

# PORKETTA'S THE NAME OF THE GAME

by ELLA MYERS

*The dark, crispy underbelly of Sudbury's favourite pastime*

You don't call "Bingo" at Porketta Bingo. You shout "Porketta!"

The rules aren't what you'd expect at the famous Sudbury pseudo-gambling event that returns to the Beef 'N Bird on Lorne St. in October.

And if you don't follow the rules, you may be subjected to rude and crude but good-hearted harassment.

Calling out "Porketta" by mistake, is another rulebreaker. This is what happened to my new-to-Sudbury friend Claudine Gagné at her first porketta bingo.

Her friends could think of no better way of initiating her into the city than bringing her for a round of the irreverent game held Saturday afternoons from October through April.

Unfortunately, amidst the clamour and distracted by the sweet scent of 140 pounds of Tarini's Italian roast pork, she'd put a marker on the wrong card and had to pay the price.

"You messed up," chanted the crowd as she headed back to her seat, although it may have been phrased a little less politely than that.

Fortunately, someone at our table of 15-plus players won the next round, and a basket of freshly-carved porketta and buns was delivered as the prize, more than making up for the minor humiliation.

The crew at our table had been there since noon, swilling beer, sampling appetizers, listening to 1990s music and waiting for the game to start at 3 pm. As the bar filled up over the next three hours, I realized the necessity of arriving early and claiming a spot.

It appears roast pork, a welcoming atmosphere, and easygoing gameplay make for universal appeal.

The attendees are a fascinating cross-section of Sudbury: students, nine-to-fivers, and Beef 'N Bird regulars of all ages gather in the dark bar.

Instead of a standard bingo card, play-



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Porketta bingo is actually a card game. The prize is a pork sandwich.

ers get a laminated sheet with three playing cards on it for \$15. You can get as many as you like, although regular Gord Rinneard's special card is off limits. You can mark it with a traditional dabber, coins, or if all else fails, whatever you have in your purse.

Every Saturday there are six sets of seven rounds for a total of 42 chances to win.

The volunteer-run porketta bingo at the Beef 'N Bird has been going strong for more than 10 years as a fundraiser for Copper Cliff Minor Hockey. It's popularity has grown over the years simply by word of mouth, according to the organizers.

What started off as a small fundraiser is now a sought-out activity by

a loyal fan base that comes out week after week simply for the fun of it as well as visitors to the city and college and university students.

The Toppazzinis, who own the bar, are thrilled about the popularity of porketta bingo. Anthony Toppazzini's pro-hockey-playing dad, Jerry, and his wife, Dolly, bought the Beef 'N Bird 40 years ago in 1977.

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They've seen people come for their birthday parties, bachelor parties, and two girls visiting from Ireland even made sure to stop in.

Over the last decade, porketta bingo



has raised more than half a million dollars for minor hockey. Just as importantly, it's introduced countless Sudburians and visitors to the local treasure that is porketta bingo; the perfect pairing of aromatic spiced porketta and a bar full of friendly faces on a slow Saturday afternoon.