



The Pursuit of

TEXT BY EMILY BETZ TYRA

OUR ANNUAL RESTAURANT SALUTE

It's time to get that retro-sweet summertime glow. Warm nights Up North wouldn't be complete without a bite of the Big C, the Big D or the Triple B. All these classic eat spots hearken back to an earlier era of Northern delight. Nope, nothing fancy, but their flavors are classic, their golden vibes true.



Happiness

PHOTOS: TODD ZAWISTOWSKI.

The Big C at Clyde's Drive-In, St. Ignace.
OPPOSITE: Miss Molly's, Lake City.



Cherry Bowl Diner

HONOR

THE RETRO-FABULOUS Cherry Bowl drive-in movie theater has run under the Northern stars continuously since 1953. And owners Laura and Harry Clark, just the theater's second in half a century, strive to let their patrons enjoy the food as much as the flick. Where else can you find fresh hot popcorn with real melted butter?

Get hungry with a round of mini-golf before or between the double features (top releases, never rated over PG-13), then see if you can keep from getting that head-spinning, kid-in-a-candy-store feeling stepping through the screen door of the Cherry Bowl Diner. Gain focus trying to claw a stuffed animal from the coin-operated game, then pick your pleasure from hand-tossed pepperoni pizza on rotating pans, popcorn chicken in miniature popcorn boxes, fresh-made Messy Marvin's chili cheese fries, or homemade bread sticks with butter and garlic, mozzarella, Parmesan and oregano. An army of cheery concession staff brings you whatever you point to; you dress your hotdog yourself from trays of fresh-chopped onions and pickle relish and with ketchup in an old-fashioned crank dispenser. A big broasted chicken dinner with homemade seasoned potatoes and pickles is a lip-smacking choice for a cozy tailgate supper, but if Harry made his Crazy Harry's Barbecue Ribs, they're not to be missed. For dessert: Dumbo's funnel cakes, an Orange Crush slushee (with whipped cream and a cherry) or caramel apples dipped that morning. The food is all made fresh. "I know the cotton candy is ready when the staff is full and their tongues are blue," says Harry.

You'll find Roloids and mosquito repellent tucked comically at the end of the wall of candy concessions—but on a perfect crisp 'n' starry Up North night you won't need either. Lay back in the way-back of the car, crumbs of cinnamon sugar from the funnel cake scattered happily on the blanket under your chin and feel the tingle of clean Northern night air. And enjoy the show. 9812 HONOR HIGHWAY (U.S. 31), HONOR, 231-325-3413, CHERRYBOWLDRIVEIN.COM.

MISS MOLLY'S: TODD ZAWISTOWSKI. CHERRY BOWL: BRIAN CONFER.



BRIGHT LIGHTS, LITTLE CITY

The Cherry Bowl beckons in the still Northern night, as it has since 1953. Mrs. Jean Griffin ran the Honor theater for decades after her husband's 1959 death. As reported in the local paper, she operated "always with class and all in high heels." No outside beverage or food is allowed (except birthday cakes), but no matter: Cherry Bowl popcorn has real butter. Family meals of Crazy Harry's Barbecue Ribs come with home-cut seasoned potatoes and some of the biggest pickles on the planet.

Miss Molly's Drive-In

LAKE CITY

THE DOO WOP ARCHITECTURE and space-age bright paint job have lost a little of their 1961 shine, but the sparkly retro sign on Lakeshore Drive still beckons bright. Sidle your sedan between the yellow, angled arms supporting the drive-in overhang and within seconds, one of Glen and Margaret Baker's five daughters will be curbside to write down your order.

Miss Molly's was named for Margaret's dog; no wonder then, that your pooch gets a cookie on the metal window-tray when your meal comes. Ketchup and mustard arrive in squeeze bottles with pointy tips. Hamburgers come toothpicked tidily on soft buns in a basket. The Bakers use Miracle Whip to dress the burgers, and they make great fries—crisp and potato-y—which you can have sauced with cheese and homemade chili. Glen Baker is proud to be home of the Triple B: three 12-ounce patties topped with everything—including tomato, lettuce, pickles and bacon. Complete the death-defying feat of eating the burger, a basket of fries and slaw, and you'll get a free T-shirt. Says Glen, "Only 20 have done it out of the 300 who've tried." After slurping the last of your root beer—straw sounds allowed in the privacy of your own car—wait the requisite 30 minutes (maybe 60 after a Triple B) and head just north of downtown to the county park on Lake Missaukee for an after-dinner dip in the drink. (\$2 day pass, beach closes at 10 p.m.) 829 SOUTH LAKESHORE DRIVE, LAKE CITY, 231-839-2300.



CRUISE IN

Glen and Margaret Baker bought this Lake City landmark so the entire family—five daughters and one son—would all have work. Get a chillidog or a coney, the sauces are homemade.



