

**Boston Sunday Globe Cheap Eats – December 15, 1994**  
**In Newton Highlands, A Pub With Better Than Average Grub**  
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The best thing about O'Hara's in Newton Highlands is not the food, which is nevertheless very good. The best thing about O'Hara's is that it looks like a real pub and feels like a real pub. It's a chummy and often-crowded place where the patrons, who range in age from toddlers to grandparents often greet each other by name in an atmosphere that's thick with dark mahogany, draught beer and good conversation.

John O'Hara, one of three of the O'Hara clan to be found on the premises (the family's crest hands out front), figures that as many as 70 percent of his customers come from the surrounding neighborhood. If that's the case, there must be nobody home in Newton Highlands on Friday nights, when the wait for a table here can stretch to an hour. Never mind. Squeeze into a corner and try one of the pub's ever-changing beers while you wait.

The menu at O'Hara's which has expanded considerable since the place opened nearly 10 years ago, is part American and part Italian. There are five good burgers served on sesame seed buns and a small assortment of calzones and an excellent thin-crust pizza. But this is no burger and pizza joint. The beef, seafood, chicken and pasta entrees are distinctive and often creative. This may be a pub, but it doesn't serve grub.

So what did we like? We liked the au jus flank steak stuffed with spinach, onions, peppers, mushrooms and cheese. We liked the shrimp provencale consisting of lots of baby shrimp, stewed tomatoes, zucchini, summer squash and white wine tossed with our choice of pasta. We liked the chicken molise with its sautéed chicken tender loin that were also tossed with pasta as well as garlic, broccoli, sour cream and tomatoes. We liked the chicken pot pie, actually a stew served in a loaf of bread that was roughly the size of a small basketball. We liked the ample portions of broiled salmon and blackened bluefish, both of which were offered as specials.

What didn't we like? Very little. But we didn't like the salty taste of the homemade five-cheese ravioli. We didn't like having to wait 10 minutes simply to place a lunchtime order for a hamburger at the bar. We guess you could even say we didn't like the fact that portions are so large that we never got to try any of the Alden Merrill deserts.

O'Hara's is nothing if not comfortable. The main dining room seats about three dozen people at booths and tables. It's located two steps above the U shaped bar, beyond which there are four more booths. Service is friendly and generally good. The big guy quietly working the front is John O'Hara, although you might also run into his father, Curt, his brother, Karl, and his sister Molly.