

A sandwich that has the Ox factor

OXMANTOWN

★★★★★

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By Alan Kelly

BETWEEN Dublin's Four Courts and Jervis Street Luas stops, along Mary's Abbey, is one of the best little eateries in the city. It's called Oxmantown - named after the area situated between the Liffey, the North Circular and Smithfield.

You can't miss its pastel-grey shop front. I've heard people on the Luas say: "oh, that looks nice!" and then not bother walking the short distance back to give it a try.

They don't know what they're missing. The best pleasures in life are often the simple ones: good coffee, a genuine welcome and a nicely-put-together sandwich. And the guys at Oxmantown sure know how to do that. I reckon most of us eat a sandwich at least once a week. I have three golden rules when it comes to making a good sambo: avoid a soggy bottom, jack up the flavours and always maintain holdability.

After a few visits to Oxmantown, I can report that they are sticking to the rules. The Jack McCarthy black pudding toasted sourdough breakfast sambo with spicy relish, garlicky mayo and rocket, is now



The Damage

Food	€19.70
Coffee	€2.50
Total	€22.20

my unmissable breakfast nirvana. I often skip brekkie at home, just to enjoy what is essentially superfood for the incurably greedy.

Not far behind that is an amazing pork belly sambo. Spicy back notes in super-moist pork (maybe cumin or cardamom), complimented by sweet pickled carrot, chopped scallions, fresh herbs and a fiery mayo. Encased in a soft sourdough roll, it tastes every bit as good as it looks.

Minimum

sogginess, maximum flavour and perfect holdability. I'm hooked. In the history of great pork belly sambos, this one is right up there. The grilled cheese sourdough with Parmesan, Gruyère, roasted tomatoes, pickles and béchamel, is a mammoth in taste and size and a perfect option for lunchtime grazers. I need both hands to manoeuvre this definition of cheesy indulgence. There's also an earthiness here, bordering close to chilli heat. Finally, I need to mention the gorgeous little chocolate hazelnut brownies. Petite in size, but they are still the most enjoyable chocolate goodies I have tasted in a long time.

This is one of the few places I call back to on a regular basis. Sometimes just for a takeout coffee (which is also very good). But it's not just for the convenience and coffee. The staff here also help to make every visit memorable. Still, it's quite difficult to quantify precisely what it is we like about certain foods - especially sandwiches. Good bread is half the battle, as is top-notch filler ingredients that are really the bricks and mortar of any great sandwich. That's where Oxmantown scores big time. The sandwiches never look too way-out, nor do they look too ordinary or mass-produced, but what I call seduction by sandwich. +

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GRAPE SPY BY JEAN SMULLEN

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★ Keep walking, don't even stop at the door ★ ★ Chance it, it beats a night in front of the TV

★ ★ ★ Middle of the road ★ ★ ★ ★ Well worth the money ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ This place is heaven for the tastebuds