

# Explore New England



## FINDERS, KEEPERS

### What a mixed bag: urban, hip, old, new, neighborly, and all in plain sight

BY NECÉE REGIS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

An old-fashioned looking triangle of busy streets, Roslindale Village hums with restaurants, shops, clothing boutiques, bakeries, specialty grocery stores, and a small green park. Located south of downtown, beyond Jamaica Plain, Roslindale is off the beaten track and not easy to find without a degree in Boston driving. There's a rail station but no subway stop, leading some to say that Rozy,

as it's affectionately called, is one of Boston's lesser-known neighborhoods. However, residents and business owners prefer to think of it as Boston's best-kept secret. "Roslindale is a hidden gem," said Jane Connelly, owner of **Village Books** on South Street. "People don't usually come out this far, but there are plenty of wonderful people here."

On a recent morning, the sun streamed through the windows where Connelly and her sister, Lorie Spencer, set up shop nine years



PHOTOS BY ROSE LINCOLN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

ago. It's tiny, as bookstores go, but they manage to offer new books of all genres for adults and children in about 900 square feet of space.

"We're small but we pack a big punch," said Connelly.

Across the street, Bob Khouzami opened **Bob's Pita Bakery** in 1991 in a space that was formerly Droubi Brothers Bakery. The sign above the market lists both names, and walking inside feels like stepping back in time to 1970 when it first opened. It's less a bakery than a Mediterranean-food specialty store with offerings such as pomegranate molasses, gulabi tea, tahini, brick-sized bags of sesame seeds, kefir, halloumi and Bulgarian sheep's milk feta, fillo, honey, 16-inch rounds of pita bread, and wood crates piled high with affor-

dably-priced fresh fruits and vegetables.

Nearby, **Birch Street House and Garden** is approaching its 10th anniversary. Elizabeth Swanson worked for years at this eclectic gift shop before taking over the business in 2008. A Roslindale resident, she admits to having "a great commute" and being a fan of the town.

"I love Roslindale," said Swanson. "Everyone here is committed to shopping locally and eating locally."

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Gretchen McClain of Belmont shops at Joanne Rossman, a shop on Birch Street, where the village's ornate clock stands.

### MAINE



Guide Matt Libby, with his forest ax, listens for his bird dogs.

## In the North Woods, gunning for birds

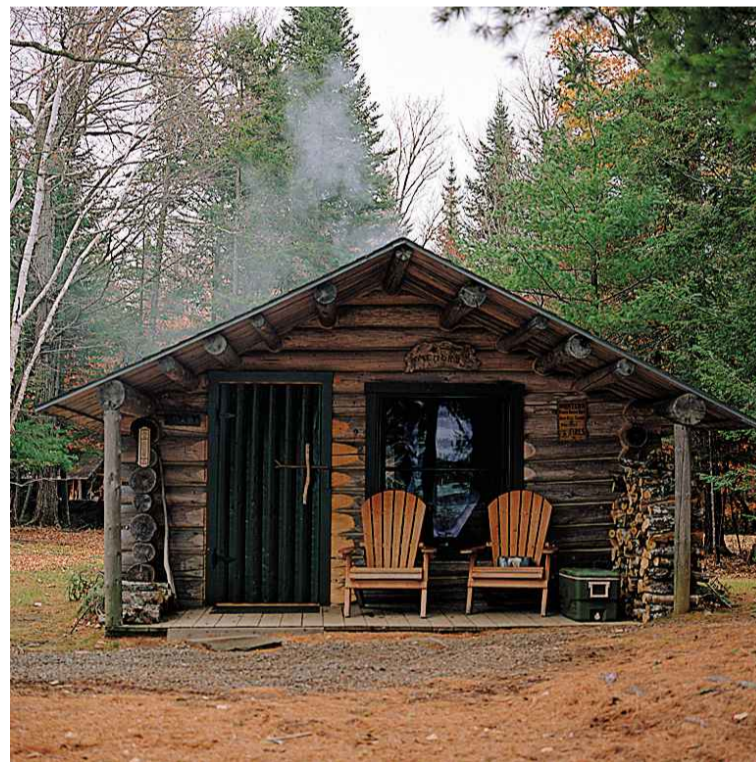
By Jonathan Levitt  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

NEAR MILLINOCKET LAKE — Ike, a young Brittany, works the thick cover, following his nose, tracking woodcock. He is fast through the boggy alder thickets, jumping over deadfall and scooting under leaf-plastered bramble. The woodcock is plump and richly feathered — a migratory shorebird that wades through the upland bogs searching for earthworms.

