

NEW YORKER



TABLES FOR TWO THE SMITH



55 Third Ave., between 10th and 11th Sts. (212-420-9800)—The two-way, four-lane, Jane Jacobs-hostile stretch of Third Avenue just below Fourteenth Street is flanked by the likes of Taco Bell and Pizza Hut, and seems to be a staging ground for a shock-and-awe campaign against the arteries. Last fall, Glenn Harris and Jeffrey Lefcourt turned a former Pizzeria Uno space into the Smith, and, whether intended or not, embraced the drag's blandness. "What's with the name?" a waitress was asked recently. "Well, the owners were thinking Blacksmith or Ironsmith or even Foodsmith," she offered. "But they didn't want to be too specific." Generality appears to be a Harris/Lefcourt trademark—they named their Greenwich Village spot Jane, as in plain—and the new place is nuance-free, all blacks and whites. (White subway tiles and black-and-white photos of Victorian nudes line the walls.) Smith, the owners seem to be reminding us, is Everyman's surname.

So does Everyman eat here? "Oh, we get all kinds," the waitress replied. "All ages, all ethnicities, all genders." A canvass of the room, though, revealed mainly N.Y.U. kids, and the Smith's atmosphere evokes a fraternity house, with the acoustics of a rush-season kegger. Servers toss around collegiate slang ("Riddle me this, Batman," a diner was asked recently. "Can I take that dead soldier in the cor-

ner?"), while the menu tends to the sophomoric: one can begin a meal with the Pink Pussy Cat, a specialty cocktail, and end with the Pink Pussy Cat, a strawberry sundae. As in any respectable frat house, the real action occurs in the basement. Here, an antique barber's chair sits next to an old-school photo booth, while the adjoining wall is equipped with a peephole that grants access to vintage porn flicks. All this, plus a flirt-friendly communal washroom.

So the other night two recovering frat guys and a former frat sweetheart were prepared to indulge in a little recidivism. But a bowl of warm potato chips smothered with melted blue cheese and a lipid-infused bacon-and-egg appetizer went barely touched. A pork chop brought to mind a salt lick, and a burger slathered with "special sauce" seemed to pose legitimate issues of copyright infringement (the waitress noted, "We have a Filet-o-Fish on the menu, too"). By evening's end, surplus fries were being woefully played with, and a "big carafe" of red wine remained a quarter full. Grimly, it dawned on the table's senior member that a ten-year college reunion was just around the corner. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner and Sundays for brunch and dinner. Entrées \$11-\$23.)

—Mike Peed

