

Eat at Jumbo's

A deli of elephantine proportions

By PATRICK MAIN

On a recent weekday evening, a friend and I decided to test out Ball Square's newest arrival, Eat at Jumbo's. There's been a hole in the heart of Ball Square ever since the much-loved Urban Gourmet burned down in October 2006. While Urban's cuisine can be procured at the nearby City Slickers, Ball Square was in danger of becoming "Breakfast Square." Now, after many fits and starts in getting the storefront rebuilt, Jumbo's opened last month with a similar menu.

Though it would seem their bread and butter is in their takeout and delivery service—which, for a pizza, wings and sandwich joint, comes as no surprise—the dining room is bright and comfortably situated with five wide tables and two-seater counters window-side. Pieces from Vermont artist Emelina Spinelli adorn the walls, and a pleasant overall aesthetic is achieved with the combination of aluminum chairs, black paneled wood and the collegiate font featured on all signage. Despite no affiliation with the neighboring university, Tufts, Jumbo's namesake is also the school's mascot.

Much like the friendly pachyderm, their menu is staggeringly huge. There are 10 custom burger combos, 13 specialty pies, wings and tenders available in your choice of 27-plus sauces (we were told there are more to come that are not yet listed), and over 25 sandwiches/wraps/paninis—featuring Thumann's MSG-free deli meats.. And that's before you even tap into their sides, which include fried green beans (\$4.49) and Cajun onion rings (\$4.79).

I went with the Little Italy (\$5.99) from their specialty sandwich list. Presented in a crusty baguette, it was loaded with chunky Roma tomatoes, basil and mozzarella balls, topped with oil and balsamic vinegar. The tomatoes were bright red and very fresh, and the bread was well equipped to stand up to the dressing without getting soggy.

My friend chose the Hollywood Burger (\$7.99), which comes topped with cheddar, avocado (a full half of the fruit, no guacamole substitute) and bacon. It was cooked to juicy perfection, medium rare, with a deliciously seasoned, grilled exterior that gave way to a tender, pink inside. The unseeded white bun was nicely toasted; though, it's highly likely a delivery order may lead to a soggier result.

We split their "wing of the day," honey barbecue (\$6.59/8 wings), and were only slightly disappointed with the sole lackluster offering of the night. They were crispy, but the flavoring wavered between too sweet and too meh. There's hope, though, as we chose only one of an impressive array of sauce options, including spicy Thai peanut, creamy pesto and General Gau varieties.

There's no doubt that Eat at Jumbo's is filling a void within a square beset by daytime culinary options. The ingredients are fresh, the service prompt and there's a little something for everyone on their menu (though indecision could prove stressful in choosing). Having just gone online with their ordering, they're a little swamped at night, but they're hiring!—a rarity these days—for help with their Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Don't forget to snag a circus peanut (Jumbo's favorite) by the register if you drop in. Rating: * * *

* * * * * phenomenal

* * * * added to the regular rotation

* * * solid cuisine, presentation and taste

* * average

* meh

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