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Tuesday, 22 October 2013

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review: bang restaurant, dublin 2



I have a list of restaurants I want to visit in Dublin, and also all across Ireland! Further afield too actually: Barcelona, London, Paris, Cape Town, Bruges, Amsterdam, New York, Copenhagen, Singapore, Bangkok...

Some are clearly more achievable than others, so I've taken the (sensible) decision to tackle the home-grown ones first.

One on my list is **Bang**, located close to St Stephen's Green on Merrion Row, and a recent voucher offer from **MenuPages Deals** meant that it was a step closer. Happy days!

Ms C and I nabbed a deal for the renowned 5-course tasting menu for 2 people at €69 - half the usual price of €69 each, and so we headed down with empty bellies one Friday evening recently.

We arrived in good time, were shown to our table straight away, and were offered drinks. We went for the recommended accompanying wines for the tasting menu (€29.95 per person), and I'm really glad we did, they turned out to be perfect matches. I've never been one for the whole 'drink this with this, eat that with that' thing, but I have to say I may be starting to convert. These were spot on so maybe there's something in that after all...

Ok so I'm just going to reel off the courses given to us, with a comment on each. Suffice to say this was one of the nicest meals I've eaten in a pretty long time. Apart from my own fantastic cooking of course ahem...

We started with an *amuse bouche* of soft goat's cheese, topped with beetroot and a few other bits & bobs. Really creamy, not too strong or salty, and a lovely way to get the appetite going. This was served with a glass of prosecco from Valdobbiadene in the Treviso province of Italy.

Next up was the fish course, which was house cured Clare Island salmon, served with avocado, radish, cucumber and a ponzu gel which was just tart enough to cut through the sweetness of the other components. Not a huge serving, very delicate and perfectly balanced. As a cheffy type cook, this played as much to my eyes as my palate, and I was left feeling inspired yet again as to how simple presentation is often the best; a feeling I'm getting a lot when dining out lately, such is the standard of Dublin restaurants these days. The wine here was a crisp Sauvignon Blanc

(Blanc/Gros Manseng) from the Cotes de Gascogne region.

Meat was next, and time to start getting full! The menu described the dish as Hereford Beef with local celeriac, crispy onion, watercress and horseradish potato. Sounds nice enough, sure, but what Bang fail to mention on the menu is that the beef is slow cooked for around 14 hours. A small detail? I think not. Jeepers creepers, what a piece of meat; I couldn't stop smiling when I tried to cut into it and it just fell apart, and then actually tasting it... I'm drooling just thinking about it! So moist and full of flavour, and coupled with the creamy horseradish mash, a real delight. This was just a fantastic plate of food. Wine with the meat was a lovely full bodied Cabernet Sauvignon from Bordeaux.

Cheeses followed, a hard and a soft (these can vary depending on when you're in), and they were served simply with biscuits, grapes and a fantastic truffled honey. The honey was amazing; I don't know what they did to it but I've never tasted anything so, erm, honey-ey! Absolutely ridiculous. The cheese course came with a lighter red, a Malbec from Argentina.

Finally it was dessert time, and although we'd already eaten four indulgent courses, we were eager to finish off with something just as nice as the previous dishes; expectations were high! Pud came in the form of a chocolate bar, accompanied by mango gel and a mango sorbet. Rich dark chocolate - not too bitter - and the sharpness of the fresh mango, this is a dessert to go on anyone's bucket list I reckon. The final wine was a sweet fruity red dessert wine, almost another part of the dish itself, so yet again a great match.

Service was impeccable throughout, with each dish and wine described in detail to us by the attentive staff. In short this was a great foody night out. Perfect food expertly presented and very well thought out, with each course complimenting the overall menu as a whole.

Now look, I realise €100 a head is a bit on the steep side for most pockets (mine included), but I feel it's worth it, and definitely a place to be recommended for a very special occasion. Or do as I did and keep your eyes peeled for the voucher offer - if you're into your food you won't regret it.

