

FOOD REVIEW:

'Great midweek value at a 'hidden' Ipswich steakhouse'

Go for the burgers at Venue 16 - but stay for the melting chocolate dessert, says Danielle Lett

The nights have grown darker and colder, and as winter fast approaches, I feel less inclined to leave the house in the evenings after work. I just want to hunker down, wrap up warm, and binge-watch telly.

Unless there's food involved. I'm always down for food, and don't need much convincing.

Last week, I felt going out for dinner rather than cooking, and thought it was the perfect opportunity to give 16 Steakhouse a try.

Located on Tuddenham Road just outside of Ipswich the restaurant, operated by Jamie Lee Smith, can be found at Venue 16, one of Suffolk's biggest wedding and events destinations.

As my mum and I made our way in (neither of us had been before), we were impressed with how big it looked from the outside. Before you even make your way in, there's marquee tents, space heaters and fairy lights everywhere (I guess if you fancied dining outside).

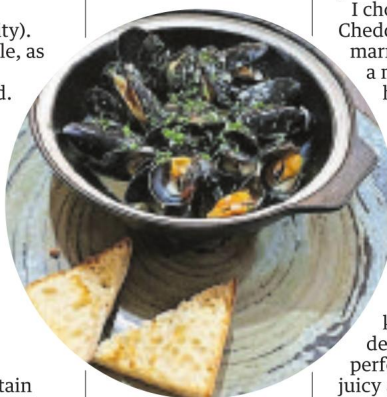
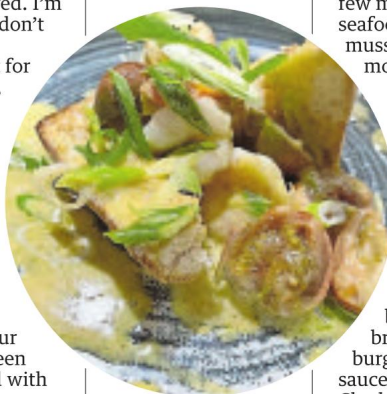
Within, it's spacious and spread across one level (great for wheelchair users or those concerned about accessibility).

I rang ahead to book a table, as that's what the website advises, and I was glad I did. It was practically full. The place was abuzz with chatter, as people nattered over their dishes, and I couldn't wait to sit down and have a look through the menu myself.

As our waitress sat us down, she pointed to the back page of the menu, which laid out the special deals on offer. Every Wednesday, it's 25% off certain dishes, and buy one get one free on burgers every Thursday.

It had been a while since I'd had a restaurant-cooked burger, and plenty of people had ordered them. Boy did they look good. So that's what we went for.

But of course, we got starters first. I went for the moules mariniere (£7.25), which was served with toasted bread, while mum opted for the pan-fried tiger prawns (£8.50), served in a lemon and garlic emulsion alongside tomato croutes, spring onion, and cherry tomatoes.



My starter was certainly value for money - it came with plenty of mussels, and the marinere sauce was incredibly rich and creamy (the toasted bread was perfect for mopping up every last drop).

The prawns were delicious, although there could've been a few more on the plate. If you're a seafood fan, I'd say go for the mussels as you definitely get more bang for your buck.

Anyway, back to the mains. If you're a fan of burgers, you'll be spoilt for choice here. The restaurant's burger stacks are all £16.95 (or buy one get one free if you go on a Thursday like we did), and you can choose from the following: 8oz beef burger, 8oz minted lamb burger, chargrilled chicken breast, or a Beyond Meat

burger, with two toppings and a sauce. Toppings include halloumi, Cheddar cheese, blue cheese, bacon, American cheese, vegan cheese, and plant-based bacon, while sauce options include tomato, mayonnaise, barbecue, red onion marmalade, 16 burger sauce, chipotle mayo, and chilli jam.

I chose a beef burger with Cheddar, bacon, and red onion marmalade, while mum ordered a minted lamb burger with halloumi and chilli jam.

Both arrived in toasted brioche buns (my favourite - you know a burger is going to be good when it comes in a brioche bun), with a side of chunky homemade coleslaw, French fries, and topped off with an onion ring.

As we dug in, we both knew we'd made the right decision. Cooked to perfection, both burgers were juicy and flavoursome, and they certainly didn't skimp on the toppings. The chips were perfectly crispy. I passed the coleslaw to my mum as she loves the stuff, and she said it was creamy, crunchy, and you could definitely tell it was homemade.

Usually we easily find room for dessert but we were feeling incredibly full by this point. We'd nearly resigned ourselves to just sticking to two courses, but out of the corner of my eye, I spotted the table next to us had just ordered Karl's Melting Chocolate Ball (£7.95) - a white chocolate



ball with a shortbread biscuit crumb, vanilla ice cream, fruit and a milk chocolate ganache. So we ordered one - to share, of course.

To go with our dessert, we perused the cocktail menu and saw our favourites, so ordered a pornstar martini and amaretto sour (£8.50 each). The martini was sweet (although I couldn't tell if it was made with fresh passionfruit juice), while the sour was the perfect mix of bitter and sweet. No complaints.

When our dessert finally arrived, we couldn't wait to get stuck in. The waitress placed the bowl on the table and poured hot chocolate ganache over it as we sat poised with our cutlery. We stuck our spoons into the now-melted chocolate ball,

getting a heaped serving off warm milk chocolate, white chocolate, ice cream, biscuit crumb and fruit - and it tasted like utter heaven. The combination of the warm and cold, paired with the softness of the ice cream and crunchy biscuit crumb was absolutely divine. The perfect dessert. If you head to Venue 16 and only have one thing, try this - it's fantastic.

After tackling dessert, we settled the bill. The total came to £66.25 which, when you consider how much we got for two people, and the quality of the food, I thought was value for money. I'd highly recommend Venue 16 for a bite to eat, especially if you go in the middle of the week to take up those offers.

venue16.co.uk



Some of the dishes at Venue 16

