

bon appétit

CONSUMED

Ramen on the Common: Late-Night Noodles in Boston

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The menu is short and hand-written on cardboard.



The pork bun at Uni, late-night.



Pan-fried shishito peppers topped with bonito flakes.



The Zojirushi hot dog consists of a deep-fried dog topped with pickled vegetables and a house-made miso-mustard.



"Traditional" ramen consists of a pork and miso-based broth.



Uni's vegetable ramen is the stunner, but it is. The broth is made from mushrooms, white miso, and Parmesan rinds.



Pork and veggie go head-to-head. Winner: veggie!



The bar at Uni in Boston.

(Credit: Matt Duckor)

It's 11 p.m., do you know where your late-night ramen is?

That's not a question I would have asked a few years ago. But here we are, **post-Momofuku Noodle Revolution**, where pork buns litter the streets and bowls of noodles await you at every turn. It's nice here. Maybe you've noticed we're a bit **obsessed** with the stuff? Now, NYC is chock full of great ramen joints, places like Ippudo, Minca, and Totto Ramen. But I have one gripe: of my regular haunts, only Chang's Noodle Bar is open past midnight on weekends. Where are the late-night options to satisfy my carby porky cravings?

It turns out, I just had to travel a few hours north to Boston.

Walk down a small set of stairs from **Ken Oringer's** flagship restaurant **Clio** and you'll stumble upon the blonde wood walls of **Uni**. During the day here, Oringer focuses on sashimi and composed dishes with an emphasis on raw fish. After 11 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, though, it's all about the ramen. The menu is hand-written on cardboard, nothing costs over ten bucks, and the Sapporo is ice cold.

Start with and order of pork buns. No, the world doesn't really need any more of them, but you might as well enjoy the good ones while they're still the de facto chef obsession of the moment. Oringer's are meatier and slightly crispy on the outside. Skip the deep-fried Japanese hot dog--it gets lost between the pickled vegetables and liberal amount of miso-mustard.

On to the noodles. That's what you're here for, after all.

My friend and trusted dining companion, *Boston Magazine* Food Editor **Leah Mennies**, said that the vegetable ramen was the one to watch here. Is it possible that vegetables could trump pork in this golden age of fat and meat? Yes. The broth, made from mushrooms, white miso, and Parmesan rinds, has all the depth and complexity of a good bowl of ramen without leaning on the crutch of pork fat.

More than anything, it's great to see a serious restaurant let loose after-hours and offer simple food that isn't topped with luxury ingredients. Good ramen doesn't need to be fussed with.

Now, come midnight in New York, I'm going to doctor some instant ramen at home, **Ivan Orkin-style**, and look longingly at these photos.