

## PADDOCK REVIEWS

Arrive early or late to miss the cacophonous crowd of young locals with demanding palates. The single room, in dark-stained woods, has an L-shaped bar from front to back—very '30s. The laconic menu begins with a few stunning (literally) cocktails and some interesting imported beers. Primi blend into secondi on one page. Plantain crab cakes (\$14) make a terrific opener: crisply fried and served with sautéed kale, grilled cipollini (praise be!) and corn-mango salsa. Twisted into a gigantic rosette and edged with herbs, house-smoked salmon (\$14) pairs with three beautifully crisp thyme- and chive-flecked rösti rounds dabbed in sour cream. Subtly smoked then grilled sirloin (you can still taste the beef) arrives with sautéed onions and mushrooms on a haystack of respectable frites (\$24). Roast leg of organic caribou (\$26), served medium rare (as advised by the kitchen), is astonishingly tender, presented over its truffled juices with flawless mash and fat spears of grilled asparagus. Two dozen wines (all vintaged, only three over \$100) hail from anywhere else but here. Made-from-scratch peanut butter pie or chocolate truffle cake to close.

- Toronto Life

### HOME SMOKED

Dish Deconstruction :

Steak and Eggs starts with a 4 to 5 ounce seving of sirloin that has been smoked in the kitchen over

Applewwod or maple chips, grilled to order and served sliced. Next come two extra large, brown, free-range eggs, sunny side up or to order. Two latkes are made with Yukon Gold potatoes, Vidalia onions,

Garlic, salt, pepper, eggs and flour. Buttered toast comes from rotating homemade bread (like a dinner

Baguette, challah, or rye). Also on the plate, a field tomato sprinkled with salt, pepper, and panko (Japanese bread crumbs), quickly fried and then baked. Finally, chipotle relish is a medley of grilled bell peppers, four types of onions (cooking, red, Vidalia and green), mixed with white wine, champagne, vinegar, salt, pepper, and canned, pureed chipoltle chili peppers packed in a adobo sauce.

Tasting Notes :

Giving steak a smoky complexity is a stroke of brilliance.

Official Word :

"We created this because we were looking for a signature dish that reflected what The Paddock is – we are pretty heavy on the meat side of things and we also do game meat, like caribou and elk, for dinner," says co-owner Tom Paterson. "We're an old-style meat and potatoes kind of place, but updated and contemporary."

The Scene :

Look for the two-for-one Brunch Coupon on the restaurant's website. Also on the menu : a cheese plate, brie and sundried tomato omelette, lamb sausage and eggs and smoked slamon with latkes and sour cream.

- Toronto Star July 14, 2005

Cushioning the hardscrabble corner of Bathurst and Queen Streets, the Paddock (178 Bathurst Street, 416-504-9997) was once a derelict bar patronized by jockeys. But its current proprietors have revived the old hoss, maintaining its mahogany patina while tweaking the lighting and pushing the menu beyond the pickled-egg tub (though there is one of those, too; the menu includes items from a 1950's bill of fare that was found in the basement). Late afternoon is the perfect time to sink into one of the red leather booths with a pint of Steam Whistle Pilsner or Mill Street Stock Ale, two terrific local brews.

- DAVE BIDINI, New York Times, Published: June 17, 2005

Ever want something no more complicated than pint of draft while the better half is whining for a Gibson served straight-up with the alchemy of a five-star hotel lounge? Well, you can't split up just because of cocktail incompatibility, now, can you? And that was the very focus Tom Paterson and Ken Horne had when they took over the Paddock, rehabilitating it into well-behaved citizen.

The Paddock received a major facelift five years ago to turn this landmark location into a semi-chi-chi bar. The upgraded version opened in the fall of 1998 in the refurbished shell of what was previously the Paddock Tavern (since 1947), but with a local chef, a solid sound system, and a quality - and often inventive - cocktail lineup.

It may seem counterintuitive to have a tavern-like bar with all the chic trappings of urban cool, yet here it is. The old-school drinks, vintage surroundings, mixed with current sounds have been luring an energized crowd here to mingle in the happy-hour vibe of a late-'40s and early-'50s era cocktail bar.

The current rendition of The Paddock is an enhancement of the original - a design that wasn't created with the intention of being "retro" or "kitschy," like many of Toronto's retro concept bars. It was established long before either of those hopelessly common adjectives were defined terms; when retro sounded like the name of a new Oldsmobile.

