

## Creative Non-Fiction: Illegal Pete's

As I sit in Anderson Academic Commons contemplating what it means to write creatively, my stomach begins to growl. I begin picturing queso-filled burrito bowls, and tart margaritas. I sit in my stiff chair picturing the queso's yellow, soft and creamy texture as it's smothered onto my burrito bowl. Then I picture a rectangular building with large adjustable windows and a large outdoor patio that could fit quite the crowd. It brings me back to some of my favorite times at the great establishment: Illegal Petes. For beginners, I have never had a disappointing meal at Pete's. To set the scene, I typically walk into Petes and I am always greeted by the overly friendly staff. As I approach the counter to order I am tasked to answer the question of the day like "In which city is Jim Morrison buried?" It's always a question I need to ask the cashier as I am checking out. After I gaze at the "Question of the Day", I admire the wide array of sticker art that is placed on the sneeze guard nearby. It's always fun to see how many stickers I recognize whether they are from restaurants nearby, clubs on campus, or personalized. I have even stumbled upon my friend putting two stickers of her little white dogs' heads on the sticker-filled canvas.

Deciding what to order at Pete's is like walking into a Walmart. There are too many choices. Their options include salads, taquitos, nachos, quesadillas, tacos, and burrito bowls. I typically go for their unforgettable mission-style burrito filled with white rice, black beans, vegetables, queso, green chili, salsa, cilantro, and guacamole. It's a burrito made in heaven that never disappoints and always satisfies. It reminds me of the time I was conversing with a Pete's employee and they told me that while the founder Pete Turner was vacationing in San Francisco he had the most incredible mission-style burrito. A huge burrito loaded with rice and

anything you could imagine is what inspired Pete Turner to serve Mexican food at Pete's. This type of burrito is the centerpiece of the cuisine at Pete's and it typically takes me a few sittings to demolish one.

Aside from the food at Petes, its vibrant cultural atmosphere is what makes it so popular. It is both a restaurant and a bar that can serve as a music venue or a place to simply hang out. Pete Turner hoped "to create a fun and energetic atmosphere with music playing, employees having fun, and I wanted to include our customers in the fun" and I think he executed his vision perfectly. It is a place that celebrates humanity, individuality, and cultivating relationships. Food brings people together and Pete's is my go-to place to catch up with friends.

Walking into Pete's on a Wednesday night is the time to forget about writing papers or the procrastinated assignments that are due the following morning. It is like a breath of fresh air. The vibe in the room is different on a Wednesday night than it is at any other time of the week. I find myself catching up with classmates about their week and their plans for the weekend, while, simultaneously trying my best to get the bartenders' attention. The happy hour specials on Wednesdays are \$5 margaritas that will knock you off your seat as they load them with sweet agave, lime, and a lot of tequila. They are dangerous and will NOT make you feel 100% the next day. I know from experience. Pete's is both the problem and the solution. When I find myself feeling overserved from the night prior, I walk to get Pete's breakfast loaded with eggs, bacon, and cheese to solve all my problems. Well, maybe not all my problems but definitely my hangover.

But, once in a while, everyone deserves a Wednesday night at Pete's. Petes is a place to unwind, drink a cold one, and catch up with friends while eating their delicious cuisine.

Memories are made at Pete's, like the time my friend had one too many margaritas and decided he embodied the strength of the Incredible Hulk. He decided it was appropriate to smash a glass on the floor and was immediately asked to leave. He was so scared to return the next week that he showed up wearing all black, sunglasses, and insisted everyone called him "Krügen". I can't make this stuff up. Its stories like this that represent the meaning behind Turner naming the restaurant "Illegal Pete's." The name was meant to convey the unique, countercultural atmosphere. Along with the owner and his father both being named Pete of course.

The owner Pete Turner had a dream 24 years ago when he opened the original Petes on the hill at Boulder. A dream that quickly expanded to the University of Denver campus. Since then it has successfully served DU students like myself and Denver locals from all walks of life. During my first week at DU, I was pressured by my orientation leader to check out Pete's. He savagely described it as a superior establishment to the original Chipotle which happened to only be a block away. I took his recommendation seriously and have given too much money to the establishment. Whether you need food between classes, quick and easy dinner, or need an excuse to drink, Pete's is your/my/his/her/its place.