

Whoppered out? Go for the Greek

There are two kinds of people in Chapel Hill: those who go to Burger King and those who go to Hector's.

The Burger Kingites opt for the familiar — the nationwide, standard burger and paper envelope of fries. Wherever they're from, be it a city, a small town or a suburb, chances are that they've had a B.K. burger before. They know exactly what to expect; they're able to anticipate the size of the burger, the exact amount

Jill Gerber
Restaurants

of ketchup and mustard on it, the amount of fries in the package, and the consistency of the milkshake. Every restaurant, with its stainless steel kitchen and tiled floors, is basically the same. The employees,

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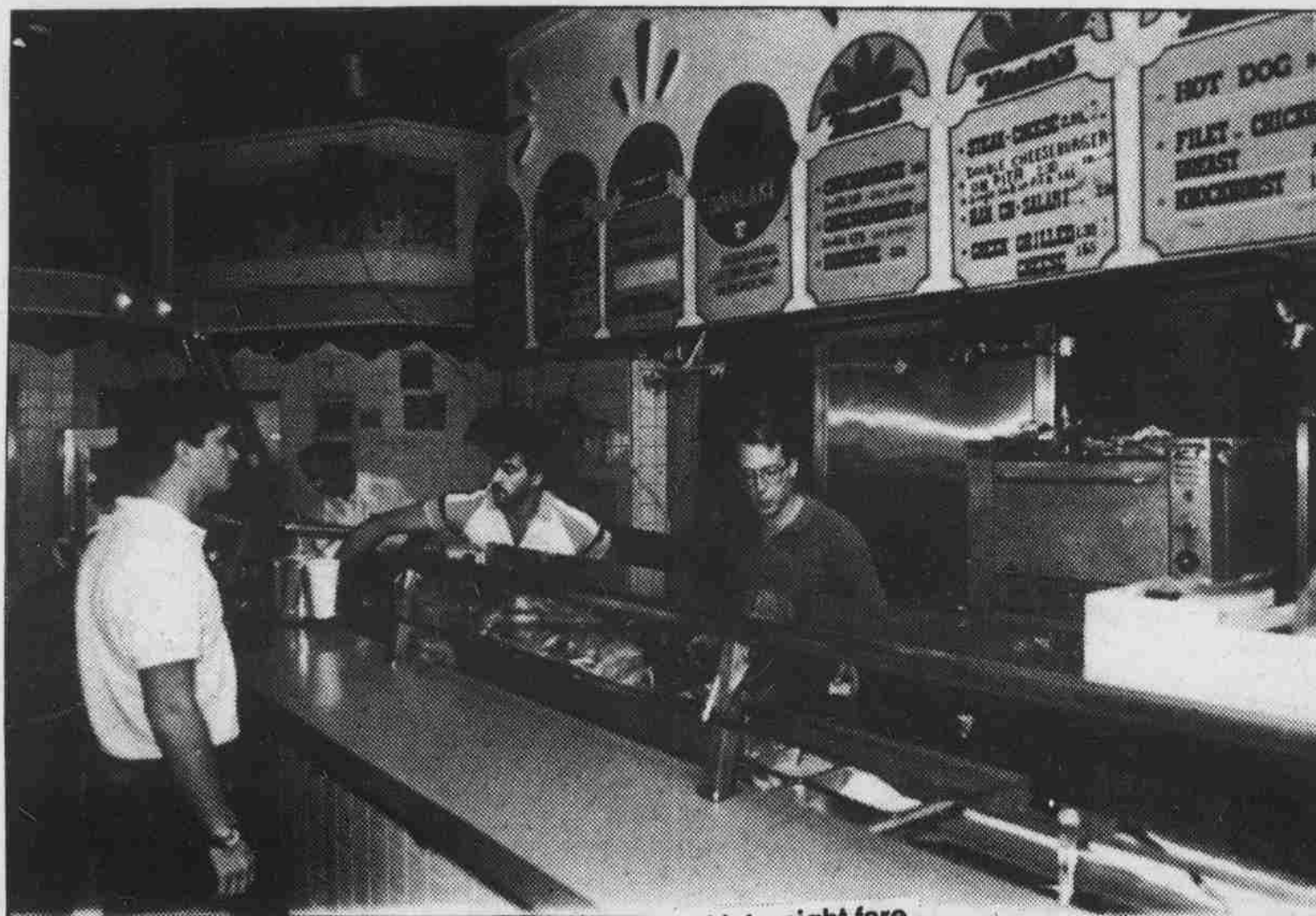
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Hector's for fast food and late night fare

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in their rust-colored polyester uniforms, are trained to give them the same "thank you" and "have a nice day." It's standardization at its best.

