



Encontro North Park

Submitted by Lynn on Friday, November 4, 2016 - 5:27pm.



Encontro North Park is a quick service restaurant located on the busy intersection of 30th St and University Ave. It's been open less than a year and I've passed by this corner full of curiosity. We finally stopped in for dinner and a meet-and-greet with the new chef!



The seating is open with multiple communal tables and a few tables on the patio. After ordering at the counters, the servers will find you by number and then the feasting begins! One of the walls has a large mural of hops and more art will be added in the future! We visited during October so it was decorated for halloween.

After taking a seat at the window, Executive Chef Jason Hotchkiss came out to greet us personally! He described the menu as paleo style food, mostly meats and greens. Just about everything was made in house too. We suggested that he 'surprise' us since he knew the menu best.



Portobello Fries - crisp fried, shaved parmigiano-reggiano

We began with some appetizers first. This portobello is deep fried and delicious! Dennis said it reminded him of calamari. We thought it had a great salty and crispy exterior and the surprisingly juicy insides was remarkable! It's a different sensation than your typical fries because the contents are juicy! I didn't even need the dipping sauce on the side.



Brussels Sprouts - crisp fried, applewood bacon, capers, apple cider vinegar

These brussels were nicely salted with some char to them. We do wish the bacon pieces were a little bigger so that we could taste it more in the dish.



We were served three sausages protein style: thai (top left), italian (bottom), and lamb (right). Otherwise, these typically come wrapped in sandwiches with the fixings. You'll also notice that they stack the smaller trays into a bigger tray which has holes to hold the condiments!



The initial bite of the **Italian Sausage** made me think of a pork chop with a dry herbiness to it. I was surprised to see actual pieces of pork in there too! Similarly, the **Thai Sausage** (pictured above), had larger chunks of shrimp but this one was flavored with a red pepper and curry-like spice to it! There was definitely some warmth and heat to it but it didn't burn the mouth. The **Lamb Sausage** was the leanest one and we felt it needed to be glorified with tzatziki sauce in a sandwich per the menu!

All sausages were made in house without additional oils or curing salts. I think this made them leaner than other places we've tried but they still retained some moistness to them. Dennis's favorite was the unique flavored Thai Sausage.



Short Rib | provencal white polenta, bacon, natural juices

This was one of the new and recommended dishes by the chef. The polenta did feel a little heavier due to the infusion of mascarpone cream but with the natural meat juices seeping in, all was forgotten in a moment of bliss! Even the polenta-avoiding Dennis couldn't resist this creamy polenta!



Dennis was about to use a knife and fork to cut the beef but found that it required very little force with just a fork. The bark had nice flavor and as you dived towards the center, it got more tender and juicy! The deep slow cooked flavor penetrated the whole meat, and you could taste the braising sauce. Pockets of fatty melty in your mouth pieces were what I loved best about this dish!



For a finisher, we got the **Churro Hand-Spun Milkshake**. The base is vanilla ice cream from Hammonds down the street and Encontro North Park adds their own spin with additional sugar, cinnamon and a churro! The churro is nothing special but the shake tasted just like the Choctaw Mexican Vanilla that Dennis craved ever since [Latin Food Fest in LA](#). We were already full from the rest of dinner but our dessert stomachs had no complaints that night. We'd come back just for this!



Since North Park is full of breweries, there are multiple good beers on tap at the bar. I like the greenery and the hanging lights decorations.



We don't drink beer too often so instead tried the kombucha on tap. Surprisingly we both enjoyed this flavor of strawberry and ginger. There was not too much carbonation which worked great for me.



After dinner, we had a more lengthy chat with Chef Jason. He used to run a couple of really big restaurant groups but this business with Encontro gave him a chance to focus on one place and make it the best it can be! Chef Jason also mentioned they want to eventually transition the restaurant to a more sit-down environment and bring more in-house desserts to the menu. They do

have seasonal menu items and plan to have beer pairings and similar events. During this time, a gentleman comes by and asked if Jason was the chef. After confirming, the guy said the salmon was really awesome and gave him a high five. We asked Chef Jason about some of his favorite items at the restaurant. One was the beef rib we tried as well as the potatas bravas and the gem salad. That salmon is also on our hot list after hearing it from the other guest. We wonder what other kinds of fun things are in the works for chef's takeover. We're already liking this place and can't wait to come back to try more!

Disclaimer: We were invited to dine here and our meal was complimentary. We were not otherwise compensated and all opinions stated are our own.

Encontro North Park
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