Ike spots a bird and stands still, pointing, bobtail wagging. The bird sits pretty. Ike is frozen, quivering. The hunters crash through the woods swinging axes, shouldering shotguns, dressed in waxed cotton, Cordura nylon, rubber boots from France. They catch up to Ike. They spot the woodcock three feet from the dog's nose. They switch off their safeties, look for an opening in the sticks where the bird might fly. They raise their guns, lean forward, and walk slowly.

Ike flushes the woodcock. It whistles and takes off fast, flying into the clear, where it is blasted from the sky. "Dead

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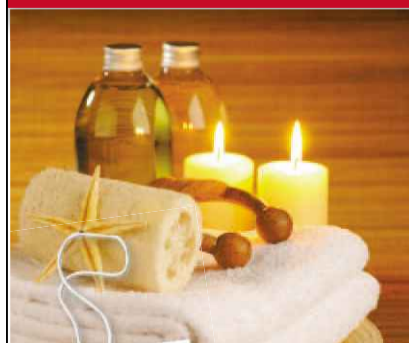


PHOTOS BY JONATHAN LEVITT FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

One of the Libby Camps guest cabins that looks onto the lake.

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# Finding fun art, food, books, clothing, comfort

► **ROSLINDALE**  
*Continued from Page M6*

Her shop is spacious, bright, and airy with oriental carpets scattered across the painted cement floor. It takes a while to fully peruse the walls, glass shelves, and wood tabletops stocked with candles, incense, pottery, kitchen towels, woven scarves, baskets, cards, toys, accent furniture, locally-made jewelry and paintings, and fair-trade objects from Africa, India, and Guatemala.

"The products are always changing," said Swanson. "We try and make gift shopping very easy here."

In fact, it's easy to shop everywhere in Roslindale, at price points both high and low. The **Home for Little Wanderers Thrift Shop** and **Family Dollar** store share the same swath of real estate with sophisticated boutiques, and Chinese restaurants, pizza parlors, and taco joints rub elbows with establishments touting locally sourced food. The eclectic mix of the district — chic and homey — adds to its appeal as a destination.

One of the newer shops in the neighborhood is the light-filled boutique **Regeneration**. Owner Kelly Witmer and her "brown mutt," Shaft, moved east from Los Angeles, and opened in October. *Regeneration* "sells a little bit of everything," including new and used clothes, plus sweaters,

hats, socks, jewelry, books, as well as "gifts and silly objects," all linked together by a nature theme.

Witmer's fine arts background is evident in the shop's design, such as the dressing room made from old doors and clothing racks made from tree limbs that dip in the center, and in its products. She silkscreens the ties, shirts, and second-hand clothes with new images, repurposing them with a fresh look.

"I want to appeal to all budgets," said Witmer.

Vernee Wilkinson admits to being "fully immersed in Roslindale" as a shop owner, resident, and mom. Her eye-catching store, **Colorwheel Collection**, offers clothes for children from newborns to age 4, with some birthday party or holiday gifts for older kids. Reflecting her commitment to the community, Wilkinson sells the work of local artists and vendors, and keeps toys and craft products handy for kids to play with as their parents shop. As this part of the city attracts young families, Wilkinson hopes "to grow as Roslindale is growing."

Walking into **Joanne Rossman**, a small shop packed with treasures, is like wandering into an antiques flea market. There are books on birds, cooking, and sacred paths, silver and brass candelabras, a random stack of gold-rimmed dessert plates,



ROSE LINCOLN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**Birch Street House and Garden, almost 10 years old, offers an eclectic inventory.**

handcrafted silver earrings, fingerless Merino wool gloves, soft leather wallets, somber landscape paintings, striped socks, paperweights, soaps, lotions, and other items, practical and not.

