

Tomahawk or Denver Roll? It's all new to me



RONAN O'REILLY RONAN'S TABLE

Fade Street Social

Fade Street, Dublin 2
Tel: (01) 604 0066
Open: Mon-Fri 12.30-2.30pm,
Mon-Sun 5-10.30pm



SO here we go again. My first tentative steps in this restaurant reviewing lark were taken on premises run by Dylan McGrath. When he opened Rustic Stone to the great unwashed, I was among the first paying punters through the door to sample what sounded like a pretty dubious concept. Even now, I'm still not sure whether it was devastatingly simple in its gimmickry or just plain gimmickry in its simplicity. Your guess is as good as mine, frankly.

For anyone who missed it the first time around, I suppose I'd better explain. Whether they liked it or not, anyone ordering steak received a hunk of flesh that had been seared on one side only. But

it was served on a slab of volcanic stone pre-heated to 300C (572F) and it was up to the individual diner to decide how well-done they wanted it. From my memory, our evening there could be best summed up as follows: pleasant enough main courses, pretentious side orders, wildly overwritten menu with too many flowery descriptions, wife angry at grease being splashed all over her top (not by me, mind, she's on her own there) and a considerably heftier bill than you'd expect after doing

most of the cooking yourself.

Late last year McGrath opened up Fade Street Social just around the corner. Much was made at the time about the size (8,000sq ft) and cost (€1.4million) of the building. As well as the restaurant proper, the labyrinthine layout also includes a Gastro Bar and a Wintergarden, whatever that is when it's at home.

Maybe I'm a bit thick, but I found the reservations system slightly tricky to navigate. When you phone up, a recorded message

gives you two options depending on whether your inquiry is about an 'existing' or 'future' booking. Well, it wasn't really either of those, frankly. It certainly wasn't existing because it hadn't been made yet. Nor, by my definition, did it properly qualify as future, given that I was looking for a table

in under two hours' time. Having somehow managed to clear that hurdle, I arrived in the middle of the Friday lunch sitting to find the place practically deserted. It's a



large, impressive space with bare redbrick walls, moody black and white photographs and a life-size mannequin of the mimic Mario Rosenstock.

No, let me correct that. It turned out, in fact, to be the liv-

ing, breathing version of the Gift Grub star having a lengthy lunch with some suit from Today FM. Frankly, I fully expected Mario to order his starters in tetchy Vincent Browne mode, then segue to a stuttering Bertie Ahern for his main course and, of course, shout for more gargle while channeling Eamon Dunphy. But, no, either he didn't do it or else his impressions are less spot-on than I'd previ-

ously imagined.

No sooner had my bum hit the chair than the tedious sales patter on the water started. Still or sparkling, sir? I'll wait until my friend gets here, thanks very much, but I will have a glass of prosecco in the meantime. Even that didn't have the desired effect, though. Two minutes later, a waitress I didn't see before or since was over with same pitch. Suffice to say, she got the same response.

The menu lists different cuts of beef: aged rib on the bone, chateaubriand and – new ones on me, these – tomahawk steak and Denver roll. The price per 100g of each is quoted and the available portions are chalked up on a blackboard. On the day we visited, for example, there were variously sized cuts of tomahawk steak – each suitable for three people, we were told – available at over €100 a pop. We opted for a chateaubriand (€42) and a Denver roll (€36), with shared side orders of new potatoes and vegetables.

The meat was melt-in-the-mouth tender. Notwithstanding

the eye-watering price of the peas and the carrots (€7 for a small portion), they were absolutely delicious. But given that it added up to five cent short of €90 for two main courses, this is the sort of place where you could very easily find yourself being frogmarched to the kitchen with a jumbo bottle of Fairy Liquid.

That said, the Gastro Bar offers a tapas menu that is considerably cheaper. The dishes include soft shell crab in sesame spice flour (€10), beef carpaccio (€9) and bacon and cabbage burgers (€7.50).

Oh, and we had sparkling water in the end. When the bottle was about three-quarters empty, the waiter quietly took it away and came back with a full one. Nice touch, I thought. And all the more so when I noticed on the bill that it only cost €1, presumably because they must be carbonating it in-house. When I had a closer look later, however, I noticed that they had charged for both bottles – even though the first one wasn't finished and we never ordered the second. It might seem petty to quibble when the charge is only nominal, but it was even more petty to pull a cheap stunt like that.

'Given the prices this was the kind of place where you could be frogmarched into the kitchen with some Fairy Liquid'

FROM THE MENU

CHATEAUBRIAND €42
DENVER ROLL €36
NEW POTATOES €4.95
PEAS AND CARROTS €7
GLASS OF PROSECCO €9



...may also be served...
n seared on one side only. But



DINNER IS SERVED: The beef, which is offered in various cuts, was melt-in-the-mouth tender, and is ideal for sharing with your dining partner



SPACE:
The large dining area was very impressive

