

Next

M A G A Z I N E

November 10th, 2005

The Diner

44 Ninth Ave
(@ 14th St)
212-627-2230

by: Peter Sherwood



With neighbors such as The Gansevoort Hotel, Soho House and the perennial Pastis, *The Diner* (parked across the street from Mark't) is unexpected company. The look of the Airstream Trailer of yesteryear inspires this new eatery boasting a closing time no earlier than 6am and good, honest comfort food. The grub is straightforward, without much of the heightened gimmickry we've come to expect from retro restaurants of its ilk: there are no truffles in the mac 'n' cheese, the burgers are foie-gras free and the lobster rolls aren't peddled out on toasted foccaccia, but served in—of all things—a basic hot dog bun.

My friends and I started with carafes of red and white wine. I stuck with a nice Chilean Casa Julia Sauvignon Blanc (\$12) while they sucked down an apparently highly drinkable Spanish Fontana Mesta Tempranillo (\$12). The

Organic Field Green Salad with Goat Cheese (\$5.95) for the vegetarian among us was simple but delicious, elevated by an amazing lemon-herb vinaigrette. Despite its inordinately high price,

I enjoyed the Lobster Roll (\$19) due to the quality of the meat and the liberal use of Old Bay, but it had far too much lemon-herb mayo where the flavor of the lobster would have more than sufficed. We boogied down on the Disco Fries (\$5) with melted cheddar and gravy on the side and settled into the delicious Diner Burgers (\$10.95). I took the advice of Mike, our extremely helpful (and cute) waiter, who rightly suggested the bleu-cheese-and-bacon combo slathered with mustard, while my friend chose the classic cheddar. We found both our burgers to be fantastic. Terrifically tender Fried Chicken (\$11.95) is a must, usually served with a side of collard greens (though we were slipped buttery good Swiss chard instead). The basic Spaghetti with Meatballs (\$9.95) was likeable: substantial, thick noodles in a sweetly vibrant tomato sauce with lots of fresh basil, yet my veggie pal (upon removing the meatballs, of course) found the dish pedestrian. Out of consideration, we nixed the spiced-meat chorizo on the wicked Macaroni and Cheese (\$5.95), though I've had the dish since, and heartily suggest trying it with the chorizo should your tastes extend beyond the realm of vegetables.

The Diner's dessert list is humble. Our Chocolate Brownie Sundae (\$5) arrived with a carousel of treats such as M&M's, walnut sauce and crushed Oreos to gild the lily. We gilded. I had to try a Chocolate Shake (\$4.95) with a cherry on top, too. And Mike surprised us with a Vanilla Sex Martini (\$9), his own combination of Vanilla Stoli, DiSarano and Bailey's that tasted like a luscious shake with a kick. Nothing says "diner" quite like a milkshake, after all, and nothing says "*The Diner*" better than a Vanilla Sex Martini.