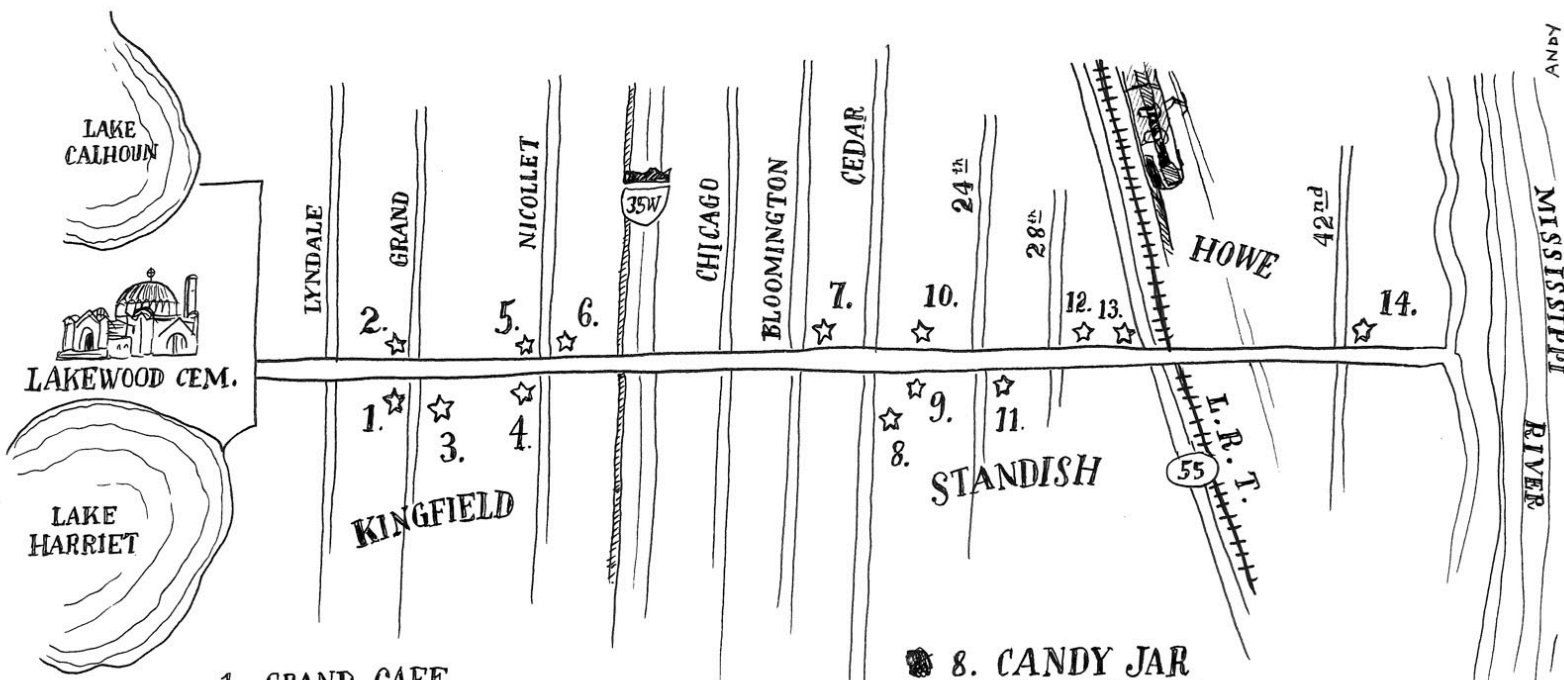




STREET

A Culinary Travelogue
by Andy Sturdevant

38th Street in South Minneapolis is one of my favorite stretches of street in the city. It's an old streetcar line, mostly residential but with busy little clusters of commercial activity every few blocks. It's a sort of shadow Lake Street, passing through all the same neighborhoods, but ~~with~~ with everything happening on a smaller scale. Following 38th across the southside, one encounters the full range of culinary experiences available in the Twin Cities. On a recent weekend, a few friends and I decided to eat our way ~~west~~ east, from Kingfield in Southwest Minneapolis, through lower Powderhorn, across Hiawatha, and into Longfellow, ending blocks from the Mississippi River. Here's some of what we saw (and ate and drank) over the course of 15 hours (!!!) at a dozen or so restaurants along 38th...



