

Connoisseur: Neighborhoods: May 2010: On Location: Arlington: Cheryl Fenton

The perfect Saturday in a better-than-ever burg.

By Cheryl Fenton

ARLINGTON, IT SEEMS, likes to reinvent itself. Take the history of the suburb's moniker, for instance: In 1635, settlers slapped this area with the clunky name Menotomy Village. But residents changed their minds 172 years later, when they swapped it for West Cambridge. Denizens finally settled on Arlington in 1867 (now "A-Town," for short). Over the years, the town has become a destination for adventurous diners and outdoorsy types, thanks to its ever-expanding networks of ethnic eateries and bike trails. Lately its boutique scene has been blossoming, too. Here's how to milk the most out of Arlington - in particular Arlington Center, a charming, internationally flavored business district.



MORNING

Start as early as you please, since **Jam'n Java** begins brewing coffee at 6:30 a.m. (594 Massachusetts Ave., 781-316-8400). Grab a joe and a scone to go, then head for the **Minuteman Bikeway**, where you can retrace Paul Revere's famous ride (though with far less urgency!). Walkers will have to bob and weave to avoid the runners and cyclists, since this is one of the nation's busiest trails. But the

tree-lined path leads straight to Spy Pond, a calming and decidedly two-wheeler-free spot that often attracts swans. Once you've had your fill of the serene scene, it's time to head back to town so you can search for a good read. One option is to troll for leatherbounds and a seat in a comfy leather chair at **Robbins Library**, the country's oldest continuously operating public library (700 Massachusetts Ave., 781-316-3200, robbinslibrary.org). But if the sun beckons, grab a used paperback from the **Book Rack** bookstore and find a spot on the shore back at the pond (13 Medford St., 781-646-2665, book-rack.com).

AFTERNOON

Spend time, not money (though donations are always welcome), at the **Cyrus E. Dallin Museum** (One Whittemore Park, 781-641-0747, dallin.org). The eponymous artist was a prominent Arlington resident and sculptor whose best-known works are *Appeal to the Great Spirit*, on display in front of the Museum of Fine Arts, and, of course, the Paul Revere tribute in the



North End. When lunchtime hits, fuel up with a giant Angus burger, salad, or plate of pasta at **Not Your Average Joe's** (645 Massachusetts Ave., 781-643-1666, notyouraveragejoes.com). Then hunt for deals at **Pink Dolly Upscale Resale Boutique**, a secondhand shop with plenty of Coach, Lucky, and J.Crew tossed into the selection of women's and children's clothes (8 Medford St., 781-646-7811, pinkdollyshop.com). Nesters on the prowl for the unique should visit **Porch & Wardrobe** for funky home goods like vintage-inspired kitchen aprons and tin clocks as well as smatterings of consignment clothing (23 Mystic St., 781-641-3325, iloveporch.com). Stylish browsers will love the trendy wares at **Helena's** (397 Massachusetts Ave., 781-483-3055, helenasofarlington.com), not to mention the one-of-a-kind jewelry at **Divinity's Splendour-Glow** (311 Broadway, 781-648-7100).



EVENING

Arlington boasts all manner of ethnic restaurants, and you can't swing a chopstick without hitting a superlative Asian eatery. Choose among Italian at La Buona Vita, Indian at Punjab, Argentinean at Tango, and Turkish at Pasha. After the global gastronomy, enjoy live music, comedy, and even belly-dancing at the **Regent Theatre** (7 Medford St., 781-646-4849, regenttheatre.com). Then mosey over to the **Chilly Cow** for homemade midwestern-style frozen custards (451 Massachusetts Ave., 781-648-4360, thechillycow.com). If you prefer screen to stage, take a short drive from Arlington Center to the **Capitol Theatre**, an old-time cinema turned multiplex that retains much of its 1920s splendor with granite columns and gold leaf (204 Massachusetts Ave., 781-648-6022, capitoltheatreonline.com). The Capitol long ago traded vaudeville for talkies, but it does offer first-run movies at yesteryear prices. Best of all, the theater has an on-site creamery. So either way, the day ends with ice cream.