

Food Review

CAROLINE SAUL AND YING LIU

Ninth Street is renowned for its plethora eateries from around the globe. However, as one strolls along Ninth Street the colorful banners overhead blend together. It is easy to pass by and not notice the lesser known restaurants. Most Science and Mathers know to go to Banh's on Saturday because of the special and authentic lunch menu. One of the most popular dishes is their Special #1. It consists of a bowl of rice noodles in broth with shrimp, pork, and vegetables. It's a light but savory dish that leaves you all warm inside. It's basically the Chinese equivalent to chicken noodle soup. For those of you who miss Asian home cooking, this is the place to go.

Another very popular dish is the vegetarian plate. It consists of fried tofu in a soy sauce based sauce topped with fried scallions along with sticky rice and a spring roll. For those of you who love tofu, you will love this dish. Even if you don't love tofu, you may find yourself loving it. The tofu is very strongly flavored and some complain that it is too salty. However, it is generally better than cafeteria tofu and very close to real Chinese food. The dish comes with sticky rice, a richer version of white rice, and a white spring roll made with rice noodles. Unlike traditional eggrolls, it is not fried and is cold but comes with a delicious dipping sauce. This dish is favored by grand seniors and many of them can be seen eating outside on Saturday afternoons.

The mixed vegetable plate was neither as colorful nor as zesty as dishes students create themselves at Bali Hai; however, it was delightfully satisfying. This combination of broccoli, cabbage, water chestnuts, and carrots in soy sauce is served over your choice of steamed or fried rice. It is one of only two vegetarian entrée choices.

Banh's also serves many lesser known items. It serves a salad roll which is very similar to the spring roll, but it contains pork and shrimp. They also serve steamed sticky rice mixed with pork and beans. This is similar to a traditional Chinese dish called zhongzi, where you steam sticky rice and beans in fragrant leaves which are folded in distinct patterns. Banh's also serves a chicken curry turnover as well as more traditional Chinese restaurant fare like egg rolls, kungpao chicken, and fried rice.

JASMINE ROWE

A week after I returned to NCSSM for my senior year, I discovered a small scrap of paper in a dusty corner of my room. Nothing more but a small ball of paper, I thought it of little significance until I realized there was writing on its ragged surface. Though shredded and worn, I was still able to flatten the paper effectively and discern its words, recognizing them as the words of Rousseau; finding these words inspiring, I immediately retyped them. The quotation has now been printed and is taped on an exposed portion of my desk, where it can always be seen while I work. Whenever I lose focus, on the occasions when my view of my goals blurs, I glance at Rousseau's surprisingly insightful words of wisdom:

"As for my pupil, or rather Nature's pupil, he has been trained to be as self-reliant as possible, he has not formed the habit of constantly seeking help from others, still less displaying his stores of learning. On the other hand, he exercises discrimination and forethought, he reasons about everything that concerns himself. He does not chatter, he acts."

Generally, this statement works to motivate me more than a pep talk from a friend. Here, in a brief paragraph, the qualities of an ideal student are summarized, and having read them, it becomes apparent that emulating a model of such perfection is actually quite simple. Reading this statement has recently, however, caused me to consider some disconcerting prospects about Science and Math students, for each day the painful fact that few here live by Rousseau's words becomes more apparent.

From an outside spectator, this may not seem to be the case; Science and Math students seem quite self-sufficient in comparison to students from other schools, and pupils from other institutions would not have the opportunity to experience the true habits of Science and Math students. Being a student at this school, I feel that our perspective would be the clearest if we were not so blinded by our own immense potential.

A handful of students that people invariably seek assistance from is inevitable at every school. One person's strength will always be another's weakness, and there is no fault in inquiring for help from individuals whose understanding of a concept is better than

one's own. The faculties of these select few students seem to be utilized more frequently now, however, than they have been in the past, their confused peers so often needing clarification that the assisting students have less time to digest information for them-

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selves. Recently, I asked a junior why she habitually asked me for aid in one of her science courses when directing her was not helping her retain the information, being sufficient only long enough for her to pass a quiz or homework assignment. To my surprise, her response was "I attempt an assignment one or two times; if I don't understand after this, I go and ask for help...I don't like failing assignments."