Perusing the offerings at the **Boston Cheese Cellar** can be a dizzying experience. On the day I visited there were 145 choices, including 24 blue cheeses alone.

"People look and say, 'You can't possibly have all these cheeses,' but we do," said Steph-

anie Beale, a shop employee.

Above the handwritten list, the "Stink-O-Meter" rates the cheeses from one ("Do you smell something?") to five ("OH NO!").

The store also sells dried pasta, olive oils, jams, chocolates, cookies, Baltic rye bread, hot sauces, and cheese accoutrements. A new offering is the in-house French herb butter, a cube made in a large ice cube tray, available in pesto, sea-salted, unsalted, and mixed with fresh locally grown herbs.

Beale offered tastes of cheese and bread, and praised the location.

"Roslindale is an interesting mix of old and new," she said. "It really works together. The old and new complement each other."

Around the corner, **Fornax Bread Co.** mixes old-fashioned sensibilities and decor with contemporary taste. The interior, with yellow, red, and sky blue walls, is cheerful and quirky. Colorful aprons adorn the front window like gaily-strung ornaments, and the mismatched tables and chairs are often crammed with patrons who flock here for the handcrafted European-style bread, pastries, homemade soups, salads, pizzettas, and sandwiches.

There are plenty of places to dine well in Roslindale. In addition to Japanese, Thai, Haitian, and Albanian offerings, there's

sophisticated bistro food, casual Mediterranean, and authentic Italian cuisine.

It's a short walk down a brick-lined walkway to **Sophia's Grotto**, a cozy hideaway serving Italian and Spanish dishes in a setting that feels more Mediterranean than Bostonian. A curved bar seats about six, and in winter the bartender might be the owner, Joseph Garufi.

"We're an unpretentious neighborhood place," said Garufi, who moved here with his family from the Back Bay about five years ago. "People are surprised at how good the food is."

In warmer weather, the outdoor patio offers seating beneath strings of festive white lights. Nearby, the **Birch Street Bistro** also offers dining al fresco, though in colder weather the charming interior, with its high ceilings, brick walls, and giant mirrors, beckons. Located in a turn-of-the-last-century blacksmith shop, Birch Street is a popular place to belly up to the granite bar and sample one of the 16 draft beers on tap. Tasty entrees feature grilled filet mignon or salmon, burgers, and pizza.

On a recent Wednesday night, every seat was filled at **Delfino**, where the Italian-inspired menu features seafood, meat, and pasta dishes. Sheaves of white paper topped red tablecloths, and still-life murals decorated the walls. The decor, and the kitchen that

opens into the dining space, imparted a homey ambience in synch with our steaming bowls of clams and chorizo, and mussels in a garlicky white sauce.

"It's so non-hip. I'm sick of hip," said a fellow diner.

Sort of like Roslindale itself: Not exactly hip, yet extremely cool.

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# A woods where nature and appetites reign

► **MAINE**  
*Continued from Page M6*

ror and looks like headlights. Dinner is at six in the main lodge. The dining room is decorated with generations of North Woods taxidermy; no creature left unstuffed. Seating is communal. Booze is bring your own. The food is served family style.

Guests include a famous novelist, his politico wife, and three great white hunters from Pennsylvania. The food is served all at once, giant steaks (each "the size of a planet," says the novelist), baked potatoes, an iceberg lettuce salad with bacon and cheese, soft and sweet homemade bread, apple pie for dessert. Table talk sticks to hunting. One of the Pennsylvanians has hunted just about every huntable place on earth and spins a long slow drag about an endless bear hunt on Kodiak Island.

After dinner a guide leads the way through the drizzly night to a cabin in the woods with a big view of the lake. Inside, the old iron woodstove clicks away, heating the room to sauna temperature. I crack a window, pour myself a glass of apple brandy, and sit down to read. Cluster flies buzz around the oil lamps.

► **LOADED FOR BIRD**

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strewn shore of Millinocket Lake.

