

Clint Eats



BY CLINT HAMBLIN

Firehouse Dining

The invitation was to join several Boston firemen at 200 Cambridge Street for dinner. I don't usually think of dining when I think of my local fire station, but I soon learned that this giant brick structure is really more than a garage for those big, shiny red fire trucks. This is a home where very dedicated men and women eat, sleep and prepare for disaster to strike.

In the middle of the interview at 5 pm, the fire alarm sounded. "Fire on Newbury Street," the announcement repeated. Instantly, everyone went into the pre-defined routine. Men swiftly got dressed and took their positions as the garage door quickly opened to allow the fire trucks to escape. The sirens blasted as they raced to the Back Bay. Suddenly, the station was empty. The food preparation had stopped. All energy switched to the emergency at hand.

Staying behind, Jacob Yee, the designated chef for the night commented, "The roasts need another 90 minutes or so. If I had to leave, I'd have to turn the oven off and hope for the best." Yee doesn't know how long his partners will be gone.

It's Monday night, and that translates to Yee and Chris Dunn doing the cooking. After marinating a couple of 5-pound top round roasts in salt, pepper, basil and meat tenderizer, they seared the meat all around, added fresh garlic to the inside and oven

roasted it for two to three hours.

From salt and pepper to paper towels, the firefighters are required to participate in the cost of stocking the entire kitchen. Each contributes about \$8 to \$10 per dinner. Lunches are usually eaten out.

"We try to shop at Shaw's or Stop and Shop where we live and then bring it into the station. For small things, we cross the street to Whole Foods at Charles River Plaza," Yee said.

From grilled salmon to chicken filets, each and every firefighter brings their best recipes to the table.

"The vegetarians take care of themselves," Yee said. "And we have one or two people who do not eat fish so we need to plan our meals. We take no requests."

The dinner included a salad, pot roast with glazed carrots, mashed potatoes and bread. The meat is rare, medium and well done, and it looks a lot like chateaubriand.

Now safely back from the

Back Bay, the kitchen is suddenly full of activity with Dunn whipping up the potatoes. Shawn Hardiman continues to slice the meat with a few of the men standing guard over the broiler, waiting for their portion of very rare pot roast to transform to well done.

A salad is quickly put together with bottled dressing, and the group sits around a huge dining table as dinner starts.



Shawn Hardiman cutting roasts



PHOTOS: CLINT HAMBLIN

"Hey, Mr. Food Writer," one of the firemen asked, "Are there supposed to be arteries in this meat?" Apparently, a noticeable artery is a big deal at the fire station. Another yells back, "Cover it with gravy and close your eyes before you eat it."

The firefighters are good-humored, joking about their days, talking about sports and commenting on the food.

"I'll bet there's too much garlic in this meat," one man complains, as another returns to the broiler to eradicate that last bit of pink from his main course. Another asks, "Anyone like arteries?" The response, "Nope, not me. Pass the gravy."

Dessert usually means a bought cake, brownies or ice cream. Activities for the night include video games, television or a visit to the gym and all are available within the fire station. There's talk that tomorrow's dinner will be pasta.

"We make our own sauce from canned tomatoes," Yee proudly announced.

When asked who their favorite chef was, the answer seemed unanimous.

"Curtis cooks Haitian. It's spicy and really good."

Boston firehouse dining! Who knew it could be such an adventure? Thanks, guys! Be safe!

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