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## RESTAURANT REVIEW

# Area Four's student-friendly lunches

Forego the usual food-truck lunch and head over to Tech Square

By Katerina Botchkina

If you're particular about coffee, you know about Area Four already — their shots are dense, their lattes are tiny and strong, and if, like me, you have a shameful preference for vats of the watery American stuff, they do a great job at that, too.

But it's probably not the first place that comes to mind for a cheap, quick weekday lunch. Sure, their airy indoor seating area is never empty from noon to 3 p.m., but the people eating there are the kind that want to pay 16 dollars for a personal pizza and can wait 20 minutes for it to arrive. That's a calculation that, on your average Tuesday, would send me directly to a food truck.

That changed this summer, when Area Four rolled out a hot dog cart — wheels, umbrella and all — and parked it just outside their Main Street entrance. The hot dogs

are made from 100 percent grass-fed beef sourced from a California farm — you can read about their ethical standards as you wait in line. While you're at it, take a look at the 12-item ingredient list and consider your condiment options: All the standards, plus some pleasant surprises, like a snappy banana-pepper relish. And priced at \$4 a piece, they're clearly a bid to lure you from Ames street.

**The hot dogs are 100% grass-fed beef sourced from a California farm.**

Are they mind-blowing? Of course not. They're hot dogs. Did it feel fantastic to sit in the sun and lick yellow mustard off my fingers instead of carrying (yet another) sty-

rofoam clamshell back to my office? Absolutely. And if you go before the weather remembers it's October and Cambridge, you can have your hot dog with a side of bocce ball or hackey sack — provided, for free, in a weird but kind of compelling gesture by the establishment. Why not?

But the real draw of Area Four will always be those pricey pizzas, and the good news is that they, too, are becoming more student-friendly: come with your ID Monday through Thursday and get a perfectly charred margherita pizza and a pint of nice local beer — Rapsallion Honey Lager, say, or Mayflower IPA — for 12 bucks. Or order to go and get \$10 off any two large pies — I'd get the gorgonzola/caramelized onion/walnut combination, which is salty, buttery, just sharp enough and completely delicious. I had my last one between classes with a coffee, but what it really needed was one of

**Area Four**

**500 Technology Square,  
Cambridge**

**(617) 758-4444**

those Rapsallions.

I won't be abandoning my usual lunch options for a steady diet of Area Four: It still comes close to \$15 for pizza and a beer, and, grass-fed or not, there's a pretty definite weekly limit on how many hot dogs I can feel great about eating. (That would be one. Okay, I'm lying — three). But Area Four makes for a very welcome addition to the weekly lunch rotation and, while they're making no big secret of their student-baiting plan, I don't really mind being baited.