



Elon Eats: Nostalgia with a side of fries

Blue Ribbon Diner serves classic diner favorites in '50s-inspired setting

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It's the 1950s in the United States. Look out the window and embrace the endless rows of identical houses during this booming period for suburbia. Turn on the radio to catch the next episode of your favorite soap opera. Dean Martin, Elvis Presley and Pat Boone top the music charts.

Imagine S. Church Street is Route 66. Hamburgers and fries are the trendy food of the time and Blue Ribbon Diner is the model diner. Teenagers squeeze six to a booth on Friday night, dates hold hands while sharing a milkshake and friendly staff in uniforms greet every person that walks in.

Blue Ribbon Diner owner Wayne Bunting has spent the past 26 years recapturing his youth through the restaurant, one of three he owns in the area. He also owns the Village Grill and a second Blue Ribbon Diner in Mebane.

"When I was much younger, the drive-in, 50s theme was not a theme — it was the 50s," Bunting said. "I love the cars, I love the music of the 50s, and we said, 'Why not, let's do a hamburger restaurant that kind of recaptures some of that drive-in feeling.'"

To help capture the feeling, the interior of the restaurant is styled after a classic diner. Customers can choose to sit at the countertop or in the red vinyl booths. Photos of classic cars

BLUE RIBBON DINER

Where: 2465 S. Church St.

Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. every day

Specials: Applejack-grilled chicken, Chicken Pie, Country Fired Steak, hand dipped milkshakes.

line the walls and the floor is classic black-and-white checkered tile. The setting alone makes the dining experience memorable.

Outside the restaurant, the bright blue awning and neon blue lettering are hard to miss. Bunting's favorite part of the decor is the jukebox that sits at the front of the entrance.

"So many people are drawn to it because of the look of the 50s-style jukebox," Bunting said.

When first designing the menu, Bunting knew he wanted to approach hamburgers in a different way.

"At that time, the gourmet hamburger was not the gourmet hamburger," Bunting said. "It was a fast-service, quick-food type of hamburger. We were trying to do a little bit better-quality product."

Today, the menu has expanded to include a variety of burger styles, all priced around \$8 with fries included. The diner also offers gluten-free buns.

Surprisingly though, the hamburger is not the "must-order" item on the menu. At the Burlington location, chicken is king — Applejack-grilled chicken, to be specific. The sauce is a perfect balance of tangy and sweet and the grill marks on the breast make it Instagram-worthy. Customers can order the chicken a variety of ways: in a wrap, on a sandwich, in a



Staff members speak behind the retro counter at Blue Ribbon Diner on S. Church Street in Burlington.

salad or in a basket.

For those looking for more homestyle classics, Blue Plate daily specials such as Monday Chicken Pie and Friday Country Fried Steak will only set you back \$6.99 and come with two vegetable sides.

Don't fill up on the entrees, though, or you might miss arguably one of the best dessert menus in town. Once you've had one of their classic hand-dipped milkshakes, you won't be able to look at the fast food soft-serve again. The peach cobbler sundae is also always a great decision, with layers of homemade cobbler and vanilla ice cream served in a tall, thick glass.

While the positives far outweigh the negatives, customers should be aware of a few things before making the trip. Vegetarian and vegan options on the menu are limited, breakfast isn't on the menu and there is

no "late-night dining." The diner is open 11 a.m.-10 p.m. seven days a week.

Yet these small negatives don't seem to deter customers, as the diner is still regularly packed after 26 years.

The '50s invokes memories of poodle skirts, suburbia and rock 'n roll, but the Blue Ribbon Diner serves as a reminder that food culture was just as defined and prominent as music and fashion during the time. The diner has established itself as a time capsule to the past, where great food is just one of its many attractive qualities.

Next time you're craving meatloaf, chicken tenders or the classic hamburger and fries, hop in the car and head over to Blue Ribbon Diner. If you're lucky enough to see Bunting while you're there, pull out a little '50s lingo and tell him he's got a hip, way-out place.

Vagina Monologues highlights women's issues

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The Vagina Monologues has become an annual Valentine's Day tradition for the Elon University community. This year, while the topic of women's rights hangs in the air around the country, the performance aims to be even more poignant than in years past.

The Vagina Monologues is a play written by Eve Ensler that premiered in 1996 and is still performed all around the world today. The play consists of monologues that Ensler composed after conducting interviews with more than 200 women about their experiences.

No monologue represents one woman's experience, but rather the experiences of many.

The Vagina Monologues will run at 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. on Feb. 14 in Whitley Auditorium. Tickets are \$5. Elon's production is sponsored by EFFECT and all proceeds will benefit CrossRoads of Alamance County, a sexual assault response and resource center serving the area.

The show is one of the few opportunities on campus for non-majors to audition and perform for the community. Senior Emily Ciuffetelli is directing the show this year and said it is the largest turnout for auditions they've ever had — spanning various ages and majors.

Junior Viuu Loub decided to audition on a whim with one of her good friends, with no expectation of getting a role.

"Fun fact: She was the first person cast in the show," Ciuffetelli said.



The Vagina Monologues' cast poses together for a promotional photo that incorporates warrior paint to symbolize empowerment.

After seeing the show her freshman year, Loub said it was, "oddly inspirational."

"And it's meant to be," she said. "But as a freshman in college — I'm already a pretty open and fairly comfortable person — I thought it would just be a cool performance to see. I think a part of the reason it's so cool is it catches people off guard on how meaningful it is."

The women have had individual rehearsals with Ciuffetelli since the beginning of Winter Term and have recently started rehearsing as a group.

To promote the event, Ciuffetelli tentatively suggested doing a "faux-nude" photo shoot using strategi-

cally placed sheets. And to her surprise, everyone was on board.

"The day that we actually did it, everyone was so body confident and body positive and it helped kind of form a bond," Ciuffetelli said.

Almost every year, Ensler adds a new monologue to the script or takes one out, but for the first time in a while, she kept the script from last year.

"She kept in the one she added last year which is a monologue with five women and is about the trans experience," Ciuffetelli said. "From being a young child, through the adversity [and] how they become who they really are. I'm really happy she kept that one in."

Aside from the words the actors speak during the show, Ciuffetelli hopes the audience will also find meaning in what the actors do when they're silent.

"They're all going to be sitting [on stage] the whole time — except the person performing — but the rotation of how they're sitting is going to change and where they're looking is going to change," Ciuffetelli said. "To me, that is representing the world and society's view of whatever [topic is being discussed]. Do they have their backs turned to it? Are they looking straight on? Are they looking past it?"

Ciuffetelli said preparing for the performance during our current po-

WHEN & WHERE

Date: Tuesday, Feb. 14

Time: 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Location: Whitley Auditorium

Tickets: \$5

litical climate has also given the show a different feel from years past.

"I think it has been a very cathartic thing for me and other people in this time to be able to have this as a form of expression," she said.

While preparing for her role, Loub said she looked up videos of past productions from around the world and watched her specific monologue various times. Though the words were the same, Loub noticed that each performance was unique.

"Everyone was so different, even in the littlest ways," she said. "It can make the biggest difference in how that monologue is perceived and how it comes out."

Ciuffetelli is grateful she got to spend her fourth and final time working on the show as director and watching the actors' progress through rehearsals.

"No matter what end you participate in the Vagina Monologues, this is — I am willing to say — a life changing experience for anyone who participates," Ciuffetelli said. "The girls who came in the very first read-through came in uncomfortable about saying 'vagina' in front of a lot of people. And just through the individual rehearsals seeing people come into their own and just really accepting their womanhood has been so beautiful."