

We still visit the fabulous Mi Cocina; and the fancy midtown Mexicans get our pesos from time to time. We even make special trips to Gabriela's all the way up west. But for consistent, fresh, marvelous Mexican, it's Mexican Radio. Beware the small quarters, though there's a lovely bench outside on which to cool your heels. If you're really lucky, you live close enough to order delivery. Best yet, go on a weekday for lunch, when you can relax and savor the wonderful food and margaritas in peace.

**BEST BAR TO MEET A MAN WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN DRIVING TEDDY KENNEDY'S CAR WHEN IT TOOK THE PLUNGE AT CHAPPAQUIDDICK**

Rudy's  
627 9th Ave. (44th St.)  
No Phone

**Glub Glub Glub.** "Aha!" he cried, "a young couple in for a drinky-winky, eh?" The Mrs. froze; we nodded. "Ever seen *Days of Wine and Roses*? Aaaahh, you're too young for that one. Fucking kids."

We'd come in for an afternoon drink. Just one beer before resuming our Sunday stroll. We had been there just a few minutes before he bounded off his bar stool and began his rant. Tall, scrawny, wearing red checkered golf pants, an ugly shirt and a Yankees cap, he looked a bit like Tommy Smothers, only drunken to the point of emaciation.

"I know, I know—you just want to be left alone for your drinky-winky. But this is important." His big hands would fly about crazily and then slap together in a tight clutch, only to come loose again. "You kids are young, but you need to know the truth. Ted Kennedy, you know who that is?"

Insulted, we both noted that we did.

"When he plunged his car in Chappaquiddick? You know? He wasn't driving. I was. I was driving the car. It was a black Ford. You can look that up! I DROVE THE CAR! HE WAS IN THE BACK SEAT FOOLIN' AROUND WITH THE GIRL.

BUT I DROVE THE CAR! You see?"

We've seen him there three or four times since. Every time, somebody gets the rant.

the machine, pour in your mixture, put the stirring blades in, turn it on. Go have another glass of wine. Come back in 15 minutes, and the Krups has magically churned you up the freshest, best-tasting sorbet you'll ever eat. No restaurant, no gelateria will ever make you better.

**BEST PLACE TO DRINK WITH A DOG**

Brooklyn Ale House  
103 Berry St. (N. 8th St.), Brooklyn  
718-302-9811

**Warped and Woofed.** Our crazy landlord is virulently anti-dog. Not surprising, as our neighbor once had one and it barked all damn day and night while she was out hobnobbing with her colleagues in the fashion world. Bitch. So we go to the Brooklyn Ale House. We can drink \$2 pints of Checker Cab Blonde Ale there, and can satisfy our dog jones. We like to slink in there at 3 p.m., when the sun is bright and the

place is quiet, so we can hang with Clio and Balto. They belong to Sean Connelly, the co-owner. Clio is an old, old black Lab who wanders lazily about the bar, his face slack, stopping in front of anyone who will give his back a scratching. Balto usually tries to leap in your lap, which evokes cries of, "Balto down!" from the centerfold barmaid, Virginia.

By 6 p.m. the place fills with regulars like Steve the pastry chef and his artist wife, Annette; the local historian Gig Valinotti; Al the philosopher and occasional Ale House bartender. And dogs—they enter in droves. Weimaraners, collies, Michael and Naomi's Labs—they just keep coming. And this salty little pug who quivers but charges other pooches. It's a rare night when there are fewer than half a dozen dogs in there at any given moment. Some days we butt into the friendly conversation about the bar. Other days we sit

in a corner and drink alone. It's a few dogs and feeling the better for it.

**BEST SANDWICH SHOP**

Manhattan Hero  
299 7th Ave. (27th St.)  
741-3560

**Yo Quiero Manhattan Hero.** When we first moved the *NYP* offices to 333, there wasn't a lot about this Lower Madison Square Garden area that instantly recommended itself to us in the way of services. We'd gone soft from all those years in Soho, which, say what you will, was jam-packed with places to eat, to drink, to shop. Luckily, we didn't have to look too far to find Manhattan Hero—our heroes, several lunchtimes a week. This fine Cuban-American establishment is far and away our favorite lunch counter in the hood. At the back end

