



PAN HAGGERTY

KAREN WILSON GETS STUCK INTO SOME COMFORT FOOD

Address:

Pan Haggerty
21 Queen Street
Newcastle

Tel: (0191) 221-0904

First impressions:

As the premises were previously occupied by Terry Laybourne's respected Café 21, I had high expectations for Pan Haggerty, a new venture that aims to provide hearty British dishes as opposed to the piffling portions of nouvelle cuisine.

A Monday lunchtime was always going to be quiet and when we arrived at 2pm there were just a couple of other diners. But who needs other diners for atmosphere?

We were happy enough to be ensconced in the corner with enough light background music to remove the need for any self-conscious whispered conversations.

Style, design and furnishings:

I'm not a fan of light, bright restaurants with too much wattage, so the intimate subdued lighting, deep damson walls and wooden shutters created a nice, cosy feel.

A central bar splits the two dining areas and there are a smattering of black and white local scenes dotted around the walls.

Cuisine:

Much like the toilets, the quality of the bread is often a reliable indicator of a good restaurant so when two big hunky slabs of delicious warm bread arrived I knew the rest of the meal would be good. It had that heaviness and special taste that reminded me of my mam's homemade batches.

And it wasn't the only thing designed to give you a rush of childhood nostalgia. The entire menu was dotted with familiar food - beer battered fish, mushy peas,

Gooseberry Fool, rice pudding – but all of it updated and given a contemporary twist.

My partner opted for the black pudding with potatoes and rocket leaves to start while I plumbed for the haddock fish cakes, which were beautifully light and fluffy.

For the main course my partner chose the minute steak with fat chips and green sauce while I was drawn towards the chicken, mostly because it came with bubble and squeak. It was moist and tender with a crispy skin while the bed of nicely seasoned bubble and squeak was the perfect accompaniment.

Both of us fancied the Amaretto bread and butter pudding with vanilla custard, but as we really needed to choose different things for review purposes, my partner won. Well, it was his birthday.

Despite not being a fan of banana, I tend to like it when mixed with other flavours so my banana and caramel ice cream

cake didn't disappoint. Having tasted the bread and butter pudding though, it was definitely the best choice and my partner's favourite dish. They also do a Bailey's version which sounds delightful. There wasn't really a chocolately option though, which would've been nice.

Drinks:

Two large glasses of perfectly respectable house cuvee red wine came to £3.60 each and my partner's latte was £1.95.

Service:

As this is a new business, we were actually served by one of the owners who couldn't have been more charming, friendly and helpful.

Value:

Given the quality of the food, this was akin to shopping at M&S but paying Asda prices. Three courses from the set lunch menu was £15 per head or £12 for two courses.

Verdict:

Brilliantly executed hearty British food with a big dollop of nostalgia. This is comfort food at its best.

