

NOSHINGHAM

Another bi-month, another opportunity for us to cram as much snap into our cakey maws as possible. If you want to be featured on this page email noshingham@leftlion.co.uk

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Cock and Hoop

Hungry? Put a ring on it



Comfortably nestled amongst popular night-time haunts along the cobbled streets of High Pavement and opposite the Galleries of Justice, this none-more-traditional venue serves as the perfect antidote to the city's hustle and bustle. The intimate pub atmosphere - with comfy armchairs and settees galore - make it an ideal place to relax after a busy day at work. It's also the ideal precursor to a date, if you would like a few drinks in a quiet pub venue before venturing downstairs to the dedicated restaurant space. With wine, beer, spirits, traditional and local ales, plus the usual selection of soft drinks, there are beverages available to suit all tastes.

When we ventured downstairs, we discovered an open plan space with quirky little booths for those in pursuit of privacy whilst eating. The service was with a smile and the waitress was attentive. There could have been more space between tables, but tea lights, soothing music and dim lighting made for an ambient atmosphere. The menu, although concise, covered all bases with popular British fish, meat and vegetarian dishes.

You can order nibbles with your drinks, which include mixed olives (£3.00), the roasted nut selection (£2.50) or Tuscan bread with olive oil and balsamic dipping (£3.00). Starters include roasted butternut squash soup with mushroom toast (£4.85), duck leg and breast terrine with green peppercorns and sourdough (£6.50) and a salad comprising devilled lamb's kidney, anchovies, oat cakes and pickled shallots (£5.75). The mains also appeal to British pub food enthusiasts with beer battered hake fillet, mushy peas and chips (£9.50) and roasted leek and kale lasagne (£8.50).

I chose a fish cake (£5.50) for starters and was pleased to discover a hearty, well-seasoned portion with soft mash potato filling. The fish pie main (£9.50) didn't disappoint either with delicate flavours designed to tantalise taste buds. My guest had salmon rillettes (£5.50) followed with succulent lamb rump (£12.50), which proved to be the wholesome and simple British cooking you'd expect from a Michelin Pub Guide venue.

Aimed clearly at people who want a bit more than your standard pub lunch - and a lot less noise - Cock and Hoop is a gastropub *par excellence*. No two-for-ones, to be sure, but the level of value for what you get towers over its rivals.

29-31 High Pavement, NG1 1HE.
Tel: 0115 852 3232

tinyurl.com/cockandhoop

Dino Café and Wine Bar

Definitely *not* a Flintstones theme restaurant



Tucked away on Warser Gate - the long alleyway that connects the Lace Market tram stop to the Old Angel - Dino is a welcome retreat from the mayhem of town. The front bar is furnished with comfy low-slung leather chairs - ideal for hanging out with mates and taking advantage of the tempting £3 cocktail deals that run from 5-9pm. An exceptionally happy group next to us could well have been there all day, as the café opens at 11am with 'proper' Italian coffee, a full lunch menu and free wi-fi if you fancy taking a breather from the office.

Dinner is served from 6-9pm (Tues-Sat) and the last rays of sun beaming through the skylight windows illuminated the tranquil décor as we were shown to our table. We selected a bottle of house Merlot (£13) and started with the bruschetta con peperonata (£3.50) and gamberoni (£4.95), confirming my suspicion that vegetarians are cheaper dates than carnivores (top budget dating tip!) The bruschetta was enough to turn this red-blooded meat eater into a leaf-munching sissy when I sampled my companion's bountiful portion of grilled ciabatta massaged liberally with garlic and heaped with warm caramelized pepper, onion, crumbled goats' cheese and basil. Another advantage of dating a veggie if you're a carnivore is that they can't try *your* food, so I was able to devour a regal plate of butterflied king prawns, magnificently fleshy and infused with garlic, white wine, chilli and lemon butter, all to myself.

The Mediterranean-style menu mainly consists of meat and fish dishes, but several vegetarian options and an extensive specials board ensure plenty of choice. I opted for a succulent supper of monkfish (£9.00) which swaggered in on a black oblong slate, upstaging my companion's risotto di zucca (£7.95) - a perky combination of roasted butternut squash and sage risotto - both visually and in terms of flavour - fortunately he didn't know what he was missing. We were full to bursting and we knew it, but there's always room for chocolate, especially in the form of homemade white chocolate cheesecake (£2.50) - something we could share (reluctantly).

Dino has an emphasis on providing an affordable high-quality menu using locally-sourced produce where possible. Friendly staff and beautiful décor help to make this a great place to linger with friends or on a romantic night out, with live music on weekend evenings. They'll even let you use their piano.

