

Restaurant Review 24 Winfield's A Gathering Place January 19, 2015

RESTAURANT REVIEW: Winfield's Gathering Place A new restaurant opened Monday January 19th in the old Bread Co store at 10312 Manchester in the shopping center at the southwest corner of Manchester Road and Woodlawn in Kirkwood. We were there at 2:15 to try lunch. The restaurant is owned by Mark Winfield and former Cardinal centerfielder Jim Edmonds.



It is located perfectly to draw in wealthy dinners. It is just a couple of blocks from Warson Woods and Glendale. It is near the south portion of Ladue, around the corner from the affluent village limits of Huntleigh and not far from the southeastern portion of Frontenac. A great recipe for success...being surrounded by rich people. Now the challenge is for the food to be good enough to bring them back.

After reading a piece in the Riverfront Times that showed various menu items, I decided to do lunch at Winfield's Gathering Place on Opening Day, January 19. I never found a problem with food on the first day of the baseball season at any ball park I was at. That would not be the case at Winfield's, despite the fact they had been doing run-throughs for four days, including a soft opening for a charity event.

The dining room was a combination of tables on wheels so the room could be reconfigured in minutes, booths and bar stools at the kitchen counter. The bar side had high tables and bar stools. Of course there were plenty of wide screen-TVs.



As I was picking three sides and an appetizer to order my wife decided we should split something. It is impossible to ask a waitress what is the most popular item three hours after the place opened for the first time.

It was decided there would be an order of buttermilk battered onion rings (\$7). The sides would be sautéed green beans, Potatoes Au Gratin (\$4) and "Grandmother's" slaw (\$3). The main order would be the Brisket French Dip (\$12).

Just to let you know, the cheeseburger is \$10.50...add bacon and it is \$12. An award winning hamburger at O'Connell's is \$5.75, \$6.50 for a cheeseburger.



In all fairness my wife and I had eaten three onion rings before I remembered to snap the photo. The Buttermilk Onion Rings are handmade, fresh dipped to order. They were good, but a little too greasy. The onion rings just become the first layer of grease in my stomach for the afternoon. A medium fresh made Onion Ring order three miles west on Manchester at Cheeburger Cheeburger is just \$4.69.

The sautéed green beans were good, but not as good as the Brick Top's green beans. My wife liked the Cole Slaw a lot. I wasn't crazy about it. The Au Gratin potatoes arrived in their own little cast iron skillet. And they were cold.



As good reviewers we did not mention anything, but when a member of the management team asked us how everything was we could not help but mention that the potatoes were cold. She took them away and hot potatoes arrived a few minutes later with something different...two little plastic cups of chives and another dressing which could be added to the potatoes but were missing from our first cold order.

I like almost any kind of potato. The best Au Gratin potatoes I have ever had were in a restaurant in Basel Switzerland. I have never had anything close to them in the United States or anywhere else. I liked the hot potatoes at Winfield's, but they like the onion rings were extra greasy, thanks to too much butter and not enough cheese.

Next was the Brisket French Dip, which my wife and I were going to split. The fact that I was having trouble using a steak knife cutting the sandwich in half was not a good sign.



The bread was soggy and while the meat was tender enough for brisket it was missing one thing...taste.

The other thing that was amusing was that normally with a French Dip you can dip a portion of the sandwich into a large cup of the au jus. That was not the case here. If you look to the rear of the plate you will see how the au jus arrived in a small plastic cup which was impossible to stick any part of the sandwich into.

The co-owner and namesake Mark Winfield stopped at our table and asked us for our opinions. I pointed out the au jus container issue and he immediately said that was a mistake, it was supposed to arrive in a bowl. When I mentioned the brisket needed some taste, which perhaps the au jus could have added, he took a friendly exception and told me how their brisket won 15 awards at BBQ competitions. He then back tracked when he realized that the restaurant's "French Dip Brisket" was different from their regular "brisket." He brought over two strips of meat that are served with the regular brisket sandwich. It had a lot more flavor.

But it is strange that the place has two different looking and tasting meats that are both sold as "brisket."

The service was fine with one exception. At first it seemed like we were back in Maryland having lunch in Baltimore. Our waitress (who is not from Baltimore) called my wife "Hon." That is a very common moniker for customers in Baltimore. But when our

waitress called my wife "hon" for the fourth time it was getting old. I have a feeling that for some future customers from the Central Snoburbia areas of Ladue and Frontenac even one "hon" might be one too many.

Honestly if I wanted lunch and was on Manchester Road near Woodlawn, I would probably head south on Kirkwood Road for a burger at the One-19 North or go north to Brick Top's at Plaza Frontenac or go east to either the Charcoal House or Faratto's in Rock Hill.