

the best things I ate in Detroit last week

a breakfast pita, a lobster roll, and mac & cheese with caramelized onions.



DANNY PALUMBO
APR 21, 2025

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Happy Monday after Easter! Jesus has risen, and now he's dead again, because God has abandoned us all. **Amen.**

Over the weekend, I had another column published with Slate, this one about whether or not you should be weighing your eggs. Writing it kind of sent me into a mental tailspin. Let me explain...

I've had a strange relationship with food lately. In December, I was diagnosed with diverticulitis and so I have to keep an eye out for any sort of acute pain in my lower left side. It's just something I'm going to have to live with now. Sometimes, I have to go on brief liquid diet because eating food (my fucking job) physically hurts me.

I've also been eating out more and cooking at home less. Way less. My relationship to food has morphed into something more professional. It never used to be that way. And as I was writing this article about eggs, I found myself saying something that made me kind of.....sad.

I often find myself romanticizing the fluid style of cooking of my grandmother, or the ladies on Pasta Grannies. Hell, the Pasta Grannies don't even use measuring cups most of the time. They feel the measurements with their fingers, groove with it. Sometimes, I find myself getting to a similar place, and it's beautiful. I can perceive, rather early on, when dough is too dry or too sticky, when it might need a little more flour or water. I sense myself needing the scale less and less, and all at once vibing with the instability of the flour, water, and eggs, instead of seeing them as things to be confined or tamed. Maybe there's something fundamentally human in the familiar feeling of cracking eggs directly into a mixing bowl or a well of flour, skipping the scale entirely. Maybe there's something to gain from *feeling* food, and not treating it like a science.

Food is my career. It has been monetized. All of it, to some extent, is a dollar sign. Hell, every single meal I eat now is at the very least considered a tax write-off. I'm constantly looking for things to say, write, photograph, and record with my phone. It didn't used to be that way. I used to keep a pretty meaningful food journal, eat meals that no one knew about, and have lovely dinner parties where not a word left the room. I used to *feel* food. Now, everything is turned into content.

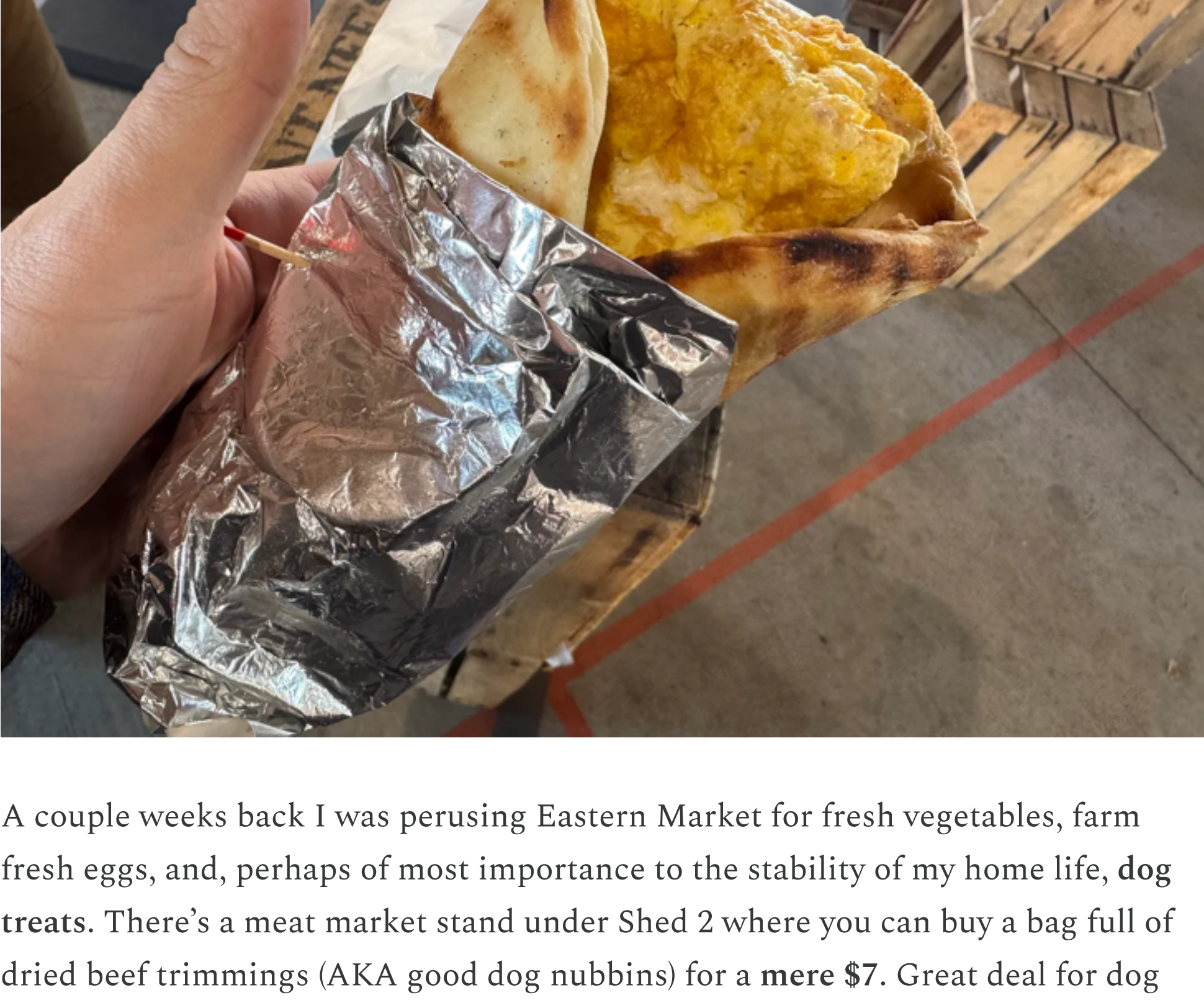
Anyway, writing the above paragraph was a reminder that I need to get back to this type of cooking soon. A type of cooking that feels *holy* (Easter reference!!) This weekend I'm seeing family, and I think for my own spirituality, I'll cook for my niece, nephew, parents, brother, and sister-in-law. I'll go pick some ramps. Make pasta. I won't pitch an article about it. I won't post a photo on Instagram. I'll do it for me, because when your passion becomes too business-minded, you start to see bits of your own humanity drift away.