9 Warser Gate, Lace Market, Nottingham NG1 1NU.
Tel: 0115 9504455

Cumin

Oh my Ghosht



Setting up an Indian restaurant in this town is tough - particularly if you opt to do so on Maid Marian Way, a stone's throw from 4550 Miles From Delhi. Laguna and cutlery tosser Chris Tarrant's fave, MemSaab. But two years ago the Arnard family did just that, after establishing similar eateries in Wembley, Leicester, Ilford and Middlesex. Spread over two floors, Cumin is intimate yet spacious, feeling modern without forgetting its Indian heritage, with swathes of reds and darks, solid furnishings and tastefully muted wallpaper.

For starters, I tried the masala fried tilapia (£7.00) a freshwater fish from Kenya. The four pieces came fried in crispy batter, marinated in a blend of lemon and spices, with a peppery edge. My guest went for the boti kebab (£6.00), five tender and tangy morsels of lamb subtly spiced with black pepper, lemon and chilli. I'm a big fan of spicy food, so for my main I scoured the menu for the red pepper symbols and plumped for the bhuna gosht (£10.50), a blend of lamb chunks and bell peppers, slow cooked with onions tomatoes and ginger. Personally I wouldn't class this as a particularly 'hot' dish, although it left a pleasing tingly sensation in my mouth. My guest was more restrained with the murg makhni (£9.50), chunky chicken simmered in a mild and creamy tomato sauce.

We complimented these with a bottle of pinot grigio (£13.50), which was both refreshing and rounded, as well as a few of Cumin's speciality side-dishes. The pilau rice (£2.50) was more than enough to share between two alongside a garlic naan (£2.50). The aloo paratha (£2.50), a pan-seared wholewheat bread filled with mashed potato and with a distinct cheese flavour went down a treat too - but best of all was the bondi raita (£3.00), a fresh creamy yoghurt spiced with roasted cumin and packed with crisp gram flour puffed balls.

We were too full to get stuck into the dessert menu, instead settling for the lemon towels and mints. But they have a few interesting looking dishes on there including pistachio kulfi (£3.00), gulab jamun (£3.00) -fried dumplings in syrup - and rasmalai (£3.00), which are milky sponge cakes. In the face of tough competition on Notts' own curry quarter-mile, The Cumin more than holds its own. If you're going on a rowdy work do then look elsewhere, but if you want to share an intimate meal, ahem, cumin and grab a table.

The Cumin, 62-64 Maid Marion Way, NG1 6BJ. 0115 941 9941

thecumin.co.uk

Our resident fast food expert Beane continues his quest to eat at every takeaway in Nottingham...

MARYLAND CHICKEN

Chicken shops are now starting to rival Greggs in the most-outlets-in-town stakes. Case in point: I clocked people queuing out the door of Maryland the other day - at four in the afternoon. KFC must be seriously sweating at this new player in town.

My first experience of this place almost ended in a visit to casualty: on my way home after a particularly saucy night at the Nottingham Bar and Club Awards, I stopped the taxi after seeing the bright lights of Maryland and ran across the busy Lower Parliament Street at 100mph - straight into the glass door that my beer goggles thought was an open doorway,

and then onto the pavement. With the whole joint in stitches, I dusted myself off and, wobbily, entered to applause. *That* is how you make an entrance, people.

As for the food, well, it's pretty standard fried chicken and chips as expected, best eaten under the influence. Not necessarily a bad thing, though - sometimes a deep-fried bird is actually enhanced by a body swishing about with enough booze to fill a child's paddling pool, and there's certainly a lot worse eateries in Notts. Give it a go, but please; *make sure you open the door first before entering.*

24 Upper Parliament Street, NG1 3DA

DESI EXPRESS

Situated in the thriving centre of Hyson Green - just across the road from that massive tropical grocers-cum-hypermarket - I'd heard many a nice tale regarding Desi Express but had yet to venture in. With the World Cup final looming that night, it *had* to be curry time in the Noodle HQ, so I decided to give it a whirl. It was early Sunday evening and the first thing I noticed was it was well rammed - always a good sign. You can either take a pew and eat in, or load up like Arnie in *Commando* and get your takeaway on big style. The first thing that hit me was how cheap the menu was - was this a fancy kebab house or a proper takeaway?

Me and the Noodle crew opted for some lamb chops, lamb curry, rice, chips, vegetable kaporas and chicken biryani. Stacked up with spice and serious flavour it did the job and then some. A special shout out must go to the rice; normally a side player in your curry game, it was gorgeous - cooked with chick peas and herbs, it went lovely with the hot spicy chops. Bottom line: Desi is good value, highly recommended and goes perfectly with a bit of football.

113 Radford Road, Hyson Green, NG7 5DU