

# AMUSE \* BOUCHE

*A HODGEPODGE OF INDIVIDUAL, BITE-SIZED MUSINGS. IT IS MY HOPE THAT THESE NIBBLES, LIKE AN AMUSE-BOUCHE, WILL NOT ONLY WHET YOUR PALATE, BUT ALSO EXPOSE A PORTHOLE INTO MY ADVENTURES WITH COOKING AND DINING... AS WELL AS LIVING AND THRIVING IN NEW YORK CITY.*

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2010

## **Sanfords: Gourmet Comfort Cuisine at Diner Prices**

I first discovered Sanfords one night when I was searching the web for restaurants that served into the wee hours. When I stumbled across the 24 hour menu, and the realization set in that I could have anything from tuna tartar to a portabella panini, from steak frites to ebi fry shrimp, I rubbed my eyes in disbelief. A restaurant with such a wide variety of offerings, with most items ranging from \$7 to \$12? I have tried my fair share of 24-hour joints that boast a boatload of offerings, but rarely does the variety taste half as good as it looks.

*Sanfords is the exception. Not only would I recommend this place as a last stop on the way home after a late evening of drinking, but I would recommend it as a top brunch spot, the ideal lunch rendezvous, and a perfect casual date place.*

Sanfords has been an Astoria destination for over 75 years, and after merely walking in the front door, you can see why.



Originally a 24 hour coffee shop, it has most recently been transformed by the Karalekas brothers, who took over for their father, a Greek immigrant. One is a self-taught chef, and the other a certified sommelier (they boast an impressive selection of unique premium wines at surprisingly low prices). Though I have yet to meet the brothers, I can tell you that their enthusiasm and passion for food and wine shines brilliantly through their menu.

While I have ordered from Sanfords for delivery, taken friends for lunch, and yes, stumbled in with friends on the way home after a few cocktails, I have consistently had wonderful experiences. For brunch, I have to recommend the crab cakes benedict (plump, delicious, 100% lump crab meat), the corned beef hash (savory, hearty, and honestly the best of its kind), or the banana chocolate chip pancakes with 100% pure maple syrup.

At lunch, you have to try the flaky spring rolls filled with a delicious warm, herbed feta. Their crunchy ranch quesadilla is loaded with crispy panko breaded chicken, bacon, red onions, guacamole, pepper jack, and ranch dressing. You can even order a burger with meted fontina, caramelized onions, chipotle aioli... and two dollars of the price is donated to the Ronald McDonald house for children suffering from cancer.

Want to keep the meal at \$10? Try the pasta prix fixe, which includes soup or salad, and a beverage. They offer an absolutely divine penne dish with grilled chicken, tossed in an avocado cream sauce (out of this world!)

It's true, I have enjoyed Sanfords extensive menu on numerous occasions. What impressed me most on this last visit was that not only was the food as exceptional as always, but we have had remarkable service every single time.

Our recent excursion was a late night, perhaps a little tipsy, twilight craving. Our server, Mike, inevitably noticed our rosy countenances and heightened volume, but greeted us with a genuine smile. I cannot imagine the graveyard shift to be a coveted one, but he helped us with our choices, and took noticeable pride in not only the food, but the entire experience. I love knowing that just around the corner from my home, I can sit with great friends absolutely any time of day, enjoy an exceptional meal with genuine hospitality, and walk out without a noticeable dent in my pocket.

Order anything that piques your interest. I imagine everything is great. I can't fathom there's a bad server in the mix, either, but definitely request Mike if he is working. He seems knowledgeable on the entire menu, and isn't afraid to help steer you in your choices.

*The butternut squash ravioli tasted like thanksgiving in a pasta pillow swimming in creamy toasted almond and sage sauce.*

We devoured the sesame-soy-marinated tuna tartar, layered with creamy guacamole on a drizzle of wasabi aioli. You absolutely have to try the hickory smoked pulled pork on corn-dusted kaiser roll. This has been a favorite with everyone who tries it. My roommate, Matty, refuses to order anything else. It's one of the best pulled pork sandwiches ever. Tender, lean, smoky deliciousness on a soft bun with warm seasoned fries and a ramekin of ketchup.

The Sanfords panini on toasted fresh ciabatta is loaded with juicy grilled chicken, apple wood bacon, apples, brie, and signature honey mustard.

A simple, extremely successful interpretation of chicken parmigiana. Again, the panko bread crumbs here are key.

After cutting through the blanket of melted mozzarella, you still find a crispy golden breaded cutlet on a bed of linguine. The aroma of tomato, basil, and garlic made everyone at the table try a bite.

Even if it means you have to forego an appetizer, or wrap a portion of your meal so that you can save room, you simply have to indulge in the banana caramel cheesecake xangos. Warm, flaky pastry tortilla wrapped around creamy cheesecake and slivers of banana, in a bed of vanilla ice cream, chocolate, and butter caramel. At \$6, it's one of the best deals on the menu, and the perfect ending to share.

*Located just off the Broadway stop off the N or W, right at the corner of Broadway and 31st St, you simply have to try Sanfords. Whether going out, or staying in but craving delicious new American comfort food delivered right to your door, I feel confident that Sanfords will pleasantly surprise you. They've already created a raving fan out of me.*