

Focus

'The Rat' doesn't mess with tradition



Tar Heel file photo

These students drove 45 miles to The Rat 'just to eat manicotti'

From staff reports

It's a tradition.
It's a UNC tradition.
It's a Chapel Hill tradition.
It's the Rams Head Rathskellar, more commonly referred to as "The Rat."

The Rat, a restaurant with a dark, earthy atmosphere, opens at a heavy wooden door in Amber Alley off Franklin Street. The restaurant is as much a part of Chapel Hill as the Old Well or Silent Sam.

"We've been here since 1948," said manager Charles Smith, who's been there for nine years. "We're part of the history of Chapel Hill and tradition."

"I've got waiters here who've been here for 20 years. I've got one waiter who's been here for 40 years. On the average, people are here for 20 to 25 years."

The Rat has a special relationship with the community, Smith said.

"It's just a unique place to work with different clientele," he said. "We also do a lot of repeat business, and that allows you to build a personal relationship with all your customers."

"During lunches, I'd say that it's 75 percent residents and 25 percent students and then at night, it's 75 percent students and 25 percent other."

Since 1948, people have been coming to The Rat to leave their ini-

tials in the solid wooden picnic-type tables, see "their" waiter and to sink their teeth into The Rat's specialty, the "Double Gambler," a tender, sizzling steak served on a skillet at 500 degrees.

"We give quick service, and it's a unique restaurant," Smith said. "Our best sellers are the spaghetti, the Gambler and the lasagna by far."

With its famous Carolina blue-bordered paper menu, The Rat also offers a patron anything from a bowl of soup to a double roast beef dinner, ranging in price from \$2.75 to \$8.75. Ribs and barbeque chicken are also popular items. The Rat's iced tea is a delightful thirst quencher, and each table gets its own pitcher, so waiting for a refill is never a concern.

The most expensive item on the menu is an around-the-world pizza at \$14.75, containing hamburger, sausage, onions and several other toppings.

"This is not just any pizza, though," Smith said. "This is the same pizza served when The Rat first introduced pizza to the people of North Carolina."

Although Smith admitted there has been some question as to whether The Rat did serve pizza first, he said, "As far as we know, it was first, but if anyone knows another restaurant that served pizza earlier, let us know,

and we will gladly concede."

An impressive group of people to visit The Rat, besides the regulars, includes Andy Griffith, Ron Howard, James Worthy and Michael Jordan — just a few of the famous people who frequent The Rat, Smith said.

"It's the regulars, though, who carve graffiti all over the tables and walls," he said. "There's not a nook or cranny where a knife or key hasn't made its imprint. Every accessible piece of wood in the restaurant proclaims someone was here and was in love with someone else who was also here."

The Rat is not without its own creativity. The backs of each table have words of wisdom inscribed on them. "The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is," says one booth. "That's the nature of women...not to love when we love them, and to love when we love them not," says another.

All the tables are placed uniformly throughout the dimly-lit restaurant, so that there is an emphasis on atmosphere. Art adorning the old-fashioned walls is hard to figure out, but adds greatly to the overall feeling received from a visit to The Rat. Memories of yesteryear, including autographed footballs and basketballs, also add to the atmosphere, for to mention the tradition. Pictures of former UNC superstars give way to reflections about past seasons and numerous championships.

Other than the main dining room, there are four "special" rooms scattered about the place, each with its own unique personality.

The "Circus Room" is a good spot for the kids. Mirrors are everywhere, and brightly painted animals cover the walls. The "Train Room" is the home of The Rat's most popular table, which gives a clear view of the Franklin Street sidewalk above. Next comes the "Lautrec Room" (as in Toulouse), which was painted in imi-

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THE ULTIMATE APTITUDE EXAM: Part 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read each question carefully. Answer all questions. Time limit 4 hours. Begin immediately. Work in numerical order (equipment remaining from Question #1 may be useful with Questions 3 and 6).

1. MEDICINE

You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze and a bottle of Scotch. Remove your appendix. Do not suture until your work has been inspected. You have 15 minutes.

2. HISTORY

Describe the history of the papacy from its origins to the present day concentrating especially but not exclusively, on its social, political, economic, religious, and philosophical impact on Europe, Asia, America and Africa. Be brief, concise and specific.

3. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Two thousand drug crazed aborigines are storming the classroom. Calm them. You may use any ancient language except Latin and Greek.

4. BIOLOGY

Create life. Estimate the difference in subsequent human culture if this form of life has been created 500 million years earlier, with special attention to its probable effect on the English Parliamentary system.

5. MUSIC

Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate and perform it with flute and drum. You will find a piano under your seat.

6. ENGINEERING

The disassembled parts of a high powered rifle have been placed in a box on your desk. You will also find an instruction manual printed in Swahili. In 10 minutes, a hungry Bengal tiger will be admitted to the room. Take whatever action you feel is appropriate. Be prepared to justify your decision.

7. SOCIOLOGY

What sociological problems might accompany the end of the world? Conduct an experiment to test your theory.

8. MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

Define Management. Define Science. How do they relate? Create a generalized algorithm to optimize all management decisions. Assuming a 7600 CPU supporting 50 terminals, each terminal to activate your algorithm, design the communications interface and all necessary control problems.



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