

Valley Angler

The Anglers Guide to Dinning in the Mount Washington Valley

by Bill Thompson

I think that the majority of anglers would agree that it is not the fishing that matters so much as the journey. There is a great deal of ritual that goes along with a good day of fishing. Perhaps one of the most important rituals is selecting the right spot for breakfast or lunch. Regular readers of this column are familiar with my frequent stops at Ursula's Snack Stand when I fish the Androscoggin River. A trip to the Androscoggin without lunch at Ursula's is a day wasted.

Enjoying meals at roadside dinners is a common theme among fishing writers and it will come as no shock that I was not the first to do so. One of my favorite writers is W.D. Wetherhill, who has written several books on fishing in Vermont and New Hampshire. Wetherhill's *Vermont River* is centered in the town of Fairlee, Vermont which just happens to be home to the Fairlee Dinner. Both Wetherhill and I share the same enthusiasm for this wonderful eatery. Should you ever be so fortunate as to stop in Fairlee be sure to dine at the Fairlee Dinner. Of course John Gierach, the master of the fishing road trip story, and is also one of my favorite fishing authors never fails to enthrall his readers with the description of some roadside culinary delight.

As any traveling angler will tell you there are certain criteria that must be adhered to when it comes to picking a proper dinning establishment. To begin with no fast food restaurants are allowed. In fact all chain establishments are suspect and with rare exception make the grade. Five star restaurants are also off the list; not that any right thinking angler would refuse a chance to dine at one. The thing is that road trips are just about always low budget affairs. Which means that price is an issue. Local dinners, not those fancy rebuilt ones that attempt to take you back to the fifties, are highly valued. Gas stations and convince stores are sometimes allowed. However they must not be pretentious.

With these parameters in mind I have set out to recommend a few local establishments that might appeal to the angler visiting our fair "Valley". This is no easy task as there are hundreds of great places to eat in the "Valley" ranging from five star restaurants to hot dog stands. In all honesty I have never had a bad dinning experience at any of the local establishments.

Breakfast, being the most important meal of the day, will serve as our starting point. There is really no question that Bea's Café in Conway is the premier breakfast spot. No phoney ambiance just good food and reasonable prices. Another good spot that bares mentioning, particularly if you are in a hurry, is Bagels Plus in North Conway. Great bagels made on site daily and good coffee to go.

Picking a lunch spot is much harder because there are so many great places to pick from. However, we have to start somewhere and in this case why not right next door. It is no secret that the North Country Angler is located right next door to the "best pizza east of the Bronx". Ask any local and they will tell you that the best pizza and subs in the area come from Elvio's Pizzeria. Janet and I are constantly tortured by the smell of fresh bread being baked and the

aroma of simmering sauce. The Sicilian pizza is my favorite, however, the Deli tuna sandwich is a close second. It makes good sense to eat at Elvio's as it is possible to pick up your flies at the same time.

It would be hard to think of another city or town in New Hampshire that has such a varied list of fine dining establishments as North Conway. To be fair we would have to include the town of Jackson as well. On the whole anglers tend to keep things simple when it comes to finding a place for the evening meal. A place that serves a good beer always makes the choice easier. For that reason alone The Moat Brewery is a personal favorite. As the name implies they do serve a wicked selection of great brews crafted on site. They also have some great ribs and a great burger. If seafood is your preference Jonathan's is the place. Again good food, generous servings, good service and no phony atmosphere. If you are looking for a place a little more fancy, but not so much that you will break the bank Delaney's Hole in the Wall is the place. They have large and varied menu and I hear they serve sushi although you can't prove that by me. I think that most fishermen have a different word for sushi. For Chinese there is only one choice and that would be The Peking. If you are craving Mexican then Café Noche in Conway is far and away the best.

I know that this is a short list and there are many other great places to eat in the "Valley" that I have left out however all of those listed do meet our criteria. Oh, and as for gas station food try Sid's Valley Food on the main street in North Conway Village; good coffee and no pretensions.

See you on the river.