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Three Great Things I Ate in Detroit Last Week

Mitsos Breakfast Sandwich, the best damn breakfast sandwich in the city



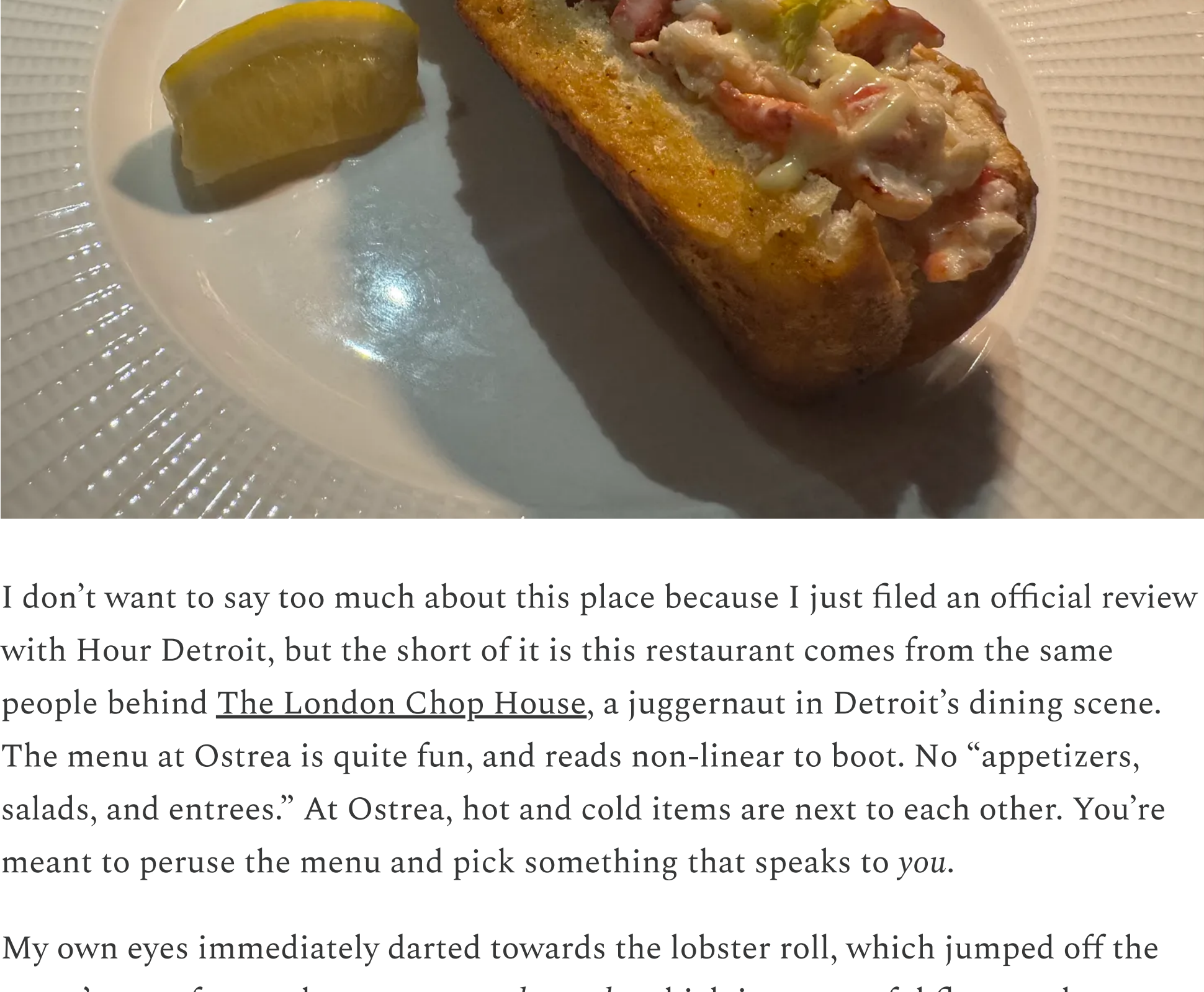
A couple weeks back I was perusing Eastern Market for fresh vegetables, farm fresh eggs, and, perhaps of most importance to the stability of my home life, dog treats. There's a meat market stand under Shed 2 where you can buy a bag full of dried beef trimmings (AKA good dog nubbins) for a mere \$7. Great deal for dog owners. Also, next to that stand is Aunt Nee's tortilla chips, headed up by ever-present Detroit food dude, Carlos Parisi.

