

FOOD & DRINK.



THE RECIPE

Henry James Foy

HAGGIS

1 SHEEP'S STOMACH, HEART AND LUNGS OF ONE LAMB, 1LB LAMB TRIMMINGS, 2 ONIONS, 8OZ OATMEAL, 1 TBSP SALT, BLACK PEPPER, CORIANDER, MACE, NUTMEG

An initially offensive concoction that begs to be buried deep in the annals of history with slavery and communism, this culinary oddity requires nothing more than the innards of a lamb and a sturdy stomach.

Preparation is a good afternoon's job. Start by washing the vital organs, before adding the trimmings (use your imagination here) and boiling the mixture for two hours.

No reference to haggis would be complete without mentioning Robert Burns, Scotland's favourite son and greatest export, after – of course – his snack of choice. While Coleridge had his albatross and Wordsworth his daffodils, Rabbie preferred his beloved 'Great Chieftan o' the Puddin'-race'. 'If ye wish her gratefu' pray'r', Burns advises, 'Gie her a Haggis!'. Learning how to spell might help with the gratefu' pray'r'-ing too, I should add.

Thankfully, Burns' Night - when you're supposed to eat your annual haggis - was only a few weeks ago, so you can justifiably feed these to your housemates in the name of tradition rather than masochism.

By now your boiling is probably done – there's an awful lot of organic matter in that saucepan, and any Shelley fan would know better than to give it too much energy. Having said that, seeing a live haggis brings good luck. Earl Nyaff of Uirsgeul reportedly spotted one of the blighters on his way to watch horseracing in 1817 and won £50. Sadly, he was trampled by the winner afterwards, but £50 is £50.

Since the mixture, adding the oatmeal, onions and spices. This all gets spooned into the stomach that you've cleaned and soaked overnight in salted water, before sewing it up with some dependable thread.

Note – before you stick it in boiling water for a good three hours, prick the stomach a few times. You don't want the bloody thing exploding all over your kitchen. Even Ainsley Harriot and his Fairy power spray can't deal with half-cooked entrails.

Three hours later, you'd think the ordeal was over. Oh no. The pièce de la resistance comes in the shape of a bagpiper, who must 'pipe' the meal to the table before Burns' ode is read with all the enthusiasm and vigour of a pre-Bannockburn William Wallace. I've been privy to the ceremony a few times now, and I must say it's rather impressive.

And how does it taste? Disturbingly good, actually, you racist bastards.

RESTAURANT: FIESTA MEXICANA

ADDRESS: 14 CLIFFORD STREET

AVERAGE MAIN: £10.95

REVIEW: HUGH SALWAY

★★★☆☆

There is nothing more mind-numbing for most students than hearing their gap year friends bemoan the poor quality of Britain's international restaurants compared to the real fare found on their ventures. The vindaloo down the local Indian never seems to shape up to the home-cooked curry they ate while doing a handstand on a yoga course in the Himalayas.

Fortunately for me, I fall into the category of the travelled food snob, among those who find nothing more enjoyable than reveling in the naivety of the friend who dips the sushi into the soy sauce rice-side down, safe in the knowledge of our own infallibility.

While the myth that it is impossible to find authentic international food in Britain is as wrong as eating sheep's testicles, I must warn against going to Fiesta Mexicana for a taste of Mexico. However you may find yourself adorned with a sombrero humming along to a Latino remix of the Arctic Monkeys, having a thoroughly enjoyable time regardless.

On first entrance, the oppressively bright colour scheme (matched by the owner's fiery red beard), and the som-

brero-covered roof seem stereotypical to the point of being ironic. However, a few tequila-based cocktails later (£2.95, Sunday to Friday before 8pm) you realise that it is all just good fun. Sure the food may be greasy, and York may be just as bitterly cold outside, but for a few hours it is great to think of nothing but Tequila Sunrise.

On a less alcohol-centric note, it must be said that the food on offer at Fiesta is far from excellent. A starter of nachos (£3.95) came in a miserly portion, with greasy cheese and uncomfortably hot chillies. While my main course was more substantial, after a few bites I came to wish it was sized similarly to the nachos.

My trio of enchiladas filled with beef, cheese, and seafood (£10.95) was a bit of a letdown. The layout of the dish did not help, as the three fillings tended to blend into each other in mouthfuls, instead of being sampled separately.

The seafood enchilada was not good at all, while the cheese one suffered from a return of the grease, a problem faced as well by my dining partner, who ate the chimichangas. Such oily fare fits rather uncomfortably with a

RESTAURANT: IL BERTORELLI

ADDRESS: CLIFFORD STREET

AVERAGE MEAL: £20-£30 (3 COURSES WITH WINE)

REVIEW: RICHARD SMITH

★★★☆☆

Il Bertorelli is actually a restaurant chain so I expected a run of the mill, pizza/pasta type affair on a par with the heinously overpriced Pizza Express. What I got was an authentic and original menu, excellently priced and with a good atmosphere to boot.

The only thing that let this place down was the service: albeit friendly it was rather slow. Our simple but indisputably Italian meal began with deep fried calamari and whitebait. The bruschetta was the high point of the starter course, emphasising the Italian cooking philosophy that simple food cooked well still holds sway.

After such an appetising start, the seafood linguine and vegetable pizza had much to live up to. And despite their unenticing Anglo-Italian names reminiscent of Wetherspoon's gastronomic delights, they delivered beautifully.

The pasta dish was the best I have ever had inside England. The pizza was commendable too, with just the right balance of



crunchy base and rich, powerful flavours of tomato, pepper and artichoke.

The 20 minute wait for our plates to be cleared was more motorway service than silver service but the lemon tart made up for it.

What this restaurant did so well was bring a corner of Italy, albeit in a slightly unoriginal fashion, to a dark and dingy York Saturday night.



place that offers a 'Skinny Menu' (rest assured, reader, this was cast aside without a thought).

The desserts proved the high point of the meal. The kahlua ice-cream pie (£3.95), with a lavish serving of cream on the side is potentially orgasm-inducing, while the Zapata's Treat, an alcohol-soaked fruit

and ice-cream dessert is also excellent. However the quality of these non-authentic dishes just goes to prove where the skills of this restaurant lie. For a good dose of Mexicana, book a flight, but for just a good dose of fun, book a table. And always keep in mind the mantra: tequila, tequila, tequila.

RESTAURANT: CAFE ROUGE

ADDRESS: 52 LOWER PETERGATE

AVERAGE PLATE: £10

REVIEW: GINA KATE HESLINGTON

★★☆☆☆

I normally try my best to avoid chain restaurants, and Cafe Rouge did little to sway that judgment. I was prepared for disappointment yet the emergence of '2 for 1' vouchers encouraged me to indulge my childhood judgment and go for the most expensive thing on the menu.

Unfortunately, they didn't have my desired dish, or about five other of the most mouth-watering options. I was forced into selecting the Prime Sirloin steak with a side of peppercorn-sauce to console me. Whether the waitress mixed up, or the chef was on the unusually cautious end of trying to protect his customers from food-poisoning, my 'rare' request was swapped for a well done steak with a charcoal taste. It wasn't bad, but I have had better chips at burger King.

The atmosphere was pleasant with whimsical Moulin-Rouge-meets-Alice-in-Wonderland decor. Of the best options ordered was the succu-



lent 'confit de canard', unfortunately five of the guests had made the mistake of ordering the sausage. Glaringly red with a gristly texture it resembled something best not eaten at the dinner table. As a last ditch attempt the brave ordered dessert and were richly rewarded. With satisfaction I cracked open a delicious crème brulee with a top like a caramelised ice- rink.