

FOOD REVIEW

Buck-It's kitchen delivers flavor with speed

by Nathan Price



I've never done a food review and by no means am I some kind of connoisseur, but I do love to eat.

And as someone who enjoys a good meal, I was ecstatic when I heard that a new local restaurant would be opening up in New Rockford – especially after several recent closures had left our community starved for local dining.

So here's my first attempt at something resembling a food review.

As it happened, the new kitchen at Buck-It's Bar in New Rockford opened just in time for my brother and father to be in town. We had planned an ice fishing trip for the weekend of February 21, and they drove up from South Dakota to stay at K & M Bison Lodge on Friday.

We went to Buck-It's together that evening, and my father and I both ordered their Cowboy Burger with a side of onion rings and mozzarella wedges, respectively.

My brother, meanwhile – being a better Catholic than either of us – ordered a grilled cheese sandwich from the fun-size menu, so as to avoid eating meat during Lent.

Vinnie Ruppell took our order and did so with a pleasant, up-beat attitude, which was a great first impression.

We then took our seats and ordered our drinks, and it couldn't have been more than three or four minutes later that Mandy Fandrich handed all three of us our orders.

Owner Justin McDonald had told me a few days earlier about how hard they worked to streamline their cooking process and how they can make a burger in only a few minutes. But hearing that and experiencing it were two different things entirely.

It almost felt weird to receive our order so quickly. I've often waited much longer for my order at national fast-food chains, which can tend to be anything but fast.

However, timely service means nothing if the food's quality is sacrificed.

The Cowboy Burgers my father and I ordered each had two smash burger patties, two strips of bacon, cheese and an onion ring topped with burger and BBQ sauce – and it was immediately clear that its quality was not sacrificed.

The smash burger was juicy and flavorful, and the sauces added a ton of great taste. It probably helps that I'm a sucker for any burger with BBQ sauce and bacon, but this one was better than most.

I also took off a portion of bacon and tried it by itself. It was cooked just how I like it and for only being a strip of bacon it was packed with great flavor, so much so that I seriously pondered whether I'd prefer eating it on its own rather than on my burger – but then I remembered that removing bacon from a bacon cheeseburger is a foodie felony.

As for the side, my mozzarella wedges arrived golden-brown with a crisp exterior and a good cheesy center – my only complaint was that there weren't more of them.

I asked my father what he thought of his meal and he also thought it was delicious, especially the bacon.

My brother, meanwhile, said he enjoyed his grilled cheese and fries, but I could tell he wasn't quite happy – he'd been eating a small grilled cheese sandwich while watching us consume two delicious smash burgers, so we could hardly blame him.

With that in mind, we decided to return to Buck-It's Bar the following evening after a successful ice fishing trip. My brother wanted to try the smash burgers he had watched us enjoy the night before, and my father and I were interested in trying more menu options.

This time I ordered the smash burger tacos while my father and brother ordered the buffalo chicken wrap and JMac burger, respectively. All of us went for fries on the side, and this time we also wanted to try an appetizer, so we ordered their six for \$12 wings as well.

Once again the service was exceptionally fast. Our appetizer was delivered before I could finish pouring my Diet Coke into its cup of ice, and all three of our orders arrived before I could finish my second wing.

Those wings were meaty and well-coated, with a sticky BBQ glaze that struck a nice balance between sweet and smoky. Next time I'd be interested in trying their other sauces. They also have buffalo, Asian, bourbon, garlic parmesan and sweet chili.

The main course, however, was a show stopper.

My smash burger tacos were simply outstanding. I didn't expect to prefer them over the Cowboy Burger, but after the first bite I knew I had a new favorite. They were rich, a little messy in the best way, and packed with flavor.

