

GOURMet + sANDwicheS = Gourmands



Half Earl Hot Sandwich with Italian marinated chicken breast, provolone, poblanos, black olives, sliced tomato, shredded lettuce, sprouts, pepperoncini relish and Roasted Tomato Soup in a bread bowl.

There's something homey and inviting about neighborhood pubs. I haven't had the pleasure of living within walking distance of many, but they make me think of Crowley's on the recent sitcom *My Boys*, or Central Perk on the infamous *Friends*. It's the kind of place you walk into and either you're friends with people who work there, or you become friends with people who work there, and you know that if you're missing one of your true friends, you can always find them there. It's your go-to for a cup of coffee, a drink, or a bite. It's comfy, unassuming, and maybe even part of your weekly routine.

Enter Gourmands, the new self-termed 'neighborhood pub' on E. 7th and Webberville. And, it fits the literal description perfectly. Can we stop for one second to appreciate their URL: www.lovetheysandwich.com! Um, love it just as much as I love their extensive sandwich menu that makes it hard to even choose one. Although some take the word "gourmand" to describe one with an advanced tasting palate, my take on the name is the combination of the words 'Gourmet' and 'Sandwich'. Their sandwiches are well thought-out, complex (fried avocado?!), stacked high, and even a bit fancy with the fun combinations of fillers packed between two slices. Hot or cold, simple, or sophisticated, there's a sandwich for everyone.

On my first visit with Sandy from Marketing Uncorked (she's a promotional product pro!), we both got the half sandwich and soup combo, which was perfect since even half a sandwich was filling enough! We were both excited and surprised to see the roasted tomato soup laid perfectly in the scooped out center of a round bread bowl, which is baked locally. I also loved the toasty touch to the hot sandwich I ordered. We also both commented on the tasty handful of homemade crispy potato chips that embellished our lunches. We even met owner Tiffany when she stopped by our table, which made the experience all the more personal. Today, I made a second stop there to pick up a salad to-go for lunch since my shared workspace is in the neighborhood. Much like the 'neighborhood pubs' I mentioned above, I met Jeremy, a server and bartender, and informed him that I would be a regular since I'm close by and needing casual and close lunch options. He even invited me to enjoy a mid-day refreshment (which I declined- work was waiting!), but ensured I'd take a raincheck on my next near visit.

Needless to say, I'm a big fan. I'm thrilled with my new find and to pay tribute to neighborhood pubs, whichever neighborhood they live in. Gourmand's successfully transformed a former Tejano nightclub into a go-to spot with character, which, in my opinion, the East side can't have enough of. There's something about the black and white checkered flooring, the jukebox welcoming visitors to set the musical mood, and the friendliness of the staff and the menu that just makes me feel like I can be myself and that I'm a part of the neighborhood. Okay, I think if I say neighborhood one more time, I'm going to have to reference Mr. Rogers. Just pay a visit, you'll leave with a smile. (Oh, and don't forget to check out their happy hour and weekday specials!)