Asking for help is not a weakness, nor does it imply that the student lacks the intelligence to grasp a concept. On the contrary, questioning information is an efficient way to learn, and intelligent, curious students are often the ones being inquisitive. Depending solely on others to teach you is far less benign a habit, preventing the questioning student from learning and becoming a crutch more debilitating than helpful. If attempting to solve a problem twice is not sufficient, giving up and asking is not either; it is more beneficial, in the long run, to struggle through the challenge a

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few more times, asking questions when finished or when it is truly impossible to continue. Academically successful students understand best after making an effort to do so, their tenacity paying off with an impenetrable understanding of the concept they originally battled. Should one surrender to the difficulty of his conundrum, immediately asking someone else to help him solve it, there is no guar-

antee that later, during a test or simply while trying to recall the information for personal reasons, that information will be as reliable. Intellectual students never lack curiosity, frequently asking questions, but rarely, it seems, should the "show me how to do this; then do it for me" request be made, and even more rarely do teachers respond to it; even they prefer that the student makes an effort to develop an understanding for him or herself before asking other questions. To this end, it would behoove the student to not "form the habit of constantly seeking help from others," asking for questions only when it is imperative or helpful.

Abuse of assistance is not the only aspect in which Rousseau would be disappointed with NCSSM's students. Not only did his student refrain from incessantly asking for help, but he also resisted the tempting urge to "display his stores of learning." One

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would not ask a Science and Math student to feign stupidity; few would benefit from this, and it is doubtless that some students were forced to perform this charade at past schools. It is unnecessary, however, for academics to become competitive to the point where the students relentlessly boast about their own abilities. Many students claim to despise people who sing their own praises too

often, and yet so many are guilty of this here. Papers with "A+" markings are posted on people's doors; students in class can be heard comparing their grades, a student with a ninety-eight average scoffing the student beside her with the contemptible ninety-five; schedules are perpetually compared to see who is busier, for being industrious is apparently indicative of intelligence; and accomplishments are listed for all to know about. The constant pettiness of it all leaves a burning question to be asked: for whom are some of these students learning? If a student learns for himself,

should the fact that he earned two more points on his Physics exam than his friend be significant? Many students protest when I ask them this, indignantly crying "I'm only proud of myself!" It would seem that a student who earns an exemplary mark on a paper should be proud simply by peering at his work and seeing that "A-superior work" scrawled in the margin.

Learning from sheer competitive desire can cause a student to lose sight of what is the true point of attending school: to learn. During an Italian seminar session Dr. Frauenfelder unwittingly summed up the intention of school in a short sentence: "Academics should be their own reward." Mastering a new concept, understanding a formula, and being able to fabricate new ideas are products of learning so spectacular that their very existence should be bounty, self-congratulatory behavior no longer being necessary. Some boasting is inevitable, a student becoming

enthusiastic about his accomplishments, yet it is important to remember another aspect of Rousseau's ideal pupil: "He does not chatter, he acts."

Though being competitive is an important drive, one

should constantly remind himself of his goals, lest the pressures of competition leave him with the sole desire to surpass other students, whether it benefits him or not. At a school such as ours, it may be difficult to maintain that mindset, and students often fall into the trap of seeking extraneous help for the sheer purpose of emphasizing a certain image; using unethical means, becoming obsessed with the success of other students; and aggrandizing the successes, boasting about knowledge as opposed to applying it. It can, however, be simply avoided. Students should seek and identify their specific motivations for learning, read some of the words of the past erudite, or perhaps place an inspirational quotation in plain view to remind them of their goals. For the sheer purpose of improving one's opinion of learning, Rousseau's pupil's methods are worth a try; if this reasoning is insufficient, we can always have a competition to see who gets there first.