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Posted by Chefilepsy at 18:58 No comments:

Labels: bang, dinner, dublin 2, restaurant, review

mushrooms new potatoes Niall Thomas
omelette oyster mushrooms pak choi
parsley pasta pate pigeon pork pork belly
potatoes prawns prosciutto pâté radish
raspberries **recipe** red onion red
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super moist chocolate cake



So I'm getting into this baking lark. I like the philosophy behind it all too; a bit of prep, mix stuff together, throw it in the oven, sit back and wait for the thing to cook itself. Hmmm, that might not be *exactly* how it is in reality it seems...

Arguably easier than making a tart for dessert (no pastry, no blind baking, all that malarkey) I decided to try and perfect the humble chocolate cake. What could be simpler thinks I? Well, very recent experience tells me many things could be simpler actually.

I did make a few chocolate sponge cakes when testing this out, and all of them were pretty much edible. The problem I had was that they weren't perfect. Sinking, cracking, refusal to set, refusal to leave the tin; these have been some of the problems I've faced over the last couple of weeks. The biggest issue I've had however is getting the thing moist enough. I'm glad to report I've fixed this though!

Follow this recipe and you'll get a fantastically moist and tasty chocolate cake every single time; really straightforward too (I think?!). And thank goodness for that...

Ingredients

- 250g self-raising flour
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder
- 300g caster sugar
- 2 medium eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 250g butter
- 200ml cola
- 220ml full-fat milk

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180c / 160c (fan) / gas mark 4. Grease a 24cm deep cake tin with butter or a light coating of sunflower oil and line it with greaseproof paper.
2. Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda and cocoa powder into a large mixing bowl.
3. Add the eggs, sugar and vanilla extract and beat well with an electric mixer.
4. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a low to medium heat. Stir the cola into the butter then stir in the milk. Remove from the heat and leave to cool slightly for 2 or 3 minutes.
5. Gently whisk the wet mixture into the dry ingredients and pour into your greased tin.
6. Bake for around 40 minutes, until a skewer or small sharp knife comes out clean when inserted into the centre.
7. Remove from the oven and cool in the tin for 10-15 minutes. Carefully remove the cake from the tin , remove the greaseproof paper.
8. Stand back in amazement, dive in. And remember to come up for air every now and again. Oh and if you can bear it, share the thing; that's a lot of cake for one person and you can win some serious brownie points with this one...



Posted by Chefilepsy at 18:55 1 comment:



Labels: baking, cake, chocolate, chocolate cake, dessert, recipe

Monday, 21 October 2013

review: jamie's italian, dundrum



Opened just over a year ago in September 2012, **Jamie's Italian** is clearly doing something right. Serving great food cooked to order from fresh ingredients in a really cool restaurant might have something to do with it! Jamie Oliver was my first 'food hero', so I was really looking forward to this!

I was lucky enough to be invited to sample the goods one lunchtime after responding to a post on the restaurant's **Twitter page**; talk about an added bonus! To be honest, the quality of the food is such that I've have gladly paid for it - maybe I should have mentioned that to Andrew, our host, and Jamie's Italian General Manager.

The **menu** offers a huge range of authentic-sounding dishes, and every one of them sounds fantastic - a real problem when you're hungry and like to eat everything! This was our first time here, and not being so sure about portion sizes we opted to share a starter. We went for the crispy squid; that was down to us both reminiscing about our trip to Barcelona last year and wishing we were still there...

The squid was perfectly cooked and not chewy at all, and came served with a lovely garlic mayonnaise and some fried garlic and red chilli, and really hit the spot. At first we thought the portion size may have been a little small, but then reminded ourselves that this was an antipasti dish, not a starter, so all good. Definitely a dish to be recommended and great to whet the appetite. Maybe best to have it to yourself though; too tasty to share!

We ordered a couple of glasses of vino too, a lovely pinot grigio, *Delle Venezie*. Nice & crisp, and perfect for Italian cuisine. Lovely.