The family also keeps 10 remote cabins in Maine and a camp in Newfoundland and Labrador — all accessible by Libby-flown floatplanes. In summer, guests fish for trout and landlocked salmon, hunt bear, and scout for moose. In fall, it's deer and moose hunting and for the gentleman: upland bird hunting.

Libby Camps is a long seven-hour drive north of Boston. For those who want to skip a few roads, Libby will fly his floatplane to just about any lake in Maine, for a fee. Or it might be convenient to fly commercial to Presque Isle, a couple of hours' drive from the camp (Libby can fly there too).

But by car, it's a pleasant adventure. Past Bangor the drone of the peopled landscape fades to wilderness. Off the highway, it's a couple of hours through rolling farmland with views of Mount Katahdin. Eventually the empty roads lead to the Oxbow gate where a \$30 fee grants access to the vast dirt road and big woods and clearcut kingdom that is most of northern Maine.

Another hour of dirt road driving leads to the camp. It's dark and rainy. A cow moose trots across the road and into a grove of spruce trees. The full moon rises in the rearview mir-

ror and looks like headlights.

After dinner a guide leads the way through the drizzly night to a cabin in the woods with a big view of the lake. Inside, the old iron woodstove clicks away, heating the room to sauna temperature. I crack a window, pour myself a glass of apple brandy, and sit down to read. Cluster flies buzz around the oil lamps.

Breakfast is served big and early. Strong coffee, blueberry pancakes with maple syrup, eggs any style, bacon, sausages, homemade bread.

After breakfast dogs and guests pile into four-wheel-drive motorcades to this bog or that cover. Libby takes his group to a wild river about 10 miles away.

The men trudge through the alders. Libby leads the charge, chopping away at the thickest branches, clearing as he goes, dropping more tangle for future grouse and woodcock. "Walking like this, I might just bump one," he says. And he does. A ruffed grouse explodes from the forest floor in a flurry of beating wings.

Grouse are native, year-round residents of Maine. They nest on the ground and eat all manner of forest edibles: buds, leaves, berries, seeds, insects. In the winter they night roost in the deep snow, and in the morning they stick their heads out and look around, and then burst out of the

► **Libby Camps**

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The dates for bird hunting in Maine differ from species to species and from year to year. Generally, the best hunting takes place between early October and mid-November. Libby Camps is open from April until late November. Spaces fill up fast.

snow and up into the forest.

The bumped grouse flies high and fast but the men are good snap shots, and they all fire at once and the bird falls. "Dead bird, dead bird," says Libby. Ike fetches the grouse. It's a young bird with a broad black band of fanlike tail feathers and dark feathers on the neck that can be expanded to resemble a ruff. Libby tucks the bird into the game pouch in the back of his coat. "This one will be good eating," he says. "Grouse meat changes when the snow falls and the conifers bud. It goes bitter. But for now, this guy's eating the bounty of fall and he'll taste like it."

The men continue through the bog. The leaves on the ground are splattered with chalky, whitewash droppings, a sure sign that the woodcock is nearby. Now is the time of the fall flights; birds that have bred and

nested in the north are heading south for the winter. They may be here today and 50 miles away tomorrow. The woodcock is secretive and nocturnal, difficult to hunt with dogs, almost impossible without them. A sportsman's bird, hunted with fine, side by side or over and under shotguns, loaded with just a couple of cartridges of small shot, because with woodcock a couple of shots is all you get.

That morning the men get four woodcock and more grouse.

Everyone eats lunch by the river. Squash soup, meat sandwiches, plenty of hot coffee, packed in the kitchen. It's good ballast for an afternoon of hunting, which turns out to be wet and not very productive.

Libby cooks the gamebirds. Woodcock is classically served whole, feathers on the head, body plucked, roasted hot and fast in bacon fat with the insides intact. The old wives' tale goes that woodcock empty their bowels before they fly — but really, the bird is cooked guts in because it is such a small bird and because the guts taste so good on bacon, buttery toasted bread.

Supper is baked ham with mustard, an irresistible mess of macaroni and cheese, and Jell-O salad right out of some other century. As the hunting talk goes on, the rain falls and the fires burn.

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