

Wheelin' and mealin'

Clean starts and big finishes at this bike-friendly sandwich joint

BY FAIYAZ KARA

Orlando isn't exactly known for its bike-friendly thoroughfares, what with the lack of good public transportation clogging up streets with sedans and SUVs of every conceivable size. In the early '90s, in fact, the city was consistently voted as one of the worst in the country for cyclists – I've personally known two people who were hit by careless drivers while enjoying a ride on our mean streets. And while things have improved in recent years (more bike-ways, bike racks, bike awareness), the gains aren't worth an ache in the undercarriage if motorists remain oblivious to pedal-pushers. So, given this city's less-than-stellar rep for cycling I, naturally, opted to drive to Bikes, Beans & Bordeaux, a cute little neighborhood café in Audubon Park and a haven for urban bikers.

The night I visited, a hobbling chap sporting a crutch (a motorist-related mishap, perhaps?) walked in to unwind with a few of his cycling buddies, giving rise to a cacophony louder than a roomful of yellow jerseys. A place for quiet conversation it's not, even when half-full, but the space, decorated in an understated modern style, proves owners Jen and Darrell Cunningham have good taste. For that matter, so did a glass of Marqués de Griñón caliza (\$10.50), the blend of Spanish syrah

and graciano getting the meal off to clean start. (In honor of the Vuelta a España, or Tour of Spain, there were a few Spanish selections on the wine list.) A thick smoothie of peanut butter, banana, milk, yogurt and honey (\$3.95) made for a far more sluggish beginning.

But the pace picked up again with the sandwiches, many named after famous cyclists. (A suggestion, if I may: the Steve Bauer-y Bum, with slices of rump roast, pearl onions and banana peppers.) The Rasmussen (\$6.95), named after Danish cyclist Michael "The Chicken" Rasmussen, is everything a chicken salad sandwich should be: creamy, crunchy and subtly sweet, thanks to the inclusion of grapes. The café's focus on health means sandwiches are served with your choice of carrot sticks or Flat Earth vegetable chips, as well as a small bag of Jelly Bellies. The caprese panini (\$6.95) was perfectly pressed and not a palate-shredder, with just the right ratio of mozzarella-to-tomato-to-basil. But sampling the broccoli cheddar soup (\$3.95) was akin to having your bike chain slip off its sprocket. Too runny and devoid of chunkiness, the soup brought the proceedings to a screeching halt. I did get my fill of the thick, wonderful hummus (\$6.95), circled by "spokes" of celery, cukes, carrots, tomato, zucchini and squash.

Don't expect to have your order taken tableside. The idea is to place it at the counter, after which the meal will be brought to you. I made the mistake of waiting for my order to be taken, and Jen was kind and gracious enough to oblige, but that isn't the norm. It's easy to make that assumption, as the place just looks like it has full table service. I made sure to get off my seat when it came time for dessert, and it's a good thing, too, as both the Nutella cupcake (\$1.85) and the chocolate-coconut-butter-scotch brownie (\$2.95) were finish-line favorites. A cup of Jittery Joe's coffee (\$1.45) offered an appropriate kick-start.

Riding your bike to B3 is encouraged – just keep your eye on the racks outside, lest you inadvertently re-create a scene from a Vittorio de Sica film. The restaurant business, after all, has always had a cyclical nature.

dining@orlandoweekly.com

**BIKES, BEANS
& BORDEAUX**
3022 Corrine Drive
407-427-1440
Sandwiches
Cheap



Photo by Gregg Matthews

FREEWHEELIN' *Tour de force sandwiches for Tour de France watchers*