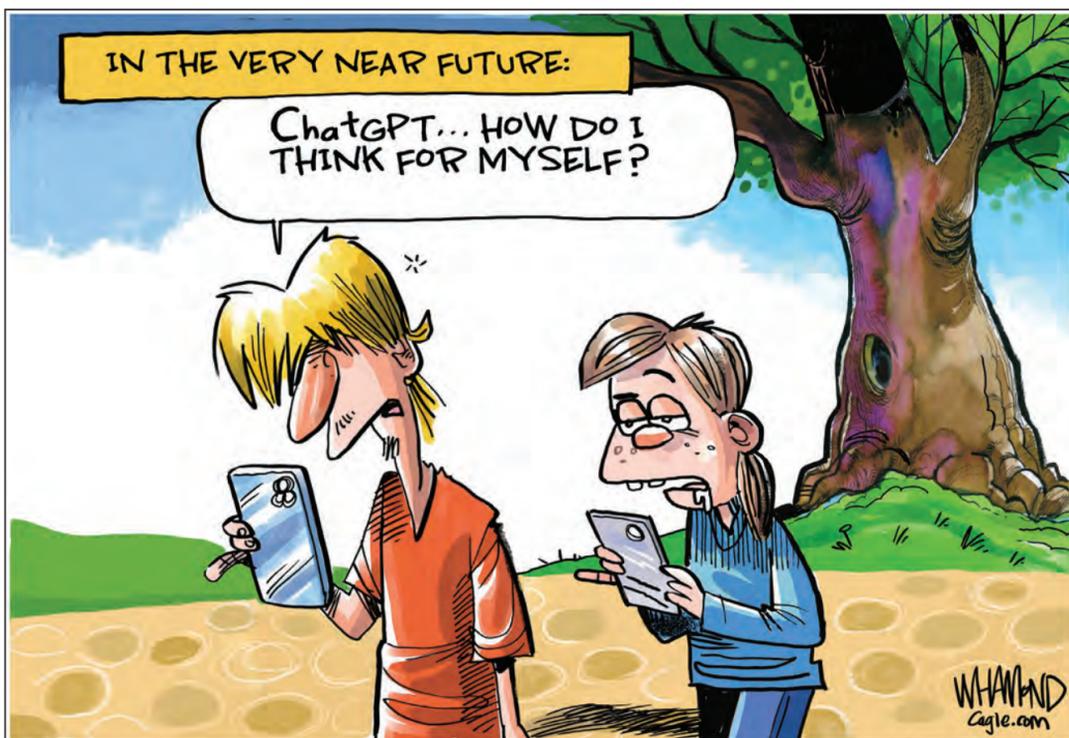
The meal comes with two tacos, each with a smash burger patty, cheese, pickles, onion, lettuce and their delicious burger sauce, all contained in a grilled tortilla – it was easily the most satisfying thing I'd eaten in months.

The fries didn't disappoint either. They had a slightly crispy exterior with a soft interior, and I ended up preferring them over the mozzarella wedges. I especially appreciated the more generous portion size.

Throughout both meals on Friday and Saturday the service was excellent. Both Mandy and Justin stopped by to make sure the food was good and that we had everything we needed, and did so with a welcoming demeanor.

But crucially, the kind, attentive and seamless service I experienced at Buck-It's Bar was backed up by delicious food, which is somehow made even better when you learn their burgers come from cattle raised locally by Collier Farms and processed at R3 Meats in Carrington.

I'd recommend Buck-It's Bar to anyone coming through town – but more importantly, I'd recommend it to those of us who call this region home. After a tough year for local dining, it's refreshing to see a locally-owned eatery firing on all cylinders.



Letters to the Editor

Concerned landowners of Grandfield Township

We are landowners in Grandfield Township, and we have serious concerns about how our township board has been operating.

After reviewing public records, notices and recent zoning actions, we believe our neighbors deserve to know what's been happening.

Based on public record, Grandfield Township's board adopted zoning ordinances through a process that appears to fall short of the public notice and hearing requirements in state law. When a vote didn't go the way board members expected, the voting practices themselves became questionable. These aren't technicalities – they are the fundamental safeguards that protect public partic-

ipation and trust in local government.

We are also troubled by apparent conflicts of interest. Some of the supervisors making these decisions are involved in threatened litigation related to wind energy or have sought compensation tied to the very issues they're voting on. For example, a letter sent to local officials on December 15, 2025 by Derrick Braaten, which is public record, appears to request compensation from Flickertail Wind to nonparticipating landowners for their "wind rights." Braaten is an attorney who claims to represent township supervisor Greg Rue and his wife Brenda personally. When decision-makers may stand to benefit financially, it raises legitimate questions about

impartiality that deserve clear and public answers.

What makes this especially frustrating is over 90% of the privately owned land in Grandfield Township is voluntarily signed into this wind energy project. Despite this, zoning authority was shifted away from Eddy County, and restrictive ordinances were written that override the wishes of the vast majority of property owners. Property rights are supposed to be foundational in North Dakota – not something a few officeholders can take away from their neighbors.

We are also troubled by evidence that outside legal counsel and special interest groups are driving township decisions behind the scenes. Additionally, when board members meet in numbers

that form a quorum and discuss township business without proper public notice, that's a transparency problem that should concern everyone – regardless of where you stand on any particular issue.

