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A draft beer and a West End Burger (sauteed mushrooms, peppers, and onions, with fries and slaw) at Ruski's can turn your gray sky blue.



# Not the Usual Suspects

Because we've all had one too many at our go-to bars.

BY OLIVIA GUNN

Sometimes you wanna go where no one knows your name and they really couldn't care if or why you came. Just get home safe and don't make a scene. Here in Portland, that's our [Ruski's](#).

With no dress code (it's fine if you don't own a pair of Oxfords and oversized Wayfarer glasses), membership, or knowledge of the latest craft beer trend required, Ruski's is the one bar in Portland with nothing to prove. It is what it is, serves what it serves, and if you ask no questions, you'll be granted the same in return.

I take a seat and am greeted with a smile and "We've got such-and-such IPA on tap and yada-yada-ya." Nothing fancy, straight to the point, and my beer is placed in front of me in a matter of seconds.

I've been to Ruski's on a Saturday night with only standing room for a band that's squeezed itself into a corner by the door, and then I've been to Ruski's on a Saturday night when I've wondered if I should check

*Out&About* A little happy hour sun at Eventide.



MEAGHAN MAURICE



# Tap Dancing

This fall is awash with foam—here’s a sampling of what’s brewing.

## BARTENDER’S BRUNCH

Sept. 7, 1-4 p.m., Coffee By Design, 1 Diamond St., Featuring Maine Beer Company, Infiniti, Novare Res, Holy Donut, Maine Pie Line. [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com)

## OKTOBERFEST BY THE BAY

Sept. 20, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Waldo County Shrine Club, Northport Ave., Belfast. 5K race in Belfast followed by festivities to benefit Shriners Hospital. [rolliesmaine.com](http://rolliesmaine.com)

## 15TH ANNUAL TRAIL TO ALE

Sept. 21, 8 a.m., Eastern Promenade. 10K race/walk on Portland’s waterfront followed by a pizza party on the Prom with Shipyard brews and Portland Pie. [register.racepartner.com/Trail-to-Ale](http://register.racepartner.com/Trail-to-Ale)

## 11TH ANNUAL MAINE LAKES BREW FEST

Sept. 27, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The Beach at Point Sebago. Taste 30 brewers and many food vendors, including Allagash, Andrews, Angry Orchard, Baxter Brewing, Bigelow, Boothbay, Funky Bow, Sea Dog, Smuttynose & Run of the Mill, [mainelakesbrewfest.com](http://mainelakesbrewfest.com)

## RISING TIDE 4TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Oct. 26, 12-5 p.m. Rising Tide Brewery, 103 Fox St., Portland. [risingtidebrewing.com](http://risingtidebrewing.com)

**MAINE BREWERS FESTIVAL,** Nov. 1, 1-10 p.m. 20th Portland Expo, 239 Park Ave. Annual gathering for craft beers. [mainebrewersfestival.com](http://mainebrewersfestival.com)

## MAINE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Nov. 8 and 9. Cross Insurance Center, Bangor. A delicious weekend of food, wine, brews, spirits, cider, and demonstrations. [maineharvestfestival.com](http://maineharvestfestival.com)

## PORTLAND BEER WEEK

Nov. 1-10. Events all over town—tastings, blind tastings, pumpkin palooza, parties, brew bus, dinners. Check it out at [mainebeerweek.com](http://mainebeerweek.com)



the pulse of the old man next to me just to be sure.

**R**uski’s is the bar many sitcoms have tried to replicate, and though some have come close, it’s a bar that simply can’t be experienced, even explained, unless you visit alone just once. It is then when you notice the bar’s true character. The walls are covered with memorabilia of the good old days, and a jukebox plays hits that remind you just how good they must have been. It’s the bar my dad could appreciate, my best friend would love, and worth a stop on the way home.

### LOCAL GETAWAY

If you’re like me, you envy those who can sit in a coffee shop for hours on end, reading the latest Number One on the *Times*

## Out&About

Meet up at Maps on Market Street.



FROM TOP: COURTESY PHOTOS; MEAGHAN MAURICE

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**R E N T**

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bestseller list. First of all, I never have the time, and second, the only time I can justify reading during the day is on vacation or in a terminal, usually on my way to vacation. So when I stopped by **Local Sprouts** on Congress Street this evening and found an empty bar with three of my favorite brews on tap—Allagash, Peak Organic, and Oxbow—I was nerdily excited that I'd thrown a good read into my bag before I'd left this afternoon. Sitting here among the muffled murmurs of a few diners and their servers, I enjoy the lack of distractions. The bar itself is simple compared to its often cluttered, overly stylized neighbors. Beside the taps I notice one or two bottles of wine, a few liquors, but mostly coffee mugs and a stock of Almond Breeze. Only open until 10 p.m., Local Sprouts isn't the spot you'll celebrate Beth's 21st or throw John's surprise bachelor party, but it is a nice alternative for some one-on-one time with your main character. Speaking of which, I need to get back to *My Antonia*.

