

Send in the Troops to Troop PVD

I'm going to let you in on a behind-the-scenes battle between two *Motif* writers, incited by the new "Taco Bar" on the Olneyville section of Providence. It began with a simple question.

"Do you want to cover Troop?" asked my editor, who is — by the way — talented and beautiful (*ed. note: and smart and funny*). "Another writer was interested, but since you're our chief food writer, I thought I'd run it by you first."

Having no idea what Troop was at that time, I searched for information, expecting to find a hole-in-the-wall joint with Mexican flair. What I found instead defied every expectation. *I must go to there*, I thought, but I didn't want to snub the other writer who clearly showed interest for a place I hadn't even heard of.

So, I said exactly that. "Troop looks awesome! But I wouldn't want to deprive someone else of covering it if they're already excited."

Five days later a friend tells me, "Oh, I heard you didn't want to cover Troop, so future contributor Chuck is going to do it. He said they asked him if he wanted to do it last night at the Christmas party."

"Wait. What? Last night? He didn't *already* want to cover it?" My voice shrilled as I accused the messenger. "I did *NOT* reject Troop — I was simply showing manners. Clearly there was a misunderstanding!"

I emailed my editor immediately, addressing her in all caps (sorry, Emily), saying, "Troop was given away only yesterday because I 'didn't want it'? So not true!!!"

The result of my whining was that the other writer was pulled from the article and I was put back on, thus demolishing my original intention of "being a good person" and turning me into a spiteful, but delighted, Troop-eating writer.

All of that to say:

- Troop: *Motif* writers are fighting over you, and
- As soon as I arrived, I knew Chuck would have been the better person for the job. It screams '90s hip-hop bands that I know nothing about. My apologies to you, brother.

I will say this is the coolest, most unique restaurant I've been to in Rhode Island. I imagine the founders passing *Through the Looking Glass* with Lewis Carroll, listening to hip-hop and toasting locally brewed beers as they journeyed to another land. On the other side they found a world full of artistic murals and neon-colored spray paint, wicker swings and hanging plants, cushioned chairs and throw pillows that read, "Oh my God, Becky."

I just couldn't get over the interior. It's a funhouse, truly — bar seats have backings made from skateboards, black concert-style floors are emblazoned with green stamps that say, "Providence."



There are eggshell-shaped seats to sit inside of and green metal couches adorned with round, brightly patterned pillows that you'd find in a hookah bar. On one wall I saw a giant mirror framed by hundreds of bottle caps. Our table, which read "Wu-Tang," resided on a patch of fake grass. Six-foot-tall potted plants stood in discreet corners. I could keep going.

There's a long bar, fully stocked. There are booths along the sidewall, semi-enclosed rooms with tables and chairs in an assortment of sizes, a couch section, a swing section, a center section of two-person tables leading to the open kitchen. And *all of this* is hidden inside an industrial brick building in Olneyville, marked by a non-descript block letter sign that advertises Troop PVD: Eats, Beats, Drinks.

This is the kind of place you can park for the night. Local beers dominate the menu, including 12 Revival beers, both on draft and in bottles/cans, but you can still find Bud and Miller Lite. The wine and cocktail list is smaller than the beer selection, but the "Pineapple Upside Down Old Fashioned" jumped out at me and I ordered it without even reading the descriptions of the other two cocktails. It was superb, an ideal combination of sweet and bitter, and I had to control myself to not drink it all in two giant gulps.

After stopping our "waiter," who happened to be one of the co-owners, with questions, I learned that Troop is the brainchild of both him and his partner, Chef JT (Jason Timothy) — the chef who left a lasting impression on me during my Night of the Laughing Gorilla. Evidently, the Taco Night they hosted during their stint as a pop-up restaurant was so popular it inspired this entire restaurant concept, which still serves tacos, just not on the regular. On this night, the menu, which is small and, I'm guessing, changes frequently, included a range of items, from street noodles to eggplant four ways to Korean short ribs. Having remembered my love for JT's chicken, we ordered the twice cooked chicken with collard greens, and cauliflower made with honey, lentils and jalapeño. Both were top-notch quality (although if you have an aversion to cilantro, as I unfortunately do, be warned: It's in the cauliflower).

In my prophetic wisdom, I predict it won't be long before this spot is filled to capacity as soon as doors open. Come for a drink, stay for a bite, and lose yourself in this '90s hip-hop vibe as you pass through the looking glass.