

FEATURE SECTION

In the Neighborhood: The Clinton Street Breakfast Cart

by Finn Hartnett

A typical day for the owners of the Clinton and Montague pushcart (a highly regarded source of student and faculty breakfasts) begins just before sunrise. The owner, Khalid, wakes up at midnight. He drives his dark red pickup to their local warehouse, to stock the cart with prepared food and ice. He also begins heating the water he'll later cook with. After he loads the pushcart, Khalid drives to their usual corner. His partner Mohammed wakes up at 3:00 a.m. He meets Khalid in Brooklyn at 5:00 a.m. and together, they open for business.

Khalid has worked on this same corner for around 20 years. He is originally from Syria. Mohammad immigrated to the US from Egypt on a visa, and received full citizenship when he married. After the cart's previous owner passed away, Mohammad received a call

from the previous owner's family, who he had known for some time. They asked him to, in his words, "jump in and give them a hand." This was half a year ago, and he's still holding up his promise today.

As Mohammad explained to me, things were easier for street vendors a couple decades ago. There were more spots to sell your wares, and more people to sell them to. "Not everybody was familiar with a pushcart. You could just pick a corner, and stay there, and it was no problem," he stated. "It's harder to be in the street now than it was before... you have to follow the rules." Back in 1995, the Department of Consumer Affairs wrote a report in which they expressed their concern for the mostly nonexistent regulations for street vendors under Mayors Ed Koch and David Dinkins.

But times have changed; currently there's more oversight in the business, and stricter enforcement of the existing rules. According to New York's official state document, to become a street vendor now you "must obtain both a food vendor license and a permit for the Food Unit." There are only 2,800 citywide and 200 borough-specific Unit permits issued at a time, and as the document states, "most, if not all, of the previously mentioned authorized permits have already been issued and there are long waiting lists in place for each category." Additionally, all aspiring vendors must take a course on food handling—15 hours long over either one or two days. For current food vendors, such as Mohammed and Khalid, New York City also conveniently offers a 33-page pamphlet, *What Mobile*

Food Vendors Should Know, which lists most of the regulations for working on a city block. The whole thing can be found online, and it makes for some good reading. Some highlights include to "be sure the vending unit is on the street and right next to the edge of the sidewalk—no more than 6 inches away at most," and that "scoops may be stored in the ice with the handle up and out of the ice."

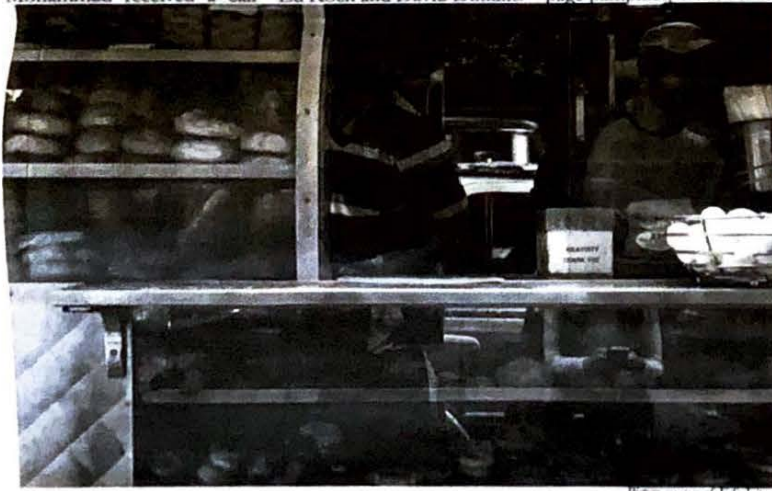
Mohammed explained that their pushcart has always had a good relationship with Saint Ann's. "It's awesome... people are so nice in the school, the students." And generally, students agree. Sophomore Henry Kerrey talked to me about what made him a cart regular from the first day of ninth grade. "First is convenience," he admitted. But Henry added that the cart's customer service sets it apart from surrounding vendors. "[At] the other carts, you pay and you're done, you know? But these guys, while you're waiting, you have a conversation with them." The vendors at Clinton and Montague try to distinguish themselves with this philosophy. "Not only students, you have to be nice with everyone," Mohammed said. "That's your business. How you make the business, you have to be good to other people." The cart also takes pride in their use of good supplies, "not the cheap ones" that some other vendors might employ. Junior Sam Guarnati

stated that he frequents the cart "because they make an incredible bacon-egg-and-cheese." He continued: "it's convenient, it's cheap, it's quick... what's not to love?"

On weekends and school breaks, the cart loses much of its business; students and faculty account for a lot of sales. However, there are still the regulars: people from the banks, or people heading to work. In fact, the cart's best business right now is not from the school but from the construction workers across the street. "I don't know what's going to happen when the construction done... it might be really hard here," Mohammed said. "But it's all right," he added. "It can survive."

Thankfully for Saint Ann's, Mohammed told me the cart probably won't move for a while. "Usually, you don't move until... there are new rules or something." That being said, he added, "it's not up to me."

After about noon, Mohammed and Khalid drive back to the warehouse. They unload all their unsold stock, clean and wash the cart, and prep plastic bags, napkins, cups and other supplies for the next day. Then they go back to their homes. Khalid eats dinner and relaxes until the early evening, when he goes to sleep. Mohammed changes and gets ready to go to his evening college classes. He goes to bed at around 10 p.m. Soon after Mohammed falls asleep, Khalid wakes up to start the day over again.



Picture courtesy of Taha Lopez

Spam Without Ram

by Elias Schisgall

It can only be described as an energy. You feel it for a moment before having your suspicions confirmed: first a couple students holding papers, then more, and soon enough the school is filled with cascades of school newspapers in their hands or on their desks. Many are opened to the back two pages to read what was once a hardy institution of the Ram, the satire and humor section: the Spam. Of course, this is

no longer. The Spam is still here, but as of recently, it has become its own publication, severed from the Ram.

Not only was this year the first ever where the publication was independent of the Ram, it was under the first-year advisory of this year's Head of the High School, Chloe Smith. "At the beginning of the year she told us 'this is going to be different than Spam with [former Head of High

School] Alex [Darrow]," said Sara Graziano, one of the Spam editors. "I don't really know what that means."

Throughout the year, Ms. Smith found conflict with the editors, through new standards she set for the Spam in terms of content. This tension reached a boiling point around the end of April, when Ms. Smith made the decision to yield her role as faculty advisor to Latin teacher and 12th Grade

Advisor Tom Hill for the rest of the year. A new advisor will take over after the summer, said Ms. Smith. She was not able to say who it would be, as whoever she had in mind had not confirmed that they would take the job. However, Ms. Smith did confirm that this person would be paid for their troubles.

Regarding her decision, Ms. Smith said "I didn't feel like the Spam editors and I were having very productive

interactions, and since they have an established relationship with Tom, because he's their advisor and they're seniors, it just seemed like it would be a more productive final step."

One new phenomenon that took place this year is the routine checking in with teachers who are mentioned in the Spam for approval. Ms. Smith saw it happening on a "case-by-case