Hector's patrons, in contrast, opt for the unfamiliar. They dare to eat a burger from a grill that might be cleaned faithfully every night like that of Burger King, but then again, might not. The cleanliness of the establishment is unimportant to these people, because they know a burger at Hector's is more tantalizing than anything B.K. could ever serve.

Unlike the "King," all food at Hector's is made to order in full view of the customer. Conversation inevitably develops between the employees and the patrons as they wait for their order to come up. The immediacy of the relationship allows the customer to say, "I changed my mind. I don't want any onions on that," at the last minute. The cooks are always obliging.

The menu at Hector's has a lot of

stuff on it that sounds good but would only be ordered by the uninitiated. Fish and chips (\$2.70), the chicken filet (\$1.75), the barbecue (\$1.75), and the chuckburger (\$1.05 single, \$1.60 double), are not half as popular as the four traditional favorites known to the restaurant's more experienced crowd.

The first, **Athenian souvlaki** (\$2.75), is sliced beef cooked on the grill and served on a crisp pita with a sour cream sauce, lettuce, tomatoes and a pinch of spice. The second, the **gyro** (\$2.95), is the same except the meat is lamb and beef, which is sliced off a big round hunk. They're both very good, and the sauce makes 'em perfect.

The third, **Greek grilled cheese**, (\$1.30, extra cheese, \$1.65), is American cheese melted on a pita, served with the same sour cream sauce used on the gyros, lettuce, tomatoes and onions. The regular is really good, but you should get it with extra cheese to avoid feeling like you're eating a salad in a pita. The "GGC" is perfect when you're not really hungry enough to eat all the meat on a burger but still want something pretty substantial.

The fourth should come to mind instantly to all Hector's fans. The process by which it is made is down to a science — it's a pleasure to watch and even more of a pleasure to eat. Of course, it's the **double cheeseburger on a pita** (\$2.30, chili, 10 cents extra). It's perfection. It could be nothing else.

The pita is toasted on the grill to

golden-brown splendor and covered with slaw, ketchup, mustard and mayo. The burgers are cooked with the cheese melted beautifully; they're placed on the pita with lettuce, diced tomatoes and onions. Then, the entire mound is wrapped in silver foil like a shiny Christmas present just waiting to be opened, the burgers nestled in their pita cocoon like a baby kangaroo in its mother's pouch.

Hector's also has fries (65 cents, extra heavy, 80 cents) that make B.K.'s counterpart look like atrophied potato shoots. They're thick, always hot and especially good when cooked a little bit longer. And Hector's has bottles of ketchup, so you can use as much as you want without having to wrestle with those impossible foil packets served by the competition.

There's even a long-term advantage to the Hec's experience. Eat a double cheese and fries, and you don't have to think about your next meal for days. This phenomenon is often referred to, without discontent, as "Hector's brick." The patron, upon finishing his last bite of sandwich, clutches his stomach and proclaims, "Man, I've got a Hector's brick."

The restaurant, which bears the phrase "Hector's, Famous Since 1969," has some of the friendliest employees known to man. They actually talk to you like you're a person, not a gaping mouth waiting to be sated with assembly-line food. If things are slow and you're by yourself, they'll even sit down for a minute in the next stool. When's the last time anyone at B.K. was ever allowed to, or wanted to, say anything other than, "May I take your order?"

There are a few things the Hector's neophyte should know:

■ The crispness of a pita has a half-life. If you get Hec's to go, don't wait too long to eat it. Carrying a double cheese all the way home may necessitate the use of a knife and fork.

■ Position yourself close to a napkin dispenser when eating in the restaurant.

■ If you make the mistake of letting your sandwich get cold, forget it. The effect is lost.

■ Always peel the foil off of a sandwich like you're eating a banana. If you lift it out completely, you risk dripping condiments in your lap and having your burger slide out. And we all hate it when that happens.

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