1. GRAND CAFE
2. VICTOR'S 1959 CAFE
3. SUGAR SUGAR
4. BLACKBIRD
5. COCINA LATINA
6. SHORTY & WAG'S
7. MARLA'S

8. CANDY JAR
9. EVERETT'S
10. DAVE'S POPCORN
11. CITIZEN CAFE
12. TED COOK'S
13. CARDINAL TAVERN
14. RIVERVIEW WINE BAR

1. GRAND CAFE

(9 A.M.)

At the beginning of our day, we know we'll need to pace ourselves. However, I just can't resist starting off with perhaps the heaviest dish in town: the eggs en Cocotte. We also order the double-baked almond brioche and orange courrant scones. I usually avoid scones, finding them flaty and dry, but the scones at the Grand make me believe I'd never eaten a real scone in my entire life to that point. The day's off to a good start.



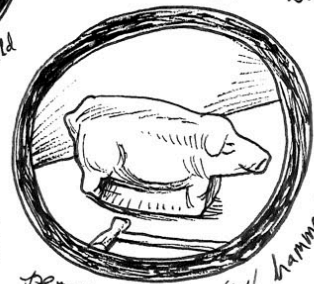
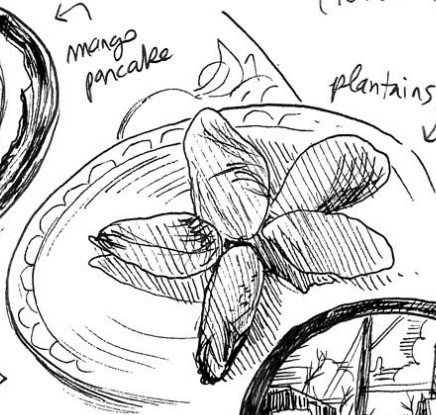
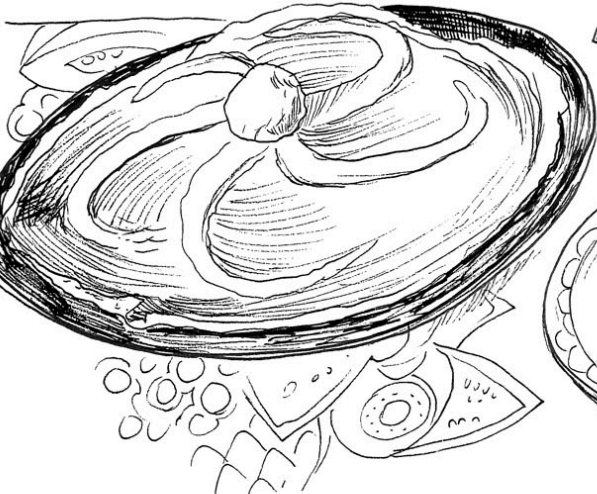
Eggs on Cocotte
(puff pastry, ham, truffle cream, poached egg, comte gruyere)



2. VICTOR'S 1959

(10:30 A.M.)

A weekend trip to Victor's always requires a wait in line, and we worry for a moment about falling behind in our itinerary. Fortunately, we get a table pretty quickly. In true socialist style, we order a few plates of food and eat them without regard to private ownership, passing the pork tamales, papas, mangos, plantains and yuccas around to all. The riotous color palette inside Victor's is a godsend on these sorts of white, featureless snow days.



3. SUGAR SUGAR

(11:00 A.M.)

The phrase "like a kid in a candy store" loses a lot of its power if you've forgotten what it's actually like to be in a candy store. We buy Swedish fish, chocolate bars, and langues de chat, tongue-shaped pieces of chocolate made from an original antique mold.

We also purchase a Victorian-style peppermint pig, which shatters with a small silver hammer into more manageable pieces, as per the tradition.



