

Amuse Brunch



Amuse Bouche Blondie with chocolate frosting (not on the menu).

Say hello to this happy bite of goodness. When was the last time you had an abuse bouche at brunch? Not to be confused with an appetizer, an amuse bouche is a bite before the meal offered by the chef to awaken the tastebuds. How about the first? My first was last weekend when some of my closest college friends joined me in Chicago for a mini-reunion and we took a coworker's recommendation to venture out to Logan Square for a midday meal at JAM. When this one-inch-on-all-sides sweet bite arrived at our place settings shortly after we were seated, we had a lengthy discussion about what amuse bouche means and how to pronounce it. Not only did it awaken our tastebuds, it gave us a sweet first impression of the meal to come and was a fantastic conversation starter - not that we needed one - put us in a room together and we're laughing (and subsequently crying) in a matter of minutes. The sign of true friends.



Vegetable Melt with roasted cauliflower & parsnip, avocado, piquillo peppers, asiago, rustic bread, apple-arugula salad.

How fantastic does this veggie sandwich look? Aviva and I split this one, and it was a fantastic choice. In fact, it inspires me to try to make this at home. The avocado was creamy, the roasted cauliflower and parsnip gave the filling texture some weight to match the thickness of the bread that framed it. The apple-arugula salad was a light and bright complement to the wholesome sandwich.



What my out of town visitors indulged in - the JAMburger with butterkase, sunnyside egg, smoked tomato sauce, seasoned fries.

This thing says it all. I did not indulge in this one but Elliot and Vina, my other house guests ordered one - each. In fact, when they asked the waiter about it before ordering, he said "This is one of the few burgers I've ever craved and thought, I need to have one right now." That sold it. They mentioned the roasted tomato and the oozy egg really made the burger stand out.



Egg Whites (poached) with root vegetable hash gratine, roasted brussels sprouts, and fennel soubise.

I dug into this dish so fast, I forgot to take a picture until it was almost gone. (Sorry for the less than beautiful snapshot!) The poached egg white was unique to me and very light, the roasted brussels sprouts cannot be spotted in this picture because Aviva and I gobbled them up - so. delicious. And the root vegetable hash gives me another idea for a unique dish to make and serve at home when I host brunch at home in the future. The beets and parsnips were fantastic, I could taste hints of thyme or rosemary and there was something homey about the warm root compilation.

And the star of the show...



Maple Pancakes with meyer lemon custard, Indian sugar brulee, citrus rind conserve.

No, this is not a sauceless pizza. When I saw that these Maple Pancakes had a small order option (like a short and tall stack in traditional pancakeries), I placed an order so we could all take a sweet bite to end the meal. I didn't realize from the menu description that it would be so 'decadent', to use our waiter's words when I asked about them. And, let me just say, I'm a chocolate person (over fruity) if I go for sweet, but this dish was so memorable for many reasons. First, the maple pancake batter already elevated the basic breakfast staple by making it deep in color and consistency. And the sticky and creamy caramelized lemon custard topped with citrus rind marmalade atop the cake definitely stuck with me. The bright citrus flavors were the perfect fresh ending to our mid-day feast.

Although the food speaks for itself, I was impressed with JAM for a reason that cannot be overlooked and must be appreciated. We were surprised when our waiter pointed out the chef and part-owner of JAM, Chef Jeffrey Mauro, who was standing on the outside of the kitchen counter facing the line cooks. I'm used to seeing chefs IN the kitchen. But when we took a closer look, we noticed he was inspecting every dish that was set on the counter for delivery to each table, he garnished many of them, and made sure the plating was clean and the presentation was precise. I so appreciated that level of quality and could definitely tell the difference in the high standards of the kitchen and on the table. I can't wait to go back, the brunch was just jammin'!