

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 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 – a great first impression of the service at Buck-It's.

We 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 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 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 burger was even better than most.

I also took off a portion of bacon and tried it by itself. 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 cheesy center – my only complaint was that there weren't more of them on the plate.

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 ordered a buffalo chicken wrap. My brother opted for the JMac burger. 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 – and 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.

Between the excellent fishing guided by local outfitters Matt and Kim Schaefer and delicious, locally-sourced food at Buck-It's, the whole weekend was a great experience for me and my family.

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.



UPSIDE DOWN UNDER

Isn't North Dakota scenic in winter?

BY MARVIN BAKER

I haven't told a lot of people about this hobby, I guess you could call it, of traveling around North Dakota and taking pictures – even during the depth of winter. It's something that I thoroughly enjoy.

A recent excursion took me to the northwest where I witnessed a certain rugged, almost wilderness beauty that can be hard to describe, but I'll try.

As many of you know, the entrance to Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) North Unit is situated just to the south of Watford City. It's incredibly breathtaking to drive along U.S. Highway 85 and see the beauty that exists there as you look toward the west.

This is home to some of the most rugged terrain in North Dakota and the Department of Transportation has strategically placed points of lookout along the route where you feel compelled to stop your vehicle, get out and just take in the view.

Of course, you can always take it a step further by grabbing your camera and go hik-

ing through, or better yet, hop on a trail ride and discover TRNP.

One thing about this park is certain in winter. Parts of it are closed, but you don't have to worry about rattlesnakes.



Stopping in nearby Watford City after getting a close look at the park in winter, is part of the enjoyment of winter. And, although most people look at you a bit strange when you tell them you've been in the park with a 10-degree temperature, they begin to appreciate what they take for granted because it's in front of them all the time.

Here are some things that aren't characteristic of the rest of North Dakota: herds of antelope graze alongside the road; horses grazing among the snow covered bluffs; tall evergreens with snow on the branches for contrast; and other wildlife such as lions or bighorn sheep, if you're lucky enough to see them.

Then, there's the Long X bridge that crosses the Little

Missouri River just south of the park's entrance. What a beautiful location to just sit and ponder.

It's hard to believe that back in territorial days, this area often had skirmishes between Native Americans and Union soldiers.

Now, it's so peaceful, I don't think the tranquility can be matched at any price. Outside the occasional traffic along U.S. 85, it's incredibly peaceful, historic, scenic and of course, the word picturesque comes to mind.

You've heard it, I've heard it, we've all heard it; young people telling us they can't wait to get out of North Dakota and find greener pastures because there is nothing here.

Those people may not have explored the state. Yes, this article is about TRNP, but there is a whole lot more to see across North Dakota in the winter.

Think about this: the Pembina Gorge, Bottineau Winter Park, Devils Lake, Sully's Hill, Fort Ransom, Huff Hills, White Butte, downtown Fargo – especially at Christmas – and many others to include Cross Ranch and Lake Ts-

chida.

Go ahead, take in some of these sites with the little bit of winter we have left. I've been to many of them this time of year and will go back 100 times.

When people complain about the dull, flat landscape without trees, maybe that's what they want to see. Get out, dress warm, explore. You might be surprised at what you find out there, like I did when I first started this hobby 35 years ago.

North Dakota is a big state geographically and there is a lot to see. It's just that those places aren't concentrated in one small radius.

Since I've left high school, I've traveled on nearly every highway and many gravel roads in the state. There's a lot of beauty to behold even during this time of year. I wouldn't trade it for anything. The natural beauty of North Dakota in winter is endless.

Marvin Baker is a news writer for the Kenmare News and formerly Foster County Independent.

– Weekly Recipe –

A nutritious, flavor-packed pasta primavera

Pasta is the foundation of many a delicious meal. When pasta is paired with nutritious ingredients, the result is a flavorful meal that won't compromise anyone's diet.

Light fare that's nutritious and filling is an ideal meal option any time of year. As people seek to eat healthy, they can consider this flavorful recipe for "Pasta Primavera with Asparagus, Peas, Leek and Tomatoes" courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Editor's Note: We are featuring recipes weekly on this page until March 9. The weekly crossword can be found on the game page.

Pasta Primavera with Asparagus, Peas, Leek and Tomatoes

Serves 6 to 8

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Ingredients
For the pasta:
16 ounces fusilli pasta
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 small leek, thinly sliced, washed and drained
9 ounces asparagus, trimmed and halved
11 ounces frozen peas, thawed
8 ounces cherry tomatoes, quartered
Salt
Freshly ground black peppercorns</p> <p>To serve:
5 tablespoons grated parmesan, for sprinkling
1 sprig thyme</p> <p>Directions
1. For the pasta: Cook the fusilli in a large saucepan of salted, boiling water until al dente, about 8 to 10 minutes.</p> | <p>2. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large saute pan set over medium heat until hot. Add the leek and a pinch of salt, and sweat for 5 to 6 minutes until softened.</p> <p>3. Add the asparagus and peas, and cover the pan with a lid. Cook for a further 3 to 4 minutes until the green vegetables are tender to the point of a knife. Drain the fusilli, reserving 1 cup of the cooking liquid.</p> <p>4. Add the fusilli to the vegetables along with the cherry tomatoes, some salt and pepper, and a splash of the reserved cooking water.</p> <p>5. Cook for a further 2 minutes until the pasta looks glossy.</p> <p>6. To serve: Divide between bowls, sprinkle with the parmesan and garnish with some thyme.</p> |
|--|---|

Erik Gjovik.....News, Sports, Photography, Design
Leasa A. Lura.....News, Advertising Layout, Design
Kim Watson.....Copy Editor
Kayla Schumacker.....Accounting

Phone (701) 652-3181 : : FAX (701) 652-3286
Email Address: fosterconews@daktel.com
www.fosterconews.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$78.00 per year in North Dakota; \$85.00 per year elsewhere in the U.S. Online only, \$45 per year. No subscription for less than one year accepted. Postal regulations require subscriptions to be paid in advance.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY: Letters to the editor must be signed to be printed. Editor reserves the right to print letters to the editor at her discretion.

ATTENTION, POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Circulation Department, Foster County Independent, P.O. Box 138, Carrington, ND 58421-0138.

DEADLINE:
News Copy & Photos, Classified Ads & Legals, and Advertising:
Tuesday at 1 p.m.

The Foster County
Independent
P.O. Box 138 Carrington, ND 58421
Amy Wobbema.....Publisher
Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Carrington, North Dakota, and published every Monday from its office at 1191 W Main St., Carrington, ND 58421-0138.
ISSN#0199-4700