**B**

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# Out&About

"Bar & Barrel" Happy Hour at The Little Tap House



## CABALLEROS

"What was that? Did you just spit?" The culprit turns sheepishly to find Jess, one of the many women of **Amigos** whose bad list you hope to avoid. "There is a trash can right there. This is somebody's living room." Kyle, the spitter, apologizes and offers Jess a beer, which leads to yet another lesson of the Been-There-Done-Thats. It's Shannen's 25th birthday, and we arrived at Amigos around six for Taco Tuesday, one-dollar tacos until

seven. After six each (hey, they're small!), we take a pitcher of PBR to the back patio where everyone enjoys a smoke. It would look like an episode of *Mad Men* were it not for the flannels and beards galore. Shannen has convinced us we must stay until close, and seeing it's only 9 p.m., I'm getting a little antsy. That is until Jess offers Shannen a slice

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Taco Tuesday at Amigo's

of birthday wisdom. “You’ve got two choices in this life. You can either feel, really feel, or you can put up a wall and not feel a thing.” I take another swig, having been completely unaware of the enlightenment Taco Tuesday can muster. After two hours, two pitchers, and one too many cigarettes, I’m ready to desert the birthday girl and call it a night, but now it’s 11 p.m., when the bar seems to come alive right before my eyes. It’s not the happy-hour crowd, the tourists, or the couples. It’s the bartenders and servers whose shifts just ended, and they’ve been waiting for a drink all night. Abby, our friend who just left work, barrels in practically ordering a beer while still on Dana Street. The back patio is finally filled, and we’re all counting down the minutes until midnight when we’ll down Washington Apples and play a rather rowdy game of “Never Have I Ever.” We’re the loudest crew at the bar, but no one seems to mid,

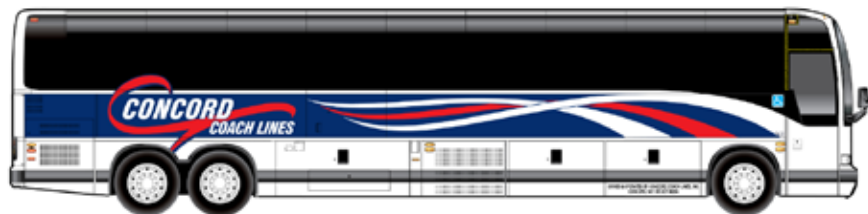
and when the time comes, everyone is singing a big, loud Portland “Happy Birthday” to Shannen.

**BISTRO ROW**

Choosing a spot to eat on Middle Street should never be hard. Throw a stone and it’s likely to land in someone’s good meal. There’s **Duckfat**, whose Belgian fries are legend, packed every day. You’ve got **East Ender** next door, with artwork brought to you on serving plates and rarely an open table. There are three more restaurants directly across the street. And on the corner at the very end of the street in a tiny storefront sits **Ribollita**. It’s nearly 8 p.m., and my family, who’s traveled all the way from Pennsylvania, is starving. My uncle wants a glass of Cabernet, my grandmother wants something authentic, my aunt wants to eat healthy, and my granddad just wants food, “darn it.” We pass by the

