

"Taste"

McHomage By Stew Mc



Dave Bentz/Diversions

I don't know why I keep returning to McDonald's. Of the three big burger chains, I probably like McDonald's the least. In fact, I can think of more reasons not to go to McDucks than all the other downtown eateries. Yet I keep returning there, once or twice a week, even more if they have good coupons.

It would be quite simple for me to write a bad review of McDonald's and their bland burgers, but I would just make a big hypocrite of myself. Someone would see me walking into the 1401 O St. location and embarrass me by screaming at the top of his lungs, "I thought you hated this place!"

So this "taste" review will focus on all the good things about the original and largest fast food chain in the world. And maybe, before the end of the article, I can answer the burning question, "Just why do I keep returning to McDonald's?"

I wasn't always fascinated with McDonald's. It wasn't until I went to Europe that I became obsessed with the Golden Arches. At first, I resisted going to any European McDonald's. Why would I want to eat a meal identical to the one I could eat in Lincoln when there were new and exciting European foods for me to try? I soon discovered the advantages. For one, I knew precisely what I was getting. There wouldn't be any outrageous tips or cover charges, and I never had to pay to

use the restroom. If I had limited time to get to a museum, I didn't have to deal with snotty waiters for hours and hours.

McDonald's is famous for being the same at any location. And believe me, that's true. If you eat a Quarter Pounder here in Lincoln, it's the same Quarter Pounder you'll eat in Brussels, Oxford, Munich or Paris. The same Muzak playing the Ray Coniff Singers blares through the speakers at Boise, Idaho, Madrid or Guildford. The pimply teen-agers wear the same blue or green polyester uniforms in Omaha, Barcelona and Toulouse. Everywhere McDonald's is the same, same, same.

There are slight cultural differences, though. The Belgians, who are famous for eating lots of French fries, have a super-huge size of fries called McFrites. And low-alcohol beer is served in most Continental locations. But I especially loved the French McDonald's McEscargot. Like Chicken McNuggets, they come in boxes of six, 12 and 24. You can even dunk the deep-fried snails in barbecue, sweet and sour sauce or honey. I couldn't resist stopping in at the French McDonald's and getting a box of those savory snails.

But of all the McDonald's restaurants in the world, the downtown Lincoln McDonald's is special. Oh, the food is the same, the same as all the other McDonald's. That same-

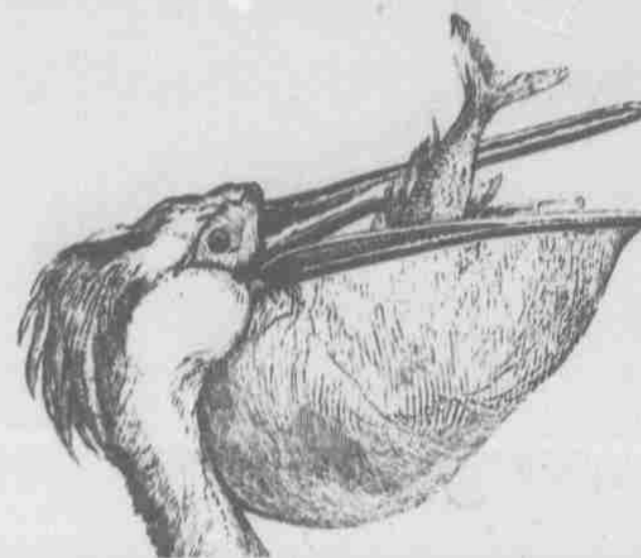
ness is one of the things I hate most about McDonald's. It's an evil part of the homogenization of America. But the clientele of the 1401 O St. location is anything but homogenous. Over the lunch hour, I can sit down and watch businessmen in three-piece-suits, the blue-collar boys dressed in plaid shirts and dirty blue jeans, college students, high schoolers and an occasional derelict dressed in rags or Regional Center escapee mumbling quietly. The 1401 O St. McDonald's is a people-watcher's paradise.

I can never stay for too long, though — the overwhelming greenness and the bright fluorescent lights are too much to take. I can O.D. on chartreuse.

I'm still not sure why I keep returning to the Golden Arches. I'll try to make a short list of all the good things about McDonald's, and maybe that will answer my question:

1. The fries are great.
2. They serve Classic Coke.
3. Big Macs are the only burgers that taste good without ketchup.
4. The freaky people.
5. If I don't eat all of my food, I know a derelict will find my half-eaten cheeseburger in the dumpster later back in the alley anyway and won't let it go to waste.

And that's why I keep going back to McDonald's. Long live Ray Kroc, Ronald McDonald and Mayor McCheese.



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