

6 to Hunts Point Ave

The city's food-distribution hub has more than just indigestion to offer. By **Drew Toal**

"You're going to Hunts Point? What are you going there for? That's a bad area, man." Or so I am advised by two local teenagers as I'm about to get off the 6 train. But this industrial section of the South Bronx wasn't always "bad"—at least not in the way my new friends mean. In the late 19th century, it was a playground for the city's elite. By the 1970s, however, unscrupulous landlords were burning buildings for the insurance money, and the quality of life fell precipitously for much of the mostly black and Hispanic community. Still, longtime residents of Hunts Point, home to the largest food-distribution center in the world, are loyal.

The women at the community office of **Mothers on the Move** (928 Intervale Ave at Dawson St, Bronx; 718-842-2224, mothersonthemove.org)

politely suggest that the locals won't be very forthcoming with help, mostly because no one in the area wants Hunts Point to turn into another Park Slope (this organization's office just recently took down the sign that read YUPPIES GO HOME). MOM graciously does, however, point my yuppie ass down Hunts Point Avenue toward the market.

There isn't much to see around the **Hunts Point Cooperative Market** (355 Food Center Dr; 718-842-7466, huntspointcoopmkt.com); no big piles of beef or mutton lying around. And more disappointing, the **New Fulton Fish Market** (800 Food Center Dr at Ryawa St; 718-378-2356, newfultonfishmarket.com) is open only during the inconvenient hours of Monday through Friday midnight to 9am. Outside the security gate, down by the water on Farragut Street, a grizzled but friendly angler deems it too early to comment on the quality of the fishing this year. The view from the rocks is actually quite nice,



Floating Pool Lady at Barretto Point Park



framed as it is by La Guardia and the Bronx Whitestone Bridge. When asked about other good spots, the fisherman points down the road to a nearby park.

After a few blocks, **Barretto Point Park** (Viele Ave between Barretto and Tiffany Sts), a shock of green on the gray landscape, reveals itself. The recently relocated **Floating Pool Lady**—a swimming pool set on a barge—is anchored in the adjacent bay, right where a nearby sign relates details of the WORST CIVILIAN MARITIME DISASTER IN THE COUNTRY'S HISTORY, when the steamship *General Slocum* caught fire in 1904 and killed more than

1,000 people. A man pushing his young daughter on a swing looks bewildered when I ask for a recommendation for nearby food. "It's an industrial area," he says. "There aren't too many places around here. That guy across the street at the hot-dog stand is about it."

The vendor at the corner of Viele Avenue and Tiffany Street whips up a mean hot dog and points me farther afield, although his Spanish—and my lack thereof—makes it difficult to ascertain exactly where I am being sent.

The temporary loss of direction is cleared up by some gentlemen playing dominoes under a bodega awning on Hunts Point Avenue. They recommend **Miguel A. Restaurante & Bar** (745 Hunts Point Ave at Faile St, 718-620-3520) and suggest the fried plantains. On the other side of the lunch counter is a bona fide bar. Handy. Making my way back to the subway, the arresting architecture and lavender walls of skin joint **El Coche** (910 Hunts Point Ave at Garrison Ave, 718-378-9275) catch my eye. A sign in the window announces that management is hiring topless dancers. Unfortunately, this establishment is closed during the day, so I'll have to drop off my CV next time.

1 to 238th St: Northern Ireland



An Beal Bocht Café

→ From the outside, **The Punch Bowl** (5820 Broadway at 238th St, Bronx; 718-884-7322, punchbowlmynyc.com) appears to be a dive. The inside confirms it. Paper shamrocks from St. Patrick's Days past line the walls, and the bar top shows signs of more than a few thousand pint glasses. Slide up next to a local barfly and listen to righteous tales from the old country. → Rose, the Punch Bowl's

barkeep, regularly hikes up the steep staircase at the western end of 238th Street to enjoy a crock of hardy Irish stew and a pint of Guinness at **An Beal Bocht Café** (445 W 238th St between Greystone and Waldo Aves; 718-884-7127, anbealbochtcafe.com). On Sunday nights, traditional Irish music will make you forget you're not in Galway. → Catching a game of rugby at

Gaelic Park (4000 Corlear Ave at 240th St, 718-548-0009) is one of An Beal Bocht Café manager Bernie's choice pastimes. Manhattan College uses the pitch for its games, but so do local teams—and many draw a large crowd of supporters. Of course, the adjoining boozery with its famously long bar (seriously, it runs the length of the room) draws a few fans itself. —Katharine Rust