Mains were next. Ms Chefilepsy opted for the Honeycomb Cannelloni Three Ways, a lovely dish with freshly made pasta covered with tomato sauce and filled with a combination of aubergine & sun-dried tomato, pumpkin, and ricotta & spinach. I went for one of the daily specials, which was a whole roasted sea bream, served with garlic, Heritage tomatoes, olives and a lovely light sauce. The fish was cooked perfectly and was really tasty; both mains really delivered.

Being guests of the house we thought it rude to not indulge in a couple of desserts; well you would wouldn't you?! Ms C chose three scoops of ice cream, topped with crushed nuts and seasonal berries - delicious. I went for the panna cotta, which was served with a seasonal fruit compote. Lovely and packed with fresh vanilla, it had the flavour (and the wobble) I love. So, more ticks in more boxes!

All-in-all this was a well balanced lunch, and could have just as easily been enjoyed in the evening for dinner. The food is just great and comes highly recommended as one of the few places I've found in the Dublin area to offer genuine-tasting Italian food (and without the menu just being limited to the standard pizza and pasta options). The atmosphere and buzz of the place is great too; the sound of loads of people chatting, along with the clatter of cutlery, is really infectious, and is spot on for this type of setting.

Getting to the restaurant is easy too. We took the Luas from the city centre (green line) and the

journey only took around 15 minutes. If you're driving that's just as simple, with loads of parking available within the Dundrum Town Centre complex.


Well done and thanks again to Andrew & the whole team; we were left wanting for nothing and I for one can't wait to head back.





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 Like 5

Posted by Chefilepsy at 19:18 No comments: 

Labels: dublin, dundrum, Italian, lunch, restaurant, review, south dublin

Monday, 7 October 2013

simple soda bread



I cook. That's what I do. Usually savoury recipes, usually starters & mains, occasionally a dessert or two. Baking has always evaded me; or more accurately, I've always evaded baking! The fear of the unknown I guess? Don't get me wrong, I can make a decent bit of shortcrust pastry for a fantastic lemon tart (recipe to follow!), but bread has always been something I've bought rather than made. Time for that to change!

So here we go, head first into the world of bread making. We're starting with arguably the simplest of all: soda bread. No yeast, no kneading, no proving, no knocking back; in fact not much of anything, and ready to eat from start to finish in less than an hour - my kind of bread

recipe indeed!

Thanks to Easy Food Magazine for this recipe from their latest issue!

Ingredients

- 500g plain flour
- 400ml buttermilk
- 2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp salt

Method

1. Pre-heat the oven to 200c / 180c (fan) / gas mark 6.
2. Sift the flour, bicarbonate of soda and salt into a large mixing bowl.
3. Make a well in the middle and pour i the buttermilk.
4. Mix gently together with your hands until well combined.
5. Lightly flour a large surface and plonk the mixture onto it. Knead for 30-60 seconds, just to bring it together, and form into a round shape.
6. Place the bread onto a lightly floured baking sheet (or alternatively line with a piece of baking parchment) and place the bread in the middle.
7. Flour the blade of a knife and cut a cross across the top of the bread, around 2cm deep.
8. Place in the middle of the pre-heated oven and bake for around 45 minutes.
9. Check the bread is cooked by tapping the bottom of the loaf - it should sound hollow. If it does, it's done.
10. Hey presto; you've just made bread.



Posted by Chefilepsy at 13:22 No comments:

Labels: baking, bread, recipe, soda bread

Wednesday, 2 October 2013

Rick Stein's coming to Dublin!

@Chefilepsy @clodaghmckenna should be fun!
— Rick Stein (@Rick_Stein) October 2, 2013



Posted by Chefilepsy at 20:38 No comments:

Monday, 30 September 2013

pan-seared pigeon breast with roast apples,
black pudding & cider reduction



Game season is under way again in Ireland and butchers are now starting to stock all of those richer meats we see in the Autumn & Winter months. Venison is back in town, as is pheasant, wild boar, partridge, quail... This dish uses pigeon; a lovely dark rich meat with virtually no fat, and cheap too; the 4 breasts I used here only set me back around €8!

This is a great starter, packed with flavour and leaving you wanting more every time!

