

Dorothy's Parker House Rolls: A Jazz Age Recipe

by Rebecca Coffey

INGREDIENTS

A messy divorce.

A late spring night in Boston.

DIRECTIONS

1. First, let's agree to call them "Pahkah House Rolls," for the Parker House is a luxury *Boston* hotel. (We'll be returning to New York on the morning train.)
2. Manners are made up of the trivialities of deportment. Start this recipe off prettily. Check in to the Pahkah House. Rouge your lips and knees, and proceed immediately to the bar...
3. ...where you'll meet athletic, Back Bay gentlemen singing divine drinking songs and wearing khakis (by which word I don't mean "car keys").
4. Have a martini. Add another. And another. Do this until you've acquired the taste for them (you've always, actually, preferred Scotch) or until Boston Brahms become altogether attractive. It's important to become uninhibited enough to put on airs. For tonight you will be not be Dorothy Parker, a perennially broke writer and book critic with a tragically sensitive mind, and newly divorced wife of one Eddie Parker, a nobody. You will be Dorothy Pahkah, a whimsical, wealthy, if somewhat wounded wit of the Boston Pahkah House family.
5. To do this, you'll need to have yet another drink. Now, quickly, in the manner of someone tucking her own hotel's ash trays into her purse, abscond to your room with three of the Pahkah House bar's best-looking gentlemen patrons.

6. Once in your room, order a few bottles from Room Service. Behave regally toward the waiter. Then pour drinks for everyone.
7. Take the first gentleman eagerly to your bosom. Teach him everything he wasn't taught on the rugby fields at Exeter. Give yourself over to high ecstasies, and make sure to give him a few, too.
8. Repeat as necessary with your other two gentlemen. Pray for strength. Really, put your back into it if you must.
9. Pour more drinks.
10. Mind you, no matter how much alcohol you add to this recipe, sooner or later, you will get tired. Tell the gentlemen to stop. It's only an old wives tale that you should taper off.
11. Sleep.
12. Before you leave for the train to New York the next morning, invite your gentlemen to breakfast with you in the dining room, where the waiters will call you Miss Pahkah, and you'll all be served delicious, trademark Parker House rolls, fresh from the oven.
13. As you spread quickly-melting butter onto your bread, ask your three gentlemen a riddle: "What is worse than a Pahkah House roll?" Take a bite of the lovely bread. As steam escapes it, smile becomingly.
14. Remember, your gentlemen are fleshy-faced, hung-over, sexually spent Bostonians with lovely, quivering souls. They haven't shaved. They haven't even showered. Their sort is prone to mental wanderings anyway, but this morning in particular your three gentlemen will be in no mood for riddles—or for anything from their Miss Pahkah, except for breakfast.
15. Regardless of their mental condition, repeat, "What is worse than a Pahkah House roll?" Then, "Really. I won't be offended. We can all enjoy a 'Pahkah House' joke together, can't we?" Then, "Oh, come now." And then, "Ha! As if you three haven't come already." (Wink, wink.)
16. Actually wink and wink.
17. At this point, in a climax of courtliness, one or another of them may mumble, "What?"
18. Say, "Pardon?"

19. He will say, "What is worse than a Pahkah House Roll?".

20. Now they are cooked. Positively braying at all three of them, screech, "Three Pahkah House Rolls! One with you! And one with you! And one with you!"

21. Being Beantowners, at first they won't understand. But with your howls and squawks of laughter, as well as with your pointing finger and the palm of your other hand, which you will slap loudly on the table, you can help them appreciate your urbane, felicitous noun-to-verb word play. You can help them even as you hand them the hotel and restaurant bills, though the clarity in your message may cloud a bit as your laughter is overtaken by your shuddering and writhing, quivering and convulsing, as specific memories of the previous night begin to emerge from blackout.

22. Your eyes are getting sticky and pink. Dry your nose with the sleeve of the light coat you bought two years ago.

23. There you go getting emotional again. Goodness. It's no wonder men never send you flowers.

END

