

OLLI AT VANDERBILT

Restaurant Adventures Fall 2016

Restaurant: Coco's Italian Market

Date: October 12, 2016

Location: 411 51st Ave N, 37209

Description: The upscale taste of the food compares well to the rustic casualness of the atmosphere. An Italian market at one end of the building completes the laid back feel to the place while adding many levels of interest—I don't know that anyone had the truffles (as meal portions are large and many of us left with to-go boxes) but the case itself was worth browsing.

Service: very good

Noise level: good for conversation

Parking: around the building--in front accessed from 51st. In back accessed from Alabama which is the one-way street that runs parallel to interstate 40.

Restaurant: Kay-Bob's Grill and Ale

Date: October 20, 2016

Location: 1602 21st Ave. – This is just south of the Peabody campus, on the east side of 21st.

Restaurant description: Kay Bob's defines its food as Persian style grilling with "Southern influences." Kay-Bob's target group is clearly Vanderbilt students, young professionals, and workers at the medical campus. The restaurant is very casual and designed to feed a large number of people quickly. There appears to be adequate tables and seating for the turnaround they typically have. There is no table service. You order from the counter and are given a number that you display on your table. The food is then brought to you. Beer is poured immediately (after paying, of course).

Service: I called the day prior and let them know that a group of 14 senior citizens would be invading Kay Bob's at 1:00. They set aside an area they call "The Nook" for us. This area, along with 2 stray chairs, did accommodate all 14 of us. Kay Bobs did an excellent job of delivering our orders and getting all orders correct.

Food: Most people ordered one of the many variations of flatbreads. Everyone appeared to enjoy their meals describing the lunch as very flavorful. This reviewer ordered the daily special. The chicken was seasoned and grilled perfectly and the mango sauce was an excellent complement. One participant felt that both the slaw and the chicken were flavorless, so she took it home and "doctored it up." There are several special sauces that can be ordered on the side. The French fries are to be recommended – they are cooked in peanut oil to perfection (didn't even think of using ketchup).

Price: Extremely reasonable for the food you receive. Appetizers run between \$6 and \$8. Flat bread sandwiches cost between \$7 and \$10. The portion sizes are very good making this a good value.

Beer/Wine/Liquor: There is a reason why the restaurant is called Kay Bob's Grill and Ale – only beer is available. However, the beer selection is extremely impressive and it is all on tap. (YIPPEE)

Noise Level: We were seated in “The Nook” and the noise/chatter level was terrible. You could only talk to the person to your right or left. My observation is that if you were in the main restaurant area a conversation would be easier, but still not optimal.

Parking: There is some parking behind the restaurant, but don’t expect to find something right away. Most folks reported parking as difficult, even a “nightmare” so do not go during the lunch crunch time.

Overall recommendation: The food is quite good, but the noise level and parking are a big downside. If you are in the area and want to give it a try, stop by no earlier than 1:30 p.m.

Restaurant: Otaku Ramen

Date: November 3, 2016

Location: 1104 Division St, in the Gulch -- just a bit east of 12th street.

Reviewer: Viv Pocek

Restaurant description: The restaurant is small and the inside seating can seem a bit cramped, but there is a large outdoor seating area that seats twice the number of the inside. The place is definitely casual and seating is all wooden – anyone with back problems should bring a cushion. It is a new restaurant and when we went, it was immaculately clean.

Service: I called several days prior to gather some information. They do not take reservations – ever. However, we were able to sit together at one of the larger tables. Our waiter was attentive and helpful describing the menu, a good thing since this was everyone’s first time to the restaurant.

Food: The restaurant specializes in a variety of Ramen bowls. Ramen is a wheat-based noodle that has more strength than traditional noodles and can maintain integrity better in the broth. There are several varieties of savory broths and each style of broth is paired with a special shape of noodle. According to the website, slurping is highly recommended – it coats your lips with the rich broth, and it complements the chef. The bowls are large and the amount of food you receive is impressive. The tables have plenty of chop sticks and napkins, but you can ask for a fork.

Several folks ordered the Tennessee Tonkotsu bowl and enjoyed it immensely. I had the Veggie Miso with tofu, bean sprouts and roasted corn. I would absolutely order this again – the broth/noodle mixture was amazing. In summary, the group enjoyed the ramen noodle experience. I can’t wait to go back.

Price: The Ramen bowls run between \$12 and \$14. The bowls are quite large with a lot of noodles, broth, vegetables and protein. For the price, I would say the bowls are a good value.

Beer/Wine/Liquor: There is Kirin and another Japanese beer on tap. There is no bar, so I was not able to research the situation more.

Noise Level: The music volume could have been less, but luckily we were seated together and more guests were sitting in the outdoor area.

Parking: Not a problem. There is a parking garage just west of the restaurant on Division. There is also a large lot across the street.

Overall recommendation: The food is very good and the Ramen experience is fun – worth the trip. A word of warning however, do not wear anything that needs to be dry-cleaned. I found that I had broth “spray” on my face and on my top. A small price to pay for the taste, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.

Restaurant: Adele's

Date: Friday, November 11, 2016. Time of day: 1:00 pm

Location: 1210 McGavock (faces 12th street, stop of the gulch)

Number of OLLI attendees: 7

Reviewer: Viv Pocek

Restaurant description: The restaurant occupies a building that was once a car repair facility. The place is quite big and has a casual/industrial feel that blends well with the building, flooring and seating. Due to the size of Adele's, tables have plenty of space between. Adele's only serves lunch on Fridays and Saturdays (brunch on Sundays), so lunch reservations are recommended. Because of the demand during lunch, large parties are given a "family-style" menu -- all food is served on platters that are shared. They do this for two reasons: first, so that people can sample several items, and second, so that everyone eats at the same time.

Seating/comfort: The décor purposely has an industrial look and feel to reflect the type of building it once was. Chairs are not padded, so anyone with back issues should bring a pad.

Service: I had made arrangements with Adele's several days before for a larger party. We had several cancellations and we ended up with a group of seven. Our server was extremely attentive and professional. The appetizer platters arrived promptly and the main course platters arrived at a nice interval.

Food: The owner/chef is a James Beard award winner, so expectations were high. Our appetizer/salad round was an excellent kale salad plus perfectly spiced meatballs and polenta. The main course consisted of JW chicken, pizzette with roasted tomato, gnocchi with cipollini, rosemary and hazelnuts and JW potatoes. In my opinion, the chicken and potatoes were absolute stand-outs. I did not care for the gnocchi, but I think it is a personal textural thing.

Price: The family-style lunch is \$30 per person (did not include dessert). There was an additional \$7.00 service fee and a gratuity of \$20 was automatically added. Separate checks were not a problem. For the regular menu, starter prices range from \$8 to \$13 and the main course ranges from \$12 to \$21.

Beer/Wine/Liquor: Full bar. The beer list is not great, but it is representative enough so that a beer snob (like me) would be able to find something.

Noise Level: The music volume was appropriate. We were at a long table at one end of the restaurant, so background dinning chatter was not a problem. However, Adele's décor is casual/industrial with many hard, reflective surfaces. I can easily see where the noise level could become nasty.

Parking: Not a problem. Adele's has a large parking lot in front of the restaurant.

Overall recommendation: Adele's is pricey, but the food is incredibly flavorful and the service was excellent. I would easily go back for the JW chicken. Consider Adele's for a special lunch or if you have a special group you want to impress.