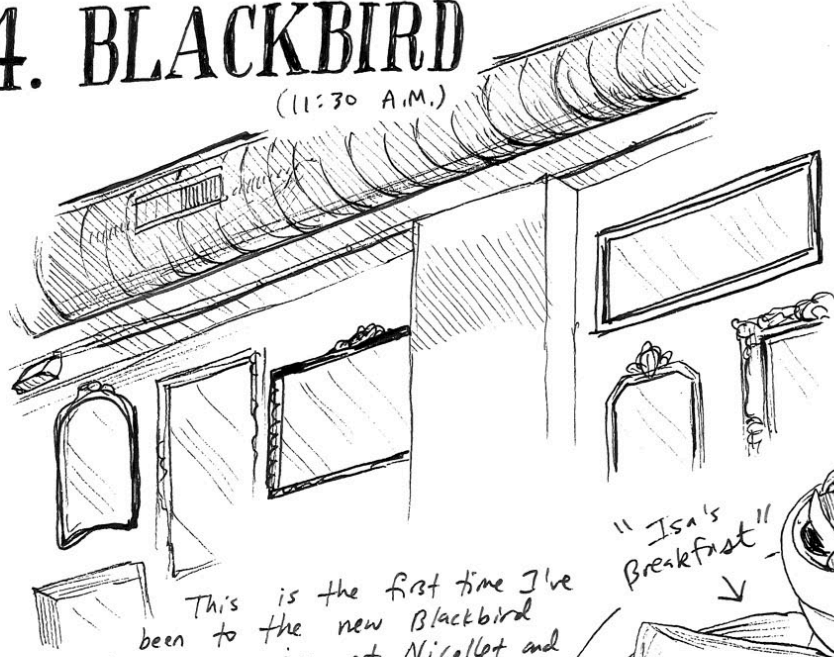
We leave with our pockets stuffed full of candy, as excited as kids in a...well... you know...

4. BLACKBIRD

(11:30 A.M.)

A few blocks on foot to Nicollet Avenue...

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This is the first time I've been to the new Blackbird since re-opening at Nicollet and 38th. The space looks fantastic - cavernous and light, the walls decorated with ornate mirrors and antlers. Our server tells us the building was an old vending machine warehouse that sat vacant for decades. I am happy to see some familiar items from the previous location on the menu.

"Isa's Breakfast"

poached eggs on steamed spinach



I order a satisfying, relatively light meal of poached eggs, steamed spinach + fresh fruit. This will be my last brunch meal of the day...

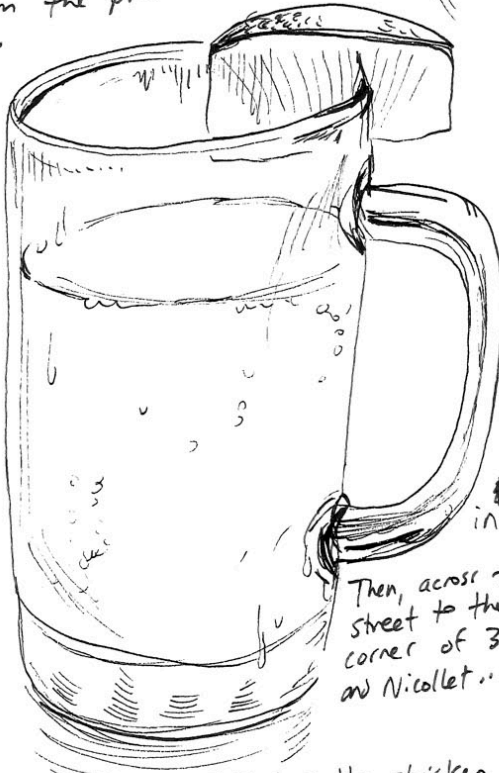
5. COCINA LATINA

(1:00 P.M.)

Time for a drink across the street. The server brings us Modelos in frosty mugs with fresh limes. I have a malta, a non-alcoholic soft drink made from hops and barley popular in Latin America. We are captivated by the Spanish language music videos they are playing. Sexy, dancing people in animal costumes.



Modelo w/ fresh lime



Then, across the street to the third corner of 38th and Nicollet...

Six wings w/ hot vinegar

boomerang formica

sweet potato pie

6. SHORTY & WAG'S

(2:00 P.M.)

I love the chicken wings, the amazing sweet potato pie, and the boomerang-patterned formica countertop where we eat in equal parts.



(note: we stopped by Willie D's on Chicago for some catfish, but it seemed to be closed. A passer-by thought it might be due to the snowstorm the night before. We had no choice but to press on to...)

7. MARLA'S CARIBBEAN CUISINE

(3:30 P.M.)



peanut punch →



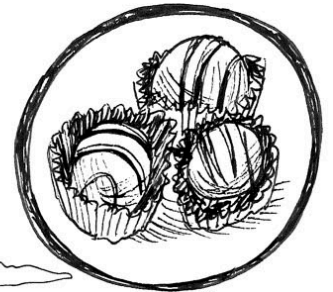
Walking many of the 18 or so blocks between Nicollet and Bloomington, we work up an appetite again. We go a little crazy, ordering fish stew, red beans and rice, dumplings, chicken chow mein, doubles (a sandwich made from fried flatbread and chickpeas) and a sorrel-flavored drink. I also order the mighty PEANUT PUNCH, one of my favorite drinks anywhere in the city. Marla, the restaurant's namesake, comes out from the kitchen for a few minutes and tells us about her first encounter with snow after arriving in the Midwest from Trinidad and Tobago at age 15 in the middle of a blizzard.