Ingredients

- 4 pigeon breasts
- 100g black pudding, diced
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored, peeled & cut into 8
- 200ml dry cider
- 2 tbsp duck fat
- 20g butter
- Salt & pepper

Method

1. Pre-heat the oven to 180c / 160c (fan) / gas mark 4.
2. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium high heat and add 1tbsp duck fat and the butter.
3. Season the apple pieces with salt & pepper & fry for 1 minute on each side until just starting to colour slightly.
4. Transfer the apple to a non-stick baking tray and place in the oven. Cook for 10 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, add the other half of the duck fat into the frying pan and fry the black pudding for 3 or 4 minutes. Drain on kitchen paper then place on a second baking tray and place in the oven for 7-8 minutes.
6. Season the pigeon breasts on both sides & fry for 1 minute, skin side down. Turn over, add the cider and cook for another 2 minutes.
7. Remove the breasts from the pan and set aside to rest.
8. Turn the heat up in the pan and reduce the cider by around half.
9. To serve, place the apple pieces in a bowl or on a plate of your choice. Slice the pigeon breasts into 5 or 6 pieces each and place on top of the apple. Sprinkle the black pudding over and spoon over the sauce.
10. I also finished mine off with some posh micro herbs; in this case it was red stem radish, but pea shoots would be lovely too.
11. Enjoy!

Serves 2



Posted by Chefilepsy at 13:22 No comments:



Labels: apple, black pudding, cider, dinner, game, light bites, pigeon, recipe, starters, supper

Tuesday, 24 September 2013

pan-fried squid & chorizo with heritage tomato & feta salad



Here's a healthy Mediterranean type option for those of you who, like me, still wish they were on holiday having long lazy lunches somewhere hot and sunny without too much of a care in the world...

This light dish started off life as a 'let's-see-what-we've-got-left-in-the-fridge' plate of food, when I fancied a starter to pre-empt the chicken dish I was cooking as my main course. The resulting meal was VERY tasty, so of course I had to share! As you can see from the photo, it looks great too; really vibrant with loads of colour, and of course the flavours are just beautiful together.

Quick to prepare, and even quicker to cook and plate up, leaving you plenty of time to slow down and enjoy with a large slurp or two of cold dry white wine...

Ingredients

For the squid

- 2 x squid (tubes/bodies only), cleaned, halved along each side and cut into thin strips widthways
- 1 x chorizo sausage, diced (I used Gubbeen chorizo from Cork, keeping it local!)
- Olive oil
- Squeeze of fresh lemon juice
- Salt & pepper

For the tomato salad

- 200g (approx - I used 2 - 3 good handfuls) Heritage (a.k.a. Heirloom) tomatoes, sliced
- 80g feta cheese, diced
- Good handful of freshly chopped parsley
- 1 clove of garlic, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Squeeze of fresh lemon juice
- Salt & pepper

Method

1. First make the salad. Throw everything into a bowl and season to taste with the lemon juice, salt & pepper. Leave to one side for the flavours to combine a little.
2. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium-high heat and add the chorizo. Cook for 4 or 5 minutes until the sausage starts to colour and release some of its oils. Remove from the pan and drain on kitchen paper.
3. In the same pan, add a small splash of olive oil and throw in the squid pieces.
4. Stir regularly and again, season to taste with the lemon juice, salt & pepper.
5. When the squid is cooked (but still nice & tender) add the chorizo back into the pan for 30 seconds to warm through.
6. To serve, divide the squid & chorizo into two portions, placing in the centre of each plate.
7. Place the tomatoes randomly around the outside of the plate and drizzle over the dressing.
8. Eat as slowly as you can to maximise the enjoyment. It might also be worth trying to convince your dining partner that they don't like it that much so you can steal theirs as well. Good luck with that...

I ate this last night for the first time and even just typing up the menu I'm drooling! That must say something about how nice it is, right?! I have to say, absolutely delicious...

Serves 2



Posted by Chefilepsy at 15:17 No comments:

Labels: chorizo, feta cheese, garlic, healthy, light bites, mediterranean, parsley, recipe, salad, squid, starters, supper, tomato

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