



diningout

BY MICHAEL NAGRANT email diningout@suntimes.com | Follow @michaelnagrnt



Buritt Bulloch, owner of Old Fashioned Donuts, drizzles some glaze on his signature doughnut holes.

JOHN H. WHITE-SUN-TIMES

JUST THE SPOT

One man's quest for the perfect doughnut

Bacon tops this maple doughnut at Glazed and Infused Doughnuts. | CHANDLER WEST-SUN-TIMES

For a sheltered white suburbanite, freshman year at college is supposed to be an exposure to the real world, a year of intercultural exploration. I suppose there were plenty of meaningful discoveries, but my first learning in those days was this: The Jews have bagels. The gentiles have doughnuts. A New Yorker actually slung a slur at me that first week at the University of Michigan when he found out my childhood Sunday mornings were filled with custard-filled eclairs and not poppyseed or granulated garlic-encrusted circles of bread. I'd filled him in on how doughnuts were not Midwestern low-country foods, but in fact the closest thing to godliness. I'd told

him of how I coveted the moments before Sunday school, not because I would soon be regaled with the divine and outsized adventures of Jesus, but that the nuns who ran the weekly church fund-raising bake sale made a killer long john. He didn't really understand, so we headed out to the nearest Dunkin', broke bread over a Boston creme affair, and a common understanding was reached. Of course, doughnut worship is not just a religious thing. It's also a regional passion. Just as Michiganders show you where they live by holding up the palm of their hand and pointing, Boston neighborhoods are defined by the closest Dunkin' Donuts franchise within walking

distance.

In Chicago, similar boundaries always have been set by the parish, the neighborhood, and most recently which Giordano's or Lou Malnati's you took your visiting friends to. Though we are ample, bloated with meat and potatoes and salad-larded hot dogs, we have not counted on doughnuts to bulk up our collective Windy City waistline. But that too has changed. Faster than a speeding bullet, Chicago has become a cruller capital. There are always some stalwarts. **Dat Donut (1979 W. 111th; 773-298-1001)** is still holding its own with a gooey, basic, glazed doughnut. Though their pineapple glazed, the Hawaiian pizza of pastry, is what

gets me going these days.

Nothing, not even any of the new kids on the block, revs me up as much as Dat's neighbor, **Old Fashioned Donuts (11248 S. Michigan; 773-995-7420)**. Old Fashioned has the best apple fritter on the planet, and certainly the largest. It is, no hyperbole extended, as big as White Sox slugger AJ Pierzynski's catcher's mitt. It's also stuffed with a full apple's worth of diced cinnamon-spiced apples and deep fried until mahogany. If there is a better apple fritter anywhere, it's only because someone had the good sense to wrap one of these in bacon.

Bacon on a donut, now there's an idea. Throw on some maple glaze for good measure and now you've got

a sense of the showstoppers they serve at **Glazed and Infused (813 W. Fulton; 312-226-5556)**. Glazed and Infused understands that there's a direct relationship between the freshness of a doughnut and the quality of a doughnut, and so they bake their selection up hourly, ensuring their wares are always as hot as the freshly brewed Intelligentsia coffee also on offer.

Though I don't understand how anyone could really let such a beautiful and tasty thing sit for more than a day, I have it on good authority from a friend with iron willpower that their red velvet cake doughnuts taste even better on day two. I, who have been known to drink sweetened condensed milk straight from the can as a snack, don't have similar patience, so all I can attest is that on day one, the chocolate buttermilk crumb roofed with a gable of swirled cream

cheese doesn't suffer. Neither does the lemon cake doughnut filled with yuzu citrus curd. Speaking of buttermilk, the old-fashioned buttermilk-batter doughnuts at **Doughnut Vault (401½ N. Franklin; no phone)** feature a crispy crumb-laced variety with a deep acidic tang that draws lines of the 'nut faithful.



Do-Rite's carrot cake doughnut. RICH HEIN-SUN-TIMES

If you're worried about getting in or not getting paid professionally to lose hours of your day on the hunt for sublime sweets as I do, rest assured there is no compromise in heading over to Lettuce Entertain You's lineless stake in the doughnut game, **Do Rite Donuts (50 W. Randolph; 312-488-2483)**. Though it sounds like a "Star Wars" villain, their banoffee, a toffee-crusted



Old Fashioned's apple fritter is huge and delicious. | JOHN H. WHITE-SUN-TIMES



Do-Rite Donuts, 50 W. Randolph, offers racks of doughnuts with plenty of variety. | RICH HEIN-SUN-TIMES



Dat Donut's pineapple glazed (top) and glazed doughnuts (below). CHANDLER WEST-SUN-TIMES



plank stuffed with vanilla bean-studded, banana-flavored cream should not be missed, nor the carrot cake doughnut oozing with cream cheese frosting and wisps of sweet shaved carrot. The pistachio doughnut crusted with a battalion of winey, green-hued nuts features a crumb so delicate I'm pretty sure it's held together by nothing but good intentions.

But all the bacon, and all the retooled cupcakes masquerading as doughnuts in the world can't distract me from my first true love, that beautiful eclair. There are many fine ones in the city, but the one that I return to more than most is the one at **Pan Hellenic Pastry (322 S. Halsted; 312-454-1886)**. Though they are Greek and serve some of the best *loukoumades* (honey-drizzled fried dough) in Chicago, Pan Hellenic serves an eclair, featuring a bordering-on-savory pate a choux crust and a thick, piped, glistening lacquer of chocolate ganache, that is French in the very best way. Michael Nagrant is a local freelance writer. Follow @michaelnagrnt. E-mail the Sun-Times Dining section at diningout@suntimes.com with questions and comments.