8. CANDY JAR

(5:00 P.M.)

Truffles are on sale, so that seems like the smart choice. We buy some jewel-like creme de menthe-flavored truffles, and tuck them away for later.

Also at 38th and Cedar we find...



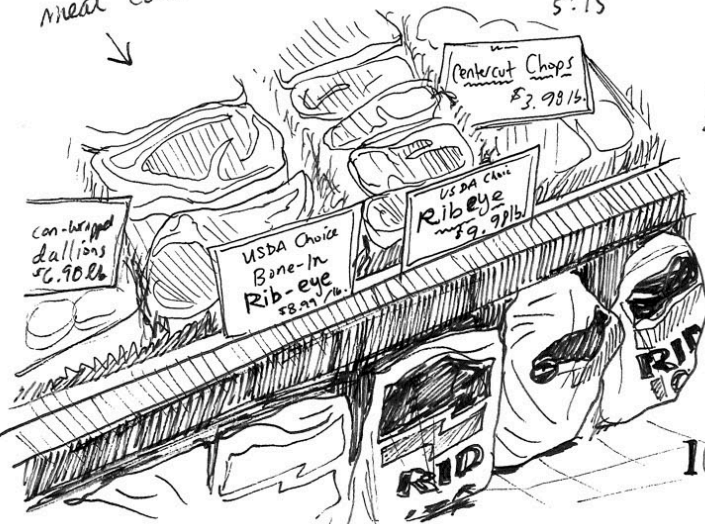
creme de menthe truffles

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9. EVERETT'S

(~~4:15~~ P.M.)
5:15

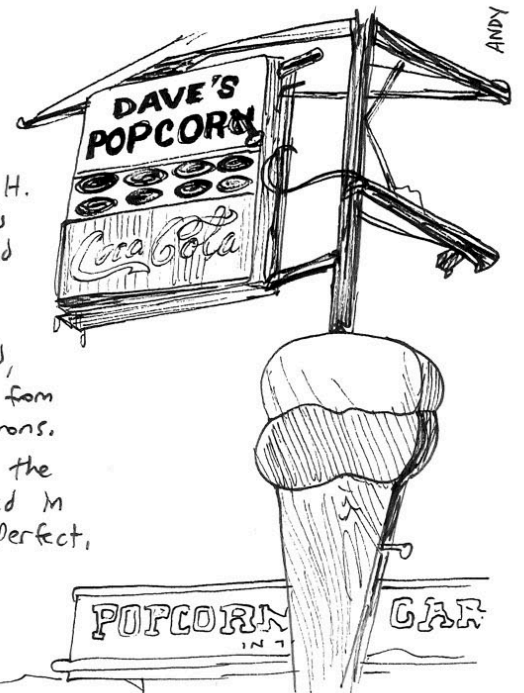
meat counter ↓



Everett's seems right out of the mayoral administration of Hubert H. Humphrey, but really it's a perfect blend of the old Southside and the new Southside. You can buy East African injera bread, or you can buy ribeyes from guys in white deli aprons. This time, we choose the steak, which is wrapped in white butcher's paper. Perfect.

10. DAVE'S POPCORN

Unfortunately closed for the winter.



11. CITIZEN CAFE

(5:30 P.M.)

house-made sausage



Coffee →



Irish Cream



In the time it takes to walk from Cedar to 24th Ave., the sky has gone from deep blue to black. The Citizen is candlelit inside, and a nice place to ease into the evening.

We order a house-made sausage, some gravlax, and coffee with Irish cream.

Those of us that skipped the Modelos back on Nicollet are honestly very happy to finally have some alcohol with our food.



storefront 15th + 28th + 29th ave.

12. TED COOK'S 19th HOLE BBQ

(7:00 P.M.)



ribs to go

Ted Cook's is take-out only, so we order a half-slab of pork ribs and some jo-jo fries, and take them to our friend Kristen's house, a few blocks away.