This issue is not about wind energy alone. It is about whether proper procedures are followed, conflicts of interest are addressed and the rights of landowners are respected. We encourage residents to review the public record, ask questions and participate in upcoming township meetings to ensure decisions are made openly, lawfully, and in the best interest of the community.

Respectfully,
Gary Hegland
Concerned Landowners of Grandfield Township

Wind farm is a win

Eddy County Planning and Zoning Commission:

I am currently a landowner in Eddy County and member of the Board of Governors for W-E Wind. My grandfather and grandmother homesteaded the farm that my wife and I own.

I grew up in the Sheyenne area and graduated from Sheyenne High School in 1960. Following graduate school, I taught at Ball State University until my retirement in 1999. In addition, my wife and I have owned and operated a small business, HML, for 50 years.

Although I have been gone from the Sheyenne area for years, my heart has

always been there. I feel the wind farm project would be a great addition to the community and bring many benefits to the residents..

Therefore, I would urge the Eddy County Planning and Zoning Commission to approve amendments submitted by Flickertail Wind, LLC, to the Eddy County zoning ordinance.

The wind farm project is a win for the area as it will bring increased tax revenue, small business growth, added revenue for schools and additional jobs.

Sincerely,
Donald A. Hendrickson,
Board of Governors of W-E Wind and Grandfield Township landowner

"First, do no harm"

Community is a commonly used word, but what is it? A group of some kind, yes, yet at the simplest level it is a collection of individuals. So when something is beneficial for the community, we should expect that it would benefit the individuals in the group.

Will the proposed industrial wind project benefit all the individuals of our community? We've heard that money will flow to the theater rebuild and the school, but what about someone who doesn't go to the movies or have kids in school? Those individuals won't benefit the same as a movie-goer with kids.

What about the rural

property owners whose farmstead is surrounded with towers? It's hard to argue that they benefit when their property value is annihilated. What about someone who suffers health effects from the infrasound emitted by the towers?

The Hippocratic Oath in medicine is "first, do no harm," and it should apply to taxpayer-funded community betterment. Wind towers jeopardize the health and wealth of some while enriching others. How does sacrificing some of our own community members make us better?

Preston Meier,
New Rockford, N.D.

We all work within the same rules

As the director of economic development in New Rockford, I've been following the discussion around proposed zoning amendments related to the Flickertail wind project. I've just read the recent mailer that was anonymously sent out about proposed zoning amendments related to the Flickertail wind project. I respect that people have concerns. But I also believe we need to keep this conversation rooted in facts and common sense and not mischaracterize it as something it isn't.

Here's something we all know whenever someone wants to build something in this state or county: a grain elevator, a hog barn, a seed plant, a feedlot, even a new shop building, they work with the county on zoning. Ord-

nances get clarified and updated. Standards get defined. That isn't corruption. That's how local government works.

Agriculture has done this for generations. When livestock facilities expanded, ordinances were updated. When drainage or floodplain rules changed, language was adjusted. No one claimed that was "removing bargaining chips" or called foul. It was making sure the rules were clear, enforceable and aligned with state law.

That's what is happening here.

The current ordinance does not clearly outline how wind projects are permitted, to the point that the county was somewhat confused. The proposed amendments aim to clarify that process and ensure it complies with N.D. Century Code. Clarifying language

isn't stripping protections, it's making sure everyone understands the process and that it follows state law.

The idea that a company can simply put turbines "anywhere" or bypass oversight is misleading. Wind projects must comply with county setbacks, state Public Service Commission requirements, FAA determinations, environmental standards, road agreements and decommissioning requirements. The N.D. Public Service Commission must approve the project layout. Under state siting law, if a turbine location changes from what was approved, the PSC must be notified and review the change. A company cannot simply move turbines around without state oversight.

County zoning is only one layer of regulation, not the only one.

We can have honest disagreements about wind development. That's fair. But suggesting that working with a county to clarify ordinance language is somehow improper ignores how development has always worked in rural North Dakota. This is normal governance, not backroom conspiracy.

Whether it's agriculture, energy or manufacturing, businesses come forward, counties review standards, and elected officials make decisions in public meetings.

That's not special treatment or backroom conspiracy. That's local governance.

We owe it to ourselves, and to our neighbors, to have this discussion based on facts, not fear.

Amanda Hegland,
NRABC Executive Director

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