



# Do You Know The Right Way To Pahk The Cah In Havahd Yahd?

UNH Professor Explains 'Yakking With The Yankees' In New Book

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DURHAM, N.H. -- When it comes to food, New Englanders love their *frappes*, *tonics*, *grinders* and *bulkies*. They watch crowds of *leaf peepers* arrive in autumn, and wait with childlike giddiness in winter for *Nor'easters*. Those who don't understand such terms may seem *numb as a hake*, but for Yankees, it's all part of being a New Englander.

Now people everywhere can learn to talk Yankee in the new book, *American Voices: How Dialects Differ From Coast To Coast*, which features an article co-authored by Naomi Nagy, University of New Hampshire associate professor of linguistics and English. In "Yakking With The Yankees," Nagy provides examples of current vocabulary and pronunciation patterns to illustrate both how New England differs from the rest of the country and what regional differences exist.

"Like many older parts of the U.S., New England and Eastern New England in particular, is characterized by a distinct local dialect that is gradually receding due to the influence of 'general American' speech used in the mass media and by newcomers to the region. Much of the distinct New England vocabulary was connected with traditional occupations that are less important in today's economy," according to Nagy. "However some local features remain, especially in rural areas in city neighborhoods with large proportions of local people."

Perhaps the most well-known characteristic of New England pronunciation is the dropping of the *r* in such words as *car* and *park*. It is prominent in areas of eastern New England that include New Hampshire and large portions of Massachusetts, Vermont and Maine as well as areas of northeastern Connecticut and northern Rhode Island. "People talk about 'New Hampsha' and 'Woosta' instead of New Hampshire and Worcester," Nagy says.

Many New England words – such as *Nor'easter* (winter snowstorm) and *quahog* (edible clam) – are nautically oriented, since the region has a rich history in ship building, fishing and seafood. Other words are tied to a particular area's farming history. They include *carting* or *teaming a load* (hauling a load) and *open and shut day* (a day with variable weather).

Words still widely used by New Hampshire residents include *grinder* (long deli sandwich), *hamburg* (ground beef), *tonic* (carbonated drink), *rotary* (traffic circle) and *notch* (mountain pass). Other traditional Yankee words were less recognizable: *belly-bunt* (ride a sled face-down), *pung* (sleigh for hauling wood) and *pug* (hair bun). Words not found in older language research but that are heard today include *bubbler* (drinking fountain), *bulkie* (round sandwich roll), *spa* (convenience store, Boston), *directional* (turn signal), *frappe* (milkshake, eastern

Massachusetts and New Hampshire), *dooryard* (where you park your car), *numb as hake* (not very bright, downeast Maine), *soggie* (greasy hotdog), *cabinet* (milkshake) and *take a heart* (have a heart attack, Rhode Island).

*American Voices: How Dialects Differ From Coast To Coast* is available through Blackwell Publishers.

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