Clyde's Drive-In

ST. IGNACE

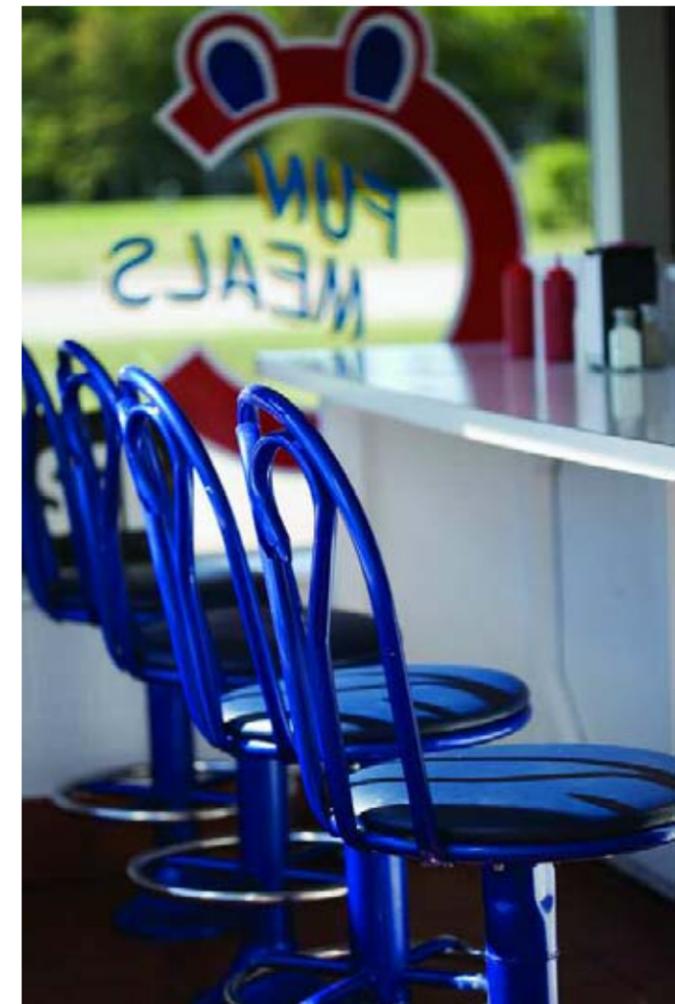


THE MIGHTY MAC TURNS 50 this summer, and what better homage to the era it was born in than to make it your portal to a juicy, fresh grilled Big C burger at the classic Clyde's Drive-In, just west of the bridge in St. Ignace. The Clyde's concept premiered in Sault Ste. Marie in 1949 with 19-year-old entrepreneur Clyde Van Dusen, a Michigan Tech college student who, realizing he could only work 8 hours a day at a regular job, thought maybe he could do a little better putting in longer hours working for himself. And longer hours he had—the original Clyde's in the Soo was open until 3 a.m. The servers were on roller skates (for a stint, anyway), and the patrons sitting outdoors could—and still can—holler out between bites of their burgers to mariners on the freighters passing through the Soo Locks. Van Dusen still owns the original Clyde's, ordering fresh ground beef from Neville's Superette every day to make the patties. The St. Ignace Clyde's is one of the original Clyde's two sisters, built in 1971 and operated by John Coveyou and his daughter Rachel. They serve up hot dogs, fried

YOOPER PRIDE

Clyde Van Dusen started the Clyde's empire (there are three across the U.P.) at age 19, with a fortune of \$300. The St. Ignace Clyde's has curb service, but many of the locals gather inside at the speckled Formica counter for coffee-talk. The craveable Big C is a ¾-pounder garnished exactly as you like it.

shrimp, fresh whitefish and perch, and gooey-good grilled cheese sandwiches made with Velveeta (with pride) to locals and U.P.-bound travelers fresh off the bridge. CLYDE'S NO. 1, 1425 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, SAULT STE. MARIE, 906-632-2581; CLYDE'S NO. 2, 201 CHIPPEWA AVE., MANISTIQUE, 906-341-6021. CLYDE'S NO. 3, U.S. 2, JUST WEST OF THE BRIDGE, ST. IGNACE, 906-643-8303.





Don's Drive-In

TRAVERSE CITY

IF YOU CAN SNAG A SPOT at a speaker, eat outside, but going for a window booth inside the Cherry Capital's neon-lit 60's icon means you can check in with stony-eyed Zelga the fortuneteller in the coin-operated booth. It's a good day when a Don's real-fruit malt is on your horizon, whirred with raspberries, strawberries, or—when in Rome—juicy cherries. A malt and steak-cut fries make a meal on their own, or you can roll up your sleeves for the juicy two-patty Big D burger, custom griddled and garnished as you like it. Reubens, grilled cheeses, fried fish, hot dogs and kiddie baskets that come in nifty little cardboard cars give one and all their fix. 2030 U.S. 31 NORTH, TRAVERSE CITY, 231-938-1860.

NEON NIFTY

The lights of Don's Drive-In lure people cruising along East Grand Traverse Bay and campers from the nearby 342-site Traverse City State Park. Get your malt or shake blended with real berries or cherries.

Frankfort A&W

FRANKFORT

THE FRANKFORT A&W WAS BUILT in 1962 to feed the sun-kissed crowds in this Lake Michigan beach town. In the scrupulous care of the Finnish Kolehmainen family for the last 32 years, this drive-in is as sparkling, spanky clean and oh-so classic as always. Brothers Jason and Aaron Kolehmainen serve the traditional A&W menu with lots of homemade touches. There's a full breakfast—don't be shy to order a frosty-creamy root beer float with your biscuits and gravy, or to do so through the metal automatic speakers in the drive-in. Teenage servers bring it on trays that hook on your window (though, sadly, the angled aerodynamics of many newfangled car windows don't allow for it). For dinner, get your classic burgers and dogs with deep-fried accoutrements like crispy golden onion rings, corn dog nuggets, or cheese curds—all made even better by dunking in homemade ranch dressing. The daily specials are local hits: Mondays they serve a goulash dinner with coleslaw, homemade cornbread and honey butter. Wednesday is wet burrito heaven, and the Friday fish fry brings carloads from up and down the coast. Don't miss the vintage car cruise night the third Friday in August. 21 LAKE STREET, FRANKFORT, 231-352-9021. 📍

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SUNSET STRIP

In summertime, more than half the Frankfort A&W carhop staff is from the area high schools. After your float and onion rings, hit the Frankfort beach to see the sun sink into Lake Michigan's horizon.

