

THE BEST OLD PLACE OF ALL

Students' favorite
Princeton spots



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MURRAY-DODGE CAFÉ

Murray-Dodge Café is part of the reason I decided to come to Princeton. Somewhere between the “This Side of Princeton” arts showcase, the panel about the Bridge-Year Program, and dinner in the dining hall, I realized this was where I wanted to be. The feeling was cemented that night when I found myself in the basement of Murray-Dodge Hall, a warm cookie in hand. If I came to this school, I’d get as many free, fresh-baked cookies as I wanted — every night of the year. I committed to Princeton as soon as I got back home.

Right away, Murray-Dodge — or “MD,” as my friends and I took to calling it — became my go-to study and hangout spot. It actually wasn’t a great study space — the dark stone walls, low ceilings, and dim lighting made it hard to read, and we always got distracted by passing friends. But it was difficult to resist the free cookies and tea and the feeling that we were making this campus our home.

The café closed for renovations in my junior year. When I returned to campus as a senior, I wasn’t sure I’d love the new MD — I thought I would miss the chalk drawings on the walls, the step in the bathroom that made the single toilet resemble a throne, even the faint smell of mildew. The new MD had higher ceilings, bright lights, and two generic bathrooms. But soon I was going there as often as ever.

I’ve realized that the person I am now feels very different from my first-year self. And if I could evolve so much and still be me, then Murray-Dodge Café also could change its face without losing its essence. It is still a place that welcomes everyone who walks through the door. Anyone can sit down at a table; anyone can take a cookie. And the cookies haven’t changed: Some are crunchy, some are cakelike, some are goeey. For me, that’s what matters in the end. ♦



“In private memory this place is its halls, its library, its chapel worn to satin by the encounters and collaborations among and between strangers from other neighborhoods and strangers from other lands.”

— TONI MORRISON