Kurt and Jen claim Ted Cook's BBQ is so good it makes you hallucinate. Despite the fact that I've been eating

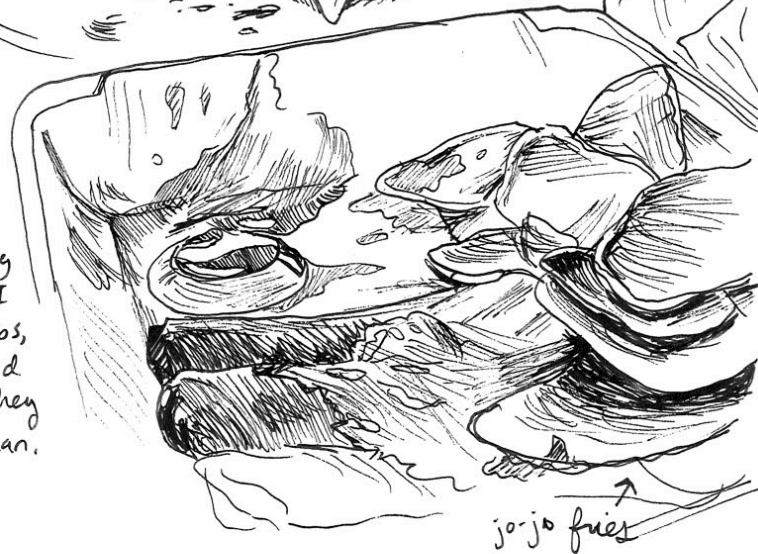
all day long, I tear into the ribs, and understand what they mean.



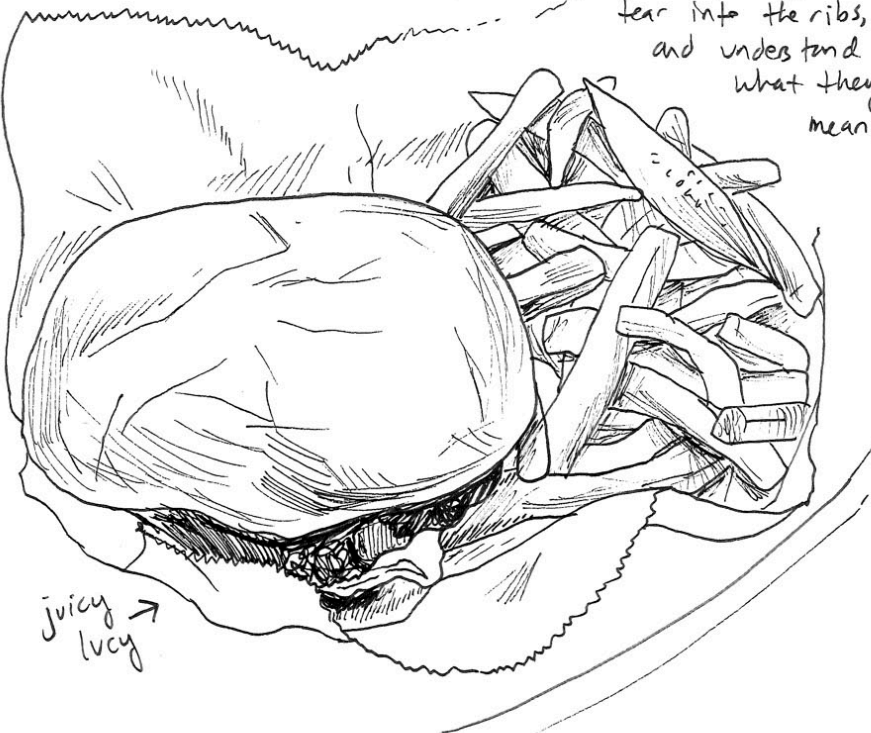
ribs



to-go bag w/ kurt



jo-jo fries



juicy Lucy

13. CARDINAL TAVERN

(9:00 P.M.)

I'd just planned to have an appetizer here, but the server hears about our expedition and insists I order some "real food." I fold, and have a perfectly acceptable Juicy Lucy. She's right: not having any classic bar food on this trip would be criminally negligent.

Over Hiawatha to...

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14. RIVERVIEW WINE BAR

(10:30 P.M.)



East 38th St. at 42nd Ave. S.
Seven blocks from the
Mississippi River



East of Hiawatha Avenue, into the Howe neighborhood of Longfellow, this part of South Minneapolis is almost entirely residential. It's very quiet. At the eastern terminus of 38th St. is the Riverview Wine Bar (across the street is the Riverview Theater, home of some of the best movie popcorn in the Twin Cities, but unfortunately closed at this hour). The Riverview is the type of place where if you go a few times, the servers know your name. They bring us some port wine (thanks, Hadija) and we tell them all about our day on 38th Street.

We stay until about midnight.