While chatting briefly with Carlos, an employee from Mitsos, a Greek Cafe on Riopelle street, brought him a sack full of breakfast sandwiches. I assume this was part of some ongoing bartering system, where gifts of food and drink are constantly being carouselled without any sort of formal ledger. Carlos, a man who is perpetually excited about eating, seemed *exceptionally* enthusiastic about this sack of pita and eggs. He proudly proclaimed that this was *the best breakfast sandwich in the city*, which seems like a hard thing to quantify, but under certain restrictions I'm inclined to agree. After trying Mitsos sandwich, I lack the imagination to visualize a better combination of three very simple things—bread, eggs, and cheese.

The egg & cheese sandwich at Mitsos costs \$4.50 (goodness!), and features a two egg omelet with melted American cheese wrapped in fresh pita bread. This sandwich is, in a word, *perfect*. The pita bread is baked fresh, and is light, doughy, warm, and ethereal. Fresh pita *always* separates itself from the store bought stuff, which, though utilitarian, can be tough, chewy, and dry. From the jump this was soft and rippable to the teeth. The fluffy egg was cooked hard on the outside, but still warm and gooey on the inside, almost like ordering a medium rare steak. Completely nourishing, warm, and Greek-American, this breakfast sandwich feels so iconic that it *could be* Detroit's version of New York's bacon egg & cheese, Austin's breakfast taco, or any number of LA's Vietnamese donut shops. Why more people here aren't serving a breakfast sandwich wrapped in fresh pita is beyond me. It would really take off in this city.

I'll be back to try the rest of the menu, which Carlos has alerted me to. In the meantime, if you haven't had this breakfast sandwich yet, you are, as I was, behind.

