, "I'm just happy to be surrounded by my friends and family." Joey's sister Tamara Jabour tells us, "We grew up in the industry." His family owned the popular Casbah restaurant, and Joey started out managing Octagon back in 1982 and has been a part of the club scene ever since.

Joey's uncle Len D'Orio talks about Chicago's club scene back in the day, when spots like Faces—which has a reputation as being one of the hottest clubs Chicago has ever known—dominated the scene. "We used to go to Faces and Playboy. The girls were sharp—classy and smart," he says. "It was like you liked cookies, and someone locked you in the Keebler cookie house." (Hilary Rawk)

CHICAGO HYPE EXCHANGE

CHARTING THE CAPRICIOUS CONTOURS OF CELEBRITY

THIS WEEK'S BIGGEST GAINERS

1 SAM ZEIL
It's finally over—the real-estate mogul led the purchase of the Chicago Tribune for a cool \$8.2 billion.

2 ROGER EBERT
The journalist celebrated his fortieth anniversary of being appointed film critic of the Sun-Times.

3 RIA CORTESIO
The Rock Island-born umpire was the first woman to work a major league exhibition game in nearly twenty years.

4 TYRUS THOMAS
As the NBA nears the playoffs, the Bulls forward has become the go-to guy in late-game situations, helping the team past the Hawks and Pistons with high fourth-quarter points.

5 PHIL JACKSON
The longtime Bulls head coach was inducted in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame—the first member of the team's nineties dynasty to earn the honor.

THIS WEEK'S BIGGEST LOSERS

1 PHIL CLINE
In light of recent off-duty CPD rabidity, the police superintendent turned in his papers.

2 DONALD WALSH
The high-ranking member of the CFD was placed on leave after he allegedly made racist comments after a paramedic asked to leave work when he learned his child was sick.

3 JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
Along with two former city employees, the city inspector was charged with bribery when nabbed in a sting operation.

4 CHICAGO CUBS
Mark Prior in AAA, a horrific start from Carlos Zambrano and now news of the team's selling come October? What next?

5 JOSE CONTRERAS
Thanks for the seven-earned-run, forty-eight-pitch start. Way to contribute.