

## Restaurant Review

**JustEat by BrownGold**

Cuisine from a wood-burning grill and oven produces satisfied grins at this casual-yet-sophisticated Buckingham restaurant.

IT'S a good sign when you open the door to a restaurant and everyone in your party simultaneously emits an enthusiastic "Mmmmm!" It's even more exciting when they carry that enthusiasm through reading the menu, eating the meal and back out the door, discussing when they will return.

Such was my experience recently at the newly opened JustEat by BrownGold.

Located in the Buckingham Green Shopping Center, just down the strip from their established JustFood catering and takeout storefront in Buckingham, JustEat is the realization of a long-held dream. Chef-owner Marc BrownGold and his wife, Theresa, met in the restaurant business and always planned to open their own place. During the five years at JustFood (which is still going strong), they had the time to solidify their ideas of what the place should be like. It was, they agreed, to be the kind of place where you could loosen your tie and be equally comfortable ordering a salad and appetizer, or a rack of lamb. "A place," says Mr. BrownGold, "where people could come, feel at home, and hang out."

While the atmosphere is casual, there is a sophisticated, urban edge that plays out in rich leathery banquettes, warm terracotta-shaded sponged walls, and lots of little touches: a square of butcher paper on the table, warm Le Bus rolls served straight from the oven in a parchment paper pocket, coarse sea salt in a tiny cup. The room seats about 50, with a small granite counter where a couple of diners can sit and watch the magic being performed at the wood-burning grill and wood-burning oven of the open kitchen. (The only gas in the kitchen serves a six-burner stovetop.)

Just about everything on the menu is cooked on the grill, or in the oven, so it wasn't difficult to order according to the aroma that entranced us when we arrived. I started with the crab cannelloni (\$8.75), two rolls of light, cheesy filling wrapped in a delicate sheet of pasta, washed in a dark, tomatoey sauce. The dish was nice but a little flat, with almost no taste of crab. If this dish left me unimpressed, my husband's pizette (\$7) wowed me. A simple dish, yes, but the confluence of thin, crisp crust, runny fresh mozzarella, a sprinkle of lightly sautéed broccoli rabe and quality olive oil with just enough garlic was close to pizza perfect.

Our friends each had salads. The roasted beet salad (\$8) was tossed with good kalamata olives, mild Feta cheese, a few grilled red onion slices and some greens. The herbed vinaigrette was light, allowing the stars of the dish to shine. Watercress added zing to the spinach salad (\$7.50), which was embellished with roasted red peppers and the traditional hard-boiled egg. Very untraditional, however, was the delicious vinaigrette, dashed with Parmesan and brightened with lemon.

We were enticed by two specials of the evening. I ordered the hanger steak in bourbon marinade (\$26). The meat was ruby red and richly flavored with bourbon sauce, but the thickness of the slices rendered this tricky cut of meat a bit tough. The huge red snapper fillet (\$25) was firm, white and ultra

fresh. The lime watercress butter sauce in which it was dressed had hints of citrus but was almost too subtle.

The duck (\$17) was as delicious as it was unusual. Slices of grilled duck breast were served alongside a stir-fry of slivered duck and vegetables, perfectly seasoned with oriental flavors. The grilled rib eye steak (\$21) was perhaps the best dish to capitalize on the flavor of the wood-burning grill. The huge slice of meat was well blackened with pepper and grilled just right. All entrées are served with the vegetables of the day. That evening we were lucky enough to enjoy a buttery mash of potatoes and parsnips, and a sautéed medley of eggplant, peppers and onions. All the portions were very generous.

Desserts are presented on a tray, thoughtfully decorated with a few pieces of lovely, unblemished fruit. We chose to share the chocolate turtle cake, two dense but dry layers held together with a gooey caramel layer. The carrot cake rewarded with a thick and chunky bite full of carrot, nut and spice in every bite. The icing was classic cream cheese. All desserts cost \$6.50.

Though the restaurant does not have a liquor license, and patrons are invited to bring their own, there is a drink menu worth mentioning. In addition to a variety of bottled teas, waters, espresso and cappuccino, it offers a root beer float, soy cappuccino and hot French chocolate.

Altogether the menu offers a handful of soups and salads, about a half-dozen appetizers and, with the specials, about a dozen entrées. During the week, three bistro dishes offer more homey fare at prices in the low teens. The menu changes monthly, explains Mr. BrownGold, to maintain the interest of regular customers, and the kitchen. Inspiration is found in the season, trends and what is available. Whenever possible, the BrownGolds like to offer organic produce and natural meats, and are developing relationships with local producers.

**JustEat by BrownGold**

Buckingham Green Shopping Center  
4950 Old York Road  
Buckingham  
(215) 794-1818

**Food** Very good

**Service** Very good

**Prices** Upper moderate

**Cuisine** Contemporary American

**Ambiance** Sophisticated casual

**Hours** Mon.-Sat. 5:30-10 p.m., Sun. 5-9:30 p.m.

**Essentials** Accepts VISA and MasterCard; BYO; wheelchair accessible; reservations suggested.