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Affordable New York Dining at The Corner Bistro

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Meghna Lamore

The Corner Bistro is a New York City institution. Nestled cozily on the corner of West 4th and Jane, just steps off of 8th Avenue, it's a small, dingy and rather ramshackle place. It's quite easy for a passer-by's eye to slip right over the thin neon sign, and for his feet to carry him onto the brighter and more eye-catching offerings on 6th Avenue. But that would be a mistake.



If you want a burger like the one above, be sure to visit the Corner Bistro in New York!

As all true New Yorkers, there is no place to beat the Corner Bistro for a cheap, delicious burger, and a cheaper and even more delicious beer. Too many people make the mistake of going on a weekend, and then too in the evenings: even in the coldest, most bitter night, the line is out the door and around the corner, and you'll have quite a wait to get it. Like all bars in New York, Corner Bistro is open till 4am every single night, and I haven't found a better place for an after-bender meal: quite worth the wait in either sub-zero or Saharan temperatures.

When you do eventually get in, you may think you've made a mistake and come into the wrong place. Dark and almost sooty, there doesn't seem to be much to recommend the place. Apart from the mouth-watering scent of frying burgers wafting out of the tiny kitchen up ahead. Once you're past the threshold, the amiable bartenders will take your drink order. Those naive enough to ask what beers are on tap are turned toward one of the small blackboards upon the wall. Squinting, you'll see the following:

ON TAP	BOTTLES
McSorley Ale \$2.50	Heiniken \$4.50
McSorley Dark \$2.50	Amstel Light \$4.50
Budwieser \$2.50	Pilsner Urquel \$4.50
Coors Light \$2.50	Brooklyn Lager \$4.50
Rolling Rock \$2.50	Guinness Pub Can \$6.00
Samuel Adams \$3.75	HaakeBeck non-alcoholic \$4.50
Sierra Nevada \$3.75	Original Sin Cider \$4.50
Stella \$3.75	
Blue Moon \$3.75	

No, I haven't made a mistake: there really are FIVE different draught beers for just \$2.50 each. Really. At those prices, who on earth cares how long the line is? Just do be prepared to be a little buzzed once your turn arrives, but by then you get to sit down, which is a relief.

I am exaggerating slightly: yes, the line is that long, but it does move reasonably quickly, which is unexpected in such a small but popular place. When you do sit down at the scarred, solid table, if you haven't already noticed the other blackboards with the menu on it and accidentally ask for a menu, you'll be greeted with a good-natured eye-roll as your server points up at the walls again. This time, this is what you'll see:

MENU

Bistro Burger \$6.75
cheese
bacon
Hamburger \$5.75
Cheese Burger \$6.00
Grilled Chicken Sandwich \$6.00
BLT Sandwich \$5.50
Grilled Cheese \$3.75
with bacon \$5.50
Chili \$5.50
Chili Burger \$6.75
French Fries \$2.50

Once again, new customers are usually taken rather aback by the dollar figures in a city well-known for the sky-high menu prices it can command. The burgers aren't huge, but well worth the money and so, so juicy and tender. The cooks can get a little over-enthusiastic, though: this is the only place I order a medium instead of a well-done. Your orders will come out on oversized paper doilies, which invariably fall to pieces toward the end of your meal (but by then, most of what was on it is in your tummy, so why worry?). Add a plate of (previously frozen but now piping hot and crispy) fries to your meal, and you'll stumble out stuffed. Service is very fast, and you'll find ample time to have at least three or four beers with your meal.

Once you're outside in the fresh air again, you may feel as though the last couple of hours were a tad surreal... especially if you're smart and you grabbed lunch there on a weekday afternoon. I've often been caught blinking like a deer caught in headlights after emerging from the cave-like bar into the bright sunshine. But have I ever had a better, more satisfying burger? Not yet. And will I go back? Every time I'm in town.

Corner Bistro is located on 331 W 4th St, at the corner of Jane and West 4TH. Phone: (212) 242-9502

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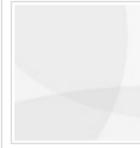
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