The celery-forward lobster roll at Ostrea

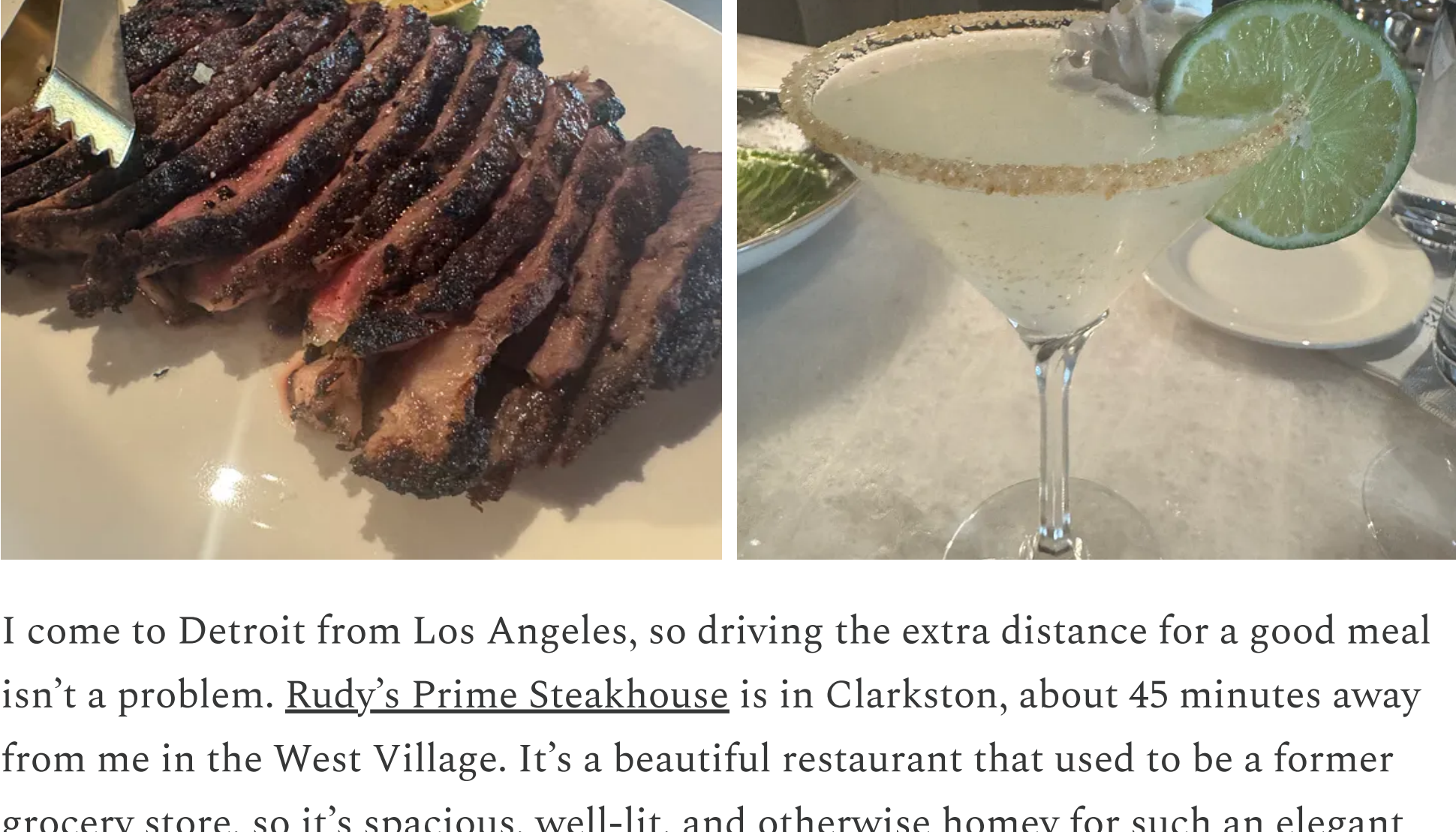


I don't want to say too much about this place because I just filed an official review with Hour Detroit, but the short of it is this restaurant comes from the same people behind The London Chop House, a juggernaut in Detroit's dining scene. The menu at Ostrea is quite fun, and reads non-linear to boot. No “appetizers, salads, and entrees.” At Ostrea, hot and cold items are next to each other. You're meant to peruse the menu and pick something that speaks to you.

My own eyes immediately darted towards the lobster roll, which jumped off the menu's page for one key reason—*celery salt*, which is a powerful flavor enhancer. This Main-style lobster roll features knuckle and claw meat dressed with a celery salt mayonnaise, stuffed inside of brioche bun that's been grilled with Old Bay infused butter, and then garnished with celery leaf. Celery leaf is a lovely, underutilized flavor. The roll was rich, but not so far-forward that it instituted a gut bomb. It felt fresh, both traditional and new, and faintly reminiscent of the flavors in a Bloody Mary.

The lobster roll costs \$32, and is made with fresh lobster meat, nothing frozen or prepackaged. I'd consider getting a cup of seafood chowder, too, which is made with an in-house crab and lobster velouté. This has potential to be a very good seafood restaurant, one that sources well and doesn't waste, two necessary things if you're going to be a seafood joint serving scallops but also hitting margins.

just about everything at Rudy's Prime Steakhouse



I come to Detroit from Los Angeles, so driving the extra distance for a good meal isn't a problem. Rudy's Prime Steakhouse is in Clarkston, about 45 minutes away from me in the West Village. It's a beautiful restaurant that used to be a former grocery store, so it's spacious, well-lit, and otherwise homey for such an elegant restaurant featuring steakhouse classics.