Everything about this little bar indicates an era when people gathered for rounds of stiff stuff on the rocks, while ranting about Ike, the Russkies and Art Linkletter. The room is a living, technicolour snapshot of the '40s; owners Tom Paterson and Ken Horne dispensed with the Paddock's previous lack-of-funds-inspired bar theme and reconnected their Queen and Bathurst venue with walnut accenting, wooden flooring, and paneling that looks like Hershey chocolate bars - all to attract a new crowd, good energy, and therefore, street cred.

The room (and there is only one room; 3/4 of the original Paddock is sectioned off), with its velvety window-area banquettes and dark wooden chairs, is open, airy and boasts a full and surprisingly current - considering it's the original - bar counter. The stylized feel of the Paddock is a gratifying change from the typical Queen West bar scene which tends to range from fratty to rave-ish. And while they have beer on tap, don't overlook the creative cocktail menu. The well-made cocktails range from a Nepaul Pepper, which combines vodka, tequila and cayenne pepper to a French Connection which features cognac and amaretto on the rocks, and the Gibson, a classic but a hard-sell.

The Paddock, regardless of what night you visit it, or what crowd is inhabiting it, gives off a fairly consistent vibe. It seems like there's always a member of the previous Paddock generation somewhere on the scene, spinning tales of how things used to be. The fare is as good as any in town, but The Paddock really distinguishes itself with a quality cocktail lineup (rotating monthly), an energized crowd and an ambiance that's chic and airy enough to support fancy dates, business meetings, and martini-soaked birthday parties.

Upshot: \*Well-behaved is all very relative; expect an uncontrollable party to break out at any given time.

- Don Ellis, [www.Martiniboys.com](http://www.Martiniboys.com) / Rating: 4 stars

" Today, The Paddock is one of the most beautiful old bars in the city, saved from the demolition ball and subtly refurbished by its owners, Tom Paterson and Ken Horne.... Chef Dale Blacker prepares thoughtful, uncomplicated,booze-friendly food... all of it served in a place with a history you can taste at the bottom of your glass..."

- Andrew Pyper : THE GLOBE AND MAIL

"...What makes The Paddock so perfect?...Could it be the simple beauty of its curving mahogany bar, the attractive yet mature and discreet staff?...The food, far superior to your basic pub grub? Or the rotating themed cocktail specials?...its just one of Toronto's best bars... former habitues Frank Sinatra and Oscar Peterson would no doubt approve..."

- Li Robbins : Toronto Life

" Besides being a well-libated barroom, since the revamping the Paddock has also become a very fine restaurant. With a well-executed continental menu and music that moves from a jazz groove to Massive Attack, the room invites lingering, intimate conversation..."

- Jill Borra : EYE Weekly

THE 'HOOD: Just south of Queen, along Bathurst, the neighbourhood is decidedly mixed, with neighbours ranging from seedy—the charmingly grungy nightclub Reverb is across the street—to the posh—trendy eateries Canteena and Lalot are kitty-corner. This is the section of Queen West that was hip before it was overtaken by West Queen West. THE CROWD: Initially, Paterson and Horne were looking to establish a local hangout for the Queen West crowd. What they have is a loyal following of music, film and literary industry types. Weekends bring suburbanites looking for a chic night out. THE NIGHTS: Weeknights are dominated by Queen Street regulars, so expect to overhear conversations about the latest in documentary filmmaking, the re-birth of '70s rock and only the juiciest magazine industry gossip.

THE DRINKS: The cocktail list at the Paddock is every bit as diverse as the clientele and the neighbourhood, from the classics—Manhattans and negronis—to the revolutionary—pumpkin martinis. There is a featured drink list and a rotating monthly cocktail list that is created by the bar team and determined by seasonal ingredients. Being knowledgeable in the art of drinking as well as being able to endure gruelling cocktail brainstorming and testing sessions are prerequisites for each member of the bar staff. The majority of the wines here are from private suppliers and are not available at Ontario's liquor stores."

- <http://www.where.ca/Toronto>

" It was once a gin joint popular with wise guys reading the racing form, but the intimate wood-panelled bar is all that remains of one of Toronto's most period watering holes. Now it's a media-savvy crowd pounding back the single malts, bent on conversation and carousing. The window seat semi-circular red leather booth is bound to impress visiting out-of-town seen-it-all types."

NOW Magazine : BEST OF TORONTO 2002

[thepaddock.ca](http://thepaddock.ca) September 2005