Epicurean in Pittsburgh

Random Musings by Alyosha Efros
Epicureanism, a philosophy misunderstood

• Seeking happiness from simple pleasures

• Avoiding pain and suffering for self and others

“It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly (agreeing neither to harm nor be harmed). And it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living a pleasant life. “

Epicurus, 341–270 B.C.
Living Wisely

• Yes, you won’t be rich, but…
  – You are way better off than most grad students
  – You are saving ~$5000/year on housing compared to students in MIT, Berkeley, and Stanford

• Spending wisely, e.g.:
  – $4 for so-so latte vs. $8 for surprisingly good bottle of wine
  – $30 for bottle of so-so wine in restaurant vs. BYOB
  – Fees & charges at the local bank, vs. Internet Bank (ING Direct, Everbank.com, etc)
  – $150+/month cost of car ownership vs. $7/hr ZipCar for weekend outings
Living Well

Do you need to be rich to live well?

Recent research on long-term effect of spending on happiness:

• “the only category to be positively correlated to happiness was leisure: vacations, entertainment, sports and equipment like golf clubs and fishing poles.” - DeLeire & Kalil

• “spending money for an experience — concert tickets, French lessons, sushi-rolling classes, a hotel room in Monaco — produces longer-lasting satisfaction than spending money on plain old stuff.”

A Highly Subjective and Opinionated Guide to Seeking Small Pleasures while Avoiding Pain in Pittsburgh without a car and on the cheap
Cultural Pleasures
Pittsburgh Symphony

- A truly world-class orchestra! …in a truly gaudy hall
  - if you even wanted to know what kitch looks like
- Student cost: ~$15 (rush tickets, often front row (!), 2 hours before show)
- Transportation: all 61-series buses and others (~20min)
Pittsburgh Chamber Music Society

Carnegie Music Hall

- Brings top chamber groups to Pittsburgh
- Student Cost: ~$15
- Transportation: 5 min walk
Renaissance and Baroque Society

- brings absolute top groups in renaissance, baroque, and early classical period music
  - One of Pittsburgh’s hidden gems!!!

- Student cost: $10

- Transportation: 15 min walk
Pittsburgh Filmmakers

The place to see good cinema
Student cost: ~$5
Transportation:
  - Melwood Screening Room: ~ 30 min walk
  - Harris Theatre (downtown) – 61-series and other buses
  - Regent Sq. Theatre – 61B, or 61A + 15 min walk
Other cultural pleasures

• **Chatham Baroque**
  – A local baroque group. Heard them once, they are awesome!

• **Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theater**
  – Pittsburgh has many good theatres. This one is one of the better

• **The Mattress Factory Art Museum**
  – Hands down the best museum in Pittsburgh! World-famous and truly unique!

• **Dreaming Ant** “DVDs. A little off center”
  – where films are sorted by director, as it should be! Has films that even NetFlix doesn’t carry! Two locations: Craig St. and in Bloomfield (bigger store, take 54C bus).

• **A/B Films**
  – $1 movies at the UC. An eclectic mix of amazing foreign films and truly awful Hollywood mass-market junk.

• **Carnegie Museum**
  – Don’t ignore it just because it’s nearby!
Outdoor Pleasures
Kayak Pittsburgh (part of Venture Outdoors)

- Kayaking -- more spiritual than yoga, (way) less dangerous than vodka!
- Open May to September, October only weekend. Evenings are best!
- Cost: $15/hr single, $20/hr tandem, $5 off with membership
- Transportation: all buses downtown, then 10 min walk across river
Schenley Skating Rink

- Open from Thanksgiving to mid-March. Go for 9:30pm sessions to avoid kiddies
- Cost: $3-5, including rentals
- Transportation: 25 min walk (in the dark). 20 min from Sq. Hill (not so dark)
Pittsburgh Inclines walk

- An easy, very scenic walk, ~1.5 – 2 hrs
- Transportation: Any downtown bus to Smithfield St. Both includes free with CMU ID. PAT transfers also valid.
Eliza Furnace and other bike/walk trails
And finally…
…the pleasures of good food and drink

Inspired by:
Peter Su’s [Pittsburgh Restaurant Micro-reviews page](#)
Best Pittsburgh Food Bargains
My Biased Top 5 Picks
Udipi Café (South Indian)

- **Udipi Café**  -- super-authentic south-Indian food!!! (note: completely vegetarian, obviously)
- I recommend: masala dosas, of course!
- Where: far-far away…. 4141 Old William Penn Hwy, Monroeville, PA. Hitch a ride with some Indians in the know.
- Cost: ~$10, BYOB
- Nearby: Famous Indian Temple, with simple but very tasty food for $1 to go
Paris 66 (French)

- Authentic Breton Creperie (much better than Crepes Parisian!)
- Real French chief (don’t come in August)
- Where East Liberty (Bus 500)
- Crepes: ~$12,
- sadly not BYOB anymore
La Feria (Peruvian)

La Feria: Peruvian Restaurant & Crafts Gallery

- Homey, super-tasty, inexpensive food in unpretentious atmosphere. BYOB.
- I recommend:: the specials, lemonade, sweet potato chips, bread-pudding
- Where: Shadyside, 5527 Walnut St (2nd floor, above Pamela’s), 20 min walk
- Cost: ~$10-15
- Update: now closes at 8:30pm 😞
Yo Rita (Tacos)

• Artisan Mexican Food

• If you don’t like Mexican, try this place

• If you do like Mexican, come with an open mind – you may never go back to Taco Bell!