Still under 6 months old, Rudy's has a wonderful team in place. JB Caillet is the general manager, and he comes from an illustrious career in New York City, with stints at Aquavit and Balthazar. The head chef is Josh Stockton, formerly of the Daniel Boulud Brasserie in Vegas and Gold Cash Gold here in Detroit. These are talented folks, and it shows just about everywhere.

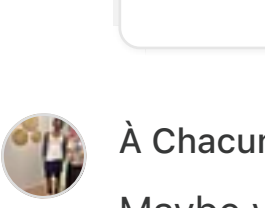
The menu at Rudy's is both traditional and unexpected. I highly recommend the classic wedge (\$14), which comes stacked with blue cheese crumble, creamy blue cheese dressing, thick bacon lardons, slow roasted tomatoes, and delicious baby gem lettuce. On the unexpected side of things, the fried chicken (\$25, and also unusual for a steakhouse!) brines Bell & Evans chicken in buttermilk, and then fries it until crispy and craggy. The chicken comes with this awesome sauce on the side—a tangy, herby, pepper-vinaigrette. Totally mouth-smacking, and wonderful to see fried chicken lean into such tang. The best deal of all at Rudy's might just be their cheeseburger (\$18), which is a thick patty formed with wagyu beef, cheddar cheese, caramelized onions, and B&B pickles. Pub burgers are making a comeback. Hell yeah. Get bent, smashburgers. We want thick boys now.

I was also smitten by the side of roasted carrots (\$13) which are garnished with a creamy & sweet yogurt. Ditto for the bougie tater tots (\$16), a decidedly French preparation of potatoes, with cakes of yukon potato topped with caramelized onion, gruyere, sour cream, chive, and trout roe.

PRO MOVE: Order their mac & cheese, which features a sinister (read: excellent) combination of gruyere and parmesan. **But make sure to add bacon and caramelized onions.** Holy shit is this combination good. Tangy and rich and sweet and meaty. This is one of my favorite mac & cheeses in recent memory. It costs \$17 for the mac, but what you're getting is like a full pasta dish. Quite a steal.

There's a lot more to be said about this place, but I'm saving it for a feature on Steakhouses for Hour Magazine in a couple months. In the meantime, you should get your ass out there to experience a few of the dishes listed above.

That's id Brief edition of *The Move* today. Thanks for reading!! I appreciate all 650 of you subscribers. If you live in Detroit, tell your friends about this newsletter! I do really think it's a valuable resource to folks in the city.



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Maybe you already find the answer, Rudy: homefood is the fondament, and restaurants (even how excellents it could be) are the extensions. Take care :-> Tarik

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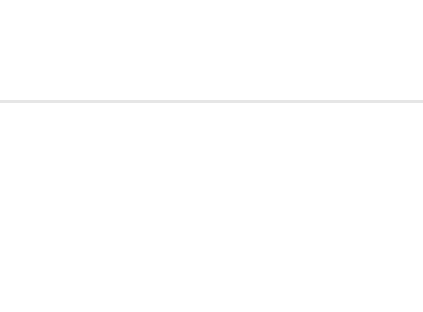
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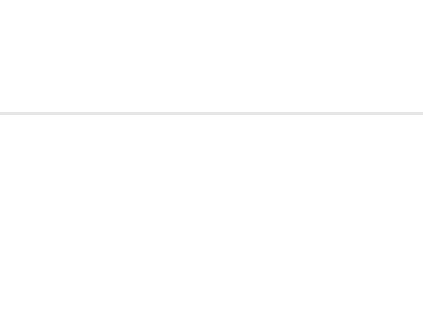
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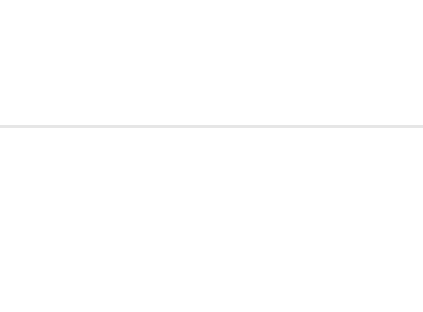
chicken parm and a cup of coffee
what it means to become a regular.
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a restaurant recommendation from my mechanic
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