*(Continued on page 78)*

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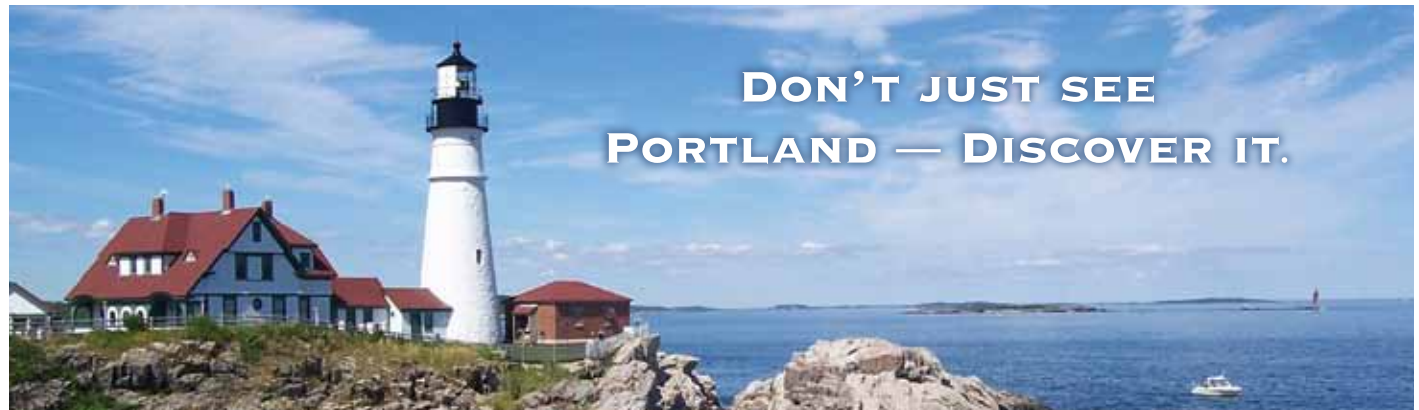
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## PORTLAND AFTER DARK



**Not The Usual Suspects** (continued from page 44)  
crowds of hungry folks waiting at Duck-fat and East Ender, and I'm hoping Ribollita isn't the same. I don't know how long my grandparents can go on empty stomachs without drawing the attention of locals. "Hi, there's five of us..." I wait for the hostess to give me a half hour, but instead she leads us to a table outside, brings ice cold water and fresh bread. Thank the Family Road Trip gods. Our server confesses that the food will take a bit longer than usual—he's been busy making cappuccinos—but it's certainly on it's way. Because of hospitality, the wine, and all-around family feel of the place, my own family is surprisingly fine with the wait. Where there would normally be complaints, tonight it's laughter and love, and when the food arrives (North End Linguine, White Bean and Romano Ravioli, Penne Arrabiata, and Fettuccine Alfredo) we're busy passing, sharing, and indulging. I take a look at the hungry diners waiting in line for the hip spots that sometimes offer too little food and too much hype. "They look hungry," my granddad says between mouthfuls of ravioli and gulps of Shipyard. He smiles at me before my uncle goes into another family story. The night is perfect, filled with the excitement any vacation brings, and I can already tell it's going to be a wonderful visit.

### SPIRIT IN THE NIGHT

As it turns out, nobody wants to go to **Bubba's** '80s Night. It's Friday night, I'm in cut-

MEAGHAN MAURICE

offs and a leopard-print top, I've just spent the last hour listening to Springsteen, and now nobody is in the mood for Bubba's. A last-minute change of plans is made, and I'm off to Rosie's, rather begrudgingly. The Fore Street bar is reeking of stale popcorn and crammed with college students. Our small group joins a larger group in the back, and I'm introduced to nobody as they nod and continue telling inside jokes from their days at Colby. Here I am looking like Stevie Nicks's and Tom Petty's long-lost love child while everyone else is wearing salmon colored Bermudas and Sperrys. There is nothing special about Rosie's for me, and I'm sorry for that fact because so many people love to drink here. It isn't a warm environment, the bar is too small, and the tables are always sticky. Granted, I've only been here after 11 p.m. Behind me a young man attempts to teach two girls how to throw darts, and I have a bad feeling I may be heading home with an eye patch. True, this would only add to my get-up, but I'll spare myself.

"Guys, let's have an adventure tonight." We've hopped from bar to bar, from Rosie's to Pearl, and we're on our way to Bull Feneey's when I get another idea, maybe a way to change it up and give these Colby grads a good time.

"Let's go buy some beer and go to the pier."

"The pier?"

"We're in Portland, aren't we?"

With two six-packs in tow, we're six 20-somethings on a mission, about to make a life-long memory. I can't disclose our exact location because that's half the fun, but the water is still as the moon barely hovers over it. DiMillo's rests against the backdrop, and our whispers and stifled laughs drift subtly through the harbor.

"Who wants to swim?"

Before I can even decline, three bare bodies zoom past and are in the water. It's a surreal moment, one from the movies: a group of friends, several still strangers, skinny-dipping and drinking beer on a New England dock. Maybe it's not one for an audience, but if I'm going to give you an honest, genuine Portland After Dark moment, this is it. The gutsy swimmers grow cold, and it's already past 2 a.m. After cleaning up our traces, we part ways on an empty street. Heading home, I'm almost positive I see the moon smiling over the Old Port. ■

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