• Cost: ~$10

• Transportation: Bus to Southside

• UPDATE from Adrien: Chef left to start Salt...
Sun Penang (Malay)

- Sun Penang – an authentic Malaysian / Singaporean place! Better than some famous places in New York and Paris!
- Outdoor Seating! Free Delivery!
- I recommend: anything with tofu (sizzling Japanese tofu, Szechuan bean curd), bah ku teh (soup), rodi kanai (appetizer). Don’t get anything thai-sounding.
- Where: Sq. Hill, 5829 Forbes Ave, 30 min walk or 61-series buses
- Cost: ~$10-15, sadly not BYOB anymore
Legume (splurge)

• Very authentic “neighborhood Parisian Bistro”
• Simple, non-pretentious
• the focus is on quality food
• BYOB, reservations essential
• Transportation: 61B to Regent Sq.
• Cost: ~$20 for main dish (menu online by 5pm)
Other good places

- **Chaya Japanese Cuisine**
  - A really good sushi place. Home-made wasabi! In Sq. Hill

- **Rose Tea Café**
  - Pretty authentic Taiwanese place. In Sq. Hill

- **Oishi Bento**
  - It’s actually Korean. Try Bi Bim Bap. In Oakland

- **Il Pizzaiolo**
  - Reasonably authentic Italian pizza. But far, far away!! Cool kids (Anupam, Luis, etc) love it, but I am not sure if it’s worth the carbon footprint.

- **Minh (Bloomfield)**
  - Vietnamese Pho
Avoiding Pain...

• Lu Lu Noodles (Craig St.)
  – First place to get torched when the revolution comes!
  – Q: what happens to left-over Lulu food???
    A: NSH Atrium!

• Nakama Pretend Japanese, (South Side)
  – Beautiful people
  – awful food

• Food Trucks
  – Be nice to your stomach

• New Dumpling House (Sq. Hill)
  – If you still go, pleeeeeease don’t get the dumplings!

• Pamela’s (many locations)
  – Famous Pittsburgh breakfast / brunch place
  – I can’t understand why
Other nice spots

• Good lunch spots
  – Eat Unique (Craig St.)
  – Café at the Carnegie Museum
  – “Taste of India” Indian place in Resnik Hall

• Good pubs
  – Harris Grill (outdoor seating, good food!)
  – Shape Edge (great selection of Belgian Beers)
  – Point Brugge (upscale version of Sharp Edge, good food & dessert)

• Some Good Cafes
  – Coffee Tree Roasters (good coffee, I am told)
  – 61C (great teas!)
  – …
Other nice spots

• Bakery
  – Allegro Bakery (Murrey & Hobart)
  – **Avoid:** Panera “Bakery”

• Ice cream
  – Dave and Andy’s (Oakland)
  – Mulberry Creamery (almost real gelato, Shadyside)
  – **Avoid:** Rita’s (Sq. Hill)

• Yummiest Dessert in Most Unexpected Place:
  – Cannoli at Mineo’s Pizza, on Murray Ave. (Sq. Hill)
  – **Real waffles** at Waffalonia on Murray Ave (Sq. Hill)
Stores

- **Trader Joe’s**
- Many stores in the Strip, e.g. *Pennsylvania Macaroni Company*
- Whole Foods (a.k.a. Whole Paycheck)
- Wine Store near Whole Foods
- **McBroom Beer Distributor** (Regent Sq.)
3 Drinkable reds*

La Vieille Ferme ~$8
Menage a Trois ~$8
Lambrusco ~$6-10
Sometime, one needs to get away…
Weekend trips

- Cities with cheap fares ($120+ R/T!) from Pittsburgh:
  - New York City (LGA, JFK, Newark): bunch of airlines
  - Boston: jetBlue, US Airways
  - Chicago: Southwest (MDW), United, AA (ORD)
  - Washington DC: Southwest (BWI), US Airways (National), UA

- Splurge: Non-stop Delta Flight to Paris ($600 in low season)
Cheers!
15-463 (15-862)  
Computational Photography  
(formerly: Rendering and Image Processing)

- Looking for a fun class this semester?
- Then get out your digital camera and take Computational Photography:
  - An emerging new field created by the convergence of computer graphics, computer vision, and digital photography!
- Learn how to acquire, represent, and render scenes using digitized photographs and video.
- Implement state-of-the-art algorithms such as:

  - Panoramic Mosaic Stitching
  - Face Morphing
  - Blending and Compositing
  - Texture Hole-Filling
  - Single-view Geometry (e.g. Tour into the Picture)
  - Multi-view Geometry

Webpage: graphics.cs.cmu.edu/courses/15-463/
Instructor: Alexei Efros