

Ease on Up the Coast

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Adventurous diners follow the C&O Canal for road-trip eats that come minus the fries

MERRILY | The C&O Canal glimmers in the morning sunlight. Its intense blue is a far cry from the murky waters of Washington's side of the Potomac. It's hard to believe it's all part of the same river. This is why, every once in awhile, you need to get out of the city.

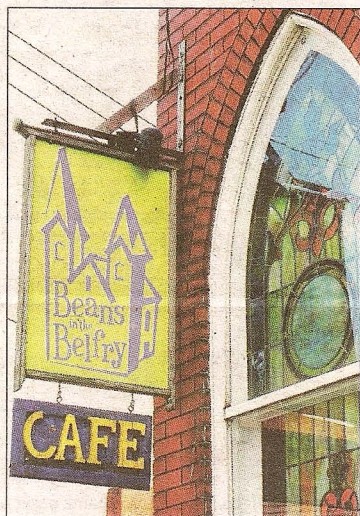
One of the most popular road-trip destinations for Washingtonians is **HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**. This weekend, the park celebrates the 150th anniversary of John Brown's famous anti-slavery raid, with events for kids and grown-ups. If Civil War history puts you to sleep, venture off for hiking, climbing, kayaking or fishing.

On the drive up, follow the C&O Canal to some foodie pit stops that will refuel your blood sugar after an hour of "Are we there yet?" and "This is why we need a car with GPS!"

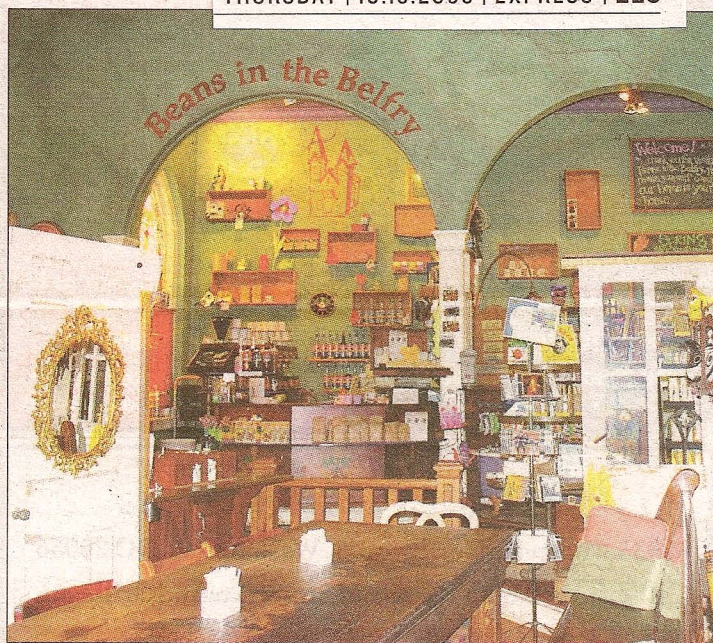
Fifteen minutes outside Harpers Ferry, in the tiny town of Brunswick, Md., a beautiful coffee shop awaits. **BEANS IN THE BELFRY** is a small, red-brick church converted into a cafe. Eclectic furniture, local artwork and stained-glass windows make for a tranquil atmosphere. The fair-trade organic coffee beans are roasted in neighboring Frederick County, where the organic milk comes from, too. The coffee is delicious — smooth, not too bitter.

Every Sunday, the cozy coffeehouse has a \$16 jazz brunch followed by afternoon English tea service. For a quick bite, choose from quiches, panini, salads or a 10-ounce crab pretzel.

Down the street, a new lunch spot called **EL SLOPPY TACOS** doubles as a taquería and a barbecue joint.



Beans in the Belfry, right and above, is 15 minutes from Harpers Ferry; the coffee shop's organic beans and milk make for a cup of joe that's well worth the trip.



ALL PHOTOS BY SUEMEDHA SOOD



Lunch spot El Sloppy Tacos uses barbecue styles from all around the world in its low-priced specialties.

"The star is not the tortilla; the star is the grilled meat," says owner Tony Amos.

Amos purposely gave El Sloppy Tacos a grammatically incorrect name, he says, to simultaneously emphasize the individual attention each taco gets and the multitude of cuisines represented by the menu. Tacos that run from \$2 to \$3.50 reflect barbecue traditions from around the world.

The Jamaican jerk pork is cooked in brown sugar and Meyer's rum, and topped with a "banana ketchup" of pureed bananas, cloves and tomato paste. For Mexican-style 'cue, the barbacoa is made

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with chuck-eye beef marinated in a wet rub and slow-roasted for 12 hours. The "El Sloppy Taco" is filled with Memphis-style pulled pork cooked in a dry rub and topped with barbecue sauce and coleslaw.

Amos, who will happily chat for hours about the geographical history of individual ingredients, makes all rubs and sauces in house. "I like big and bold flavors — anything that's in your face," he says.

If this weekend is a special occasion and cheap tacos won't cut it, the upscale organic **RESTAURANT AT PATOWMACK FARM** is just across the canal. Almost everything on the menu comes from the farm; walk around and see what's growing before entering the elegant dining room.

Outside the metro area, foodie options abound. So, the next time you head for the hills road trip-style, there's no excuse to end up at McDonald's. SUEMEDHA SOOD

→ **Beans in the Belfry**, 122 W. Potomac St., Brunswick, Md.; 310-834-7178.

→ **El Sloppy Tacos**, 12 S. Maple Ave., Brunswick, Md.; 301-834-3311.

→ **Restaurant at Patowmack Farm**, 42461 Lovettsville Road, Lovettsville, Va.; 540-822-9017.

→ **Harpers Ferry National Park**, 485 Filmore St., Harpers Ferry, W.Va.; 304-535-6298.