



## RESTAURANT REVIEW

## CHEESE AND THANK YOU

Toasted indulges the basic human need for cheese and bread

BY FAIYAZ KARA

**TOASTED CRAFTED GRILLED CHEESE** 1945 Aloma Ave., Winter Park | 407-960-3922 | [igettoasteds.com](http://igettoasteds.com) | \$

**C**heese is one of those great cross-cultural unifiers, a comestible capable of galvanizing people of all nations in as texturally rich, colorfully diverse and sensorially acute a fashion as, say, sport, music or film. When placed between a couple of slices of bread and grilled, it can be downright glorious. Now, considering I've known 10-year-olds who've perfected the art of making a grilled cheese sandwich, it's a bit surprising to see a restaurant specializing in serving them, but then again, not every restaurant is run by Jeff Yarmuth, the former president of Sonny's Real Pit Bar-B-Q.

With Toasted, Yarmuth has shifted his focus away from the meat-dominated barbecue scene to "crafted" grilled cheese sandwiches, meaning havarti, Gruyere, fontina and the like are utilized, along with artisan bread from Olde Hearth Bread Co. and out-of-the-ordinary fillings like blackberries, arugula and sweet potato. Vegetarian and, yes, surprisingly, even vegan options abound, with a house-made vegan cheese and a vegan burger patty — a

restaurant rarity, as they're usually bound with cheese or egg.

On the Friday night we visited, it seemed that the cheese-hounds were out in full force. Every table was occupied, so we stood near the entrance, admiring the Periodic Table of Cheese on the wall while poring over the menu. When a table became available, we quickly occupied the seats and continued perusing the options. In addition to grilled cheese sandwiches, a host of burgers are listed, and we took advantage of both. At the counter, Yarmuth himself took our order — when I asked about his plans for expansion, he seemed more concerned with making this Winter Park location a success first. Given the two sandwiches (and two burgers) we sampled, he appears to be on the right track.

Now these aren't monstrous sandwiches by any stretch; rather, the size of a typical grilled cheese one would make at home, and that's not a bad thing. The sandwiches are rich and buttery, and in the case of the signature fig and goat (\$6.25), a little sweet, thanks to fig preserves and honey blended with tangy goat cheese and havarti. Order it with a side of mac & cheese (\$2.50) made from Jarlsberg, Gruyere and sharp cheddar and you'll likely call it a day. These aren't

light meals designed to make you feel energized, but comfort food that may make you snoozy.

After the braised brisket (\$7), another signature grilled cheese sandwich, gooey with fontina, barbecue sauce and sweet-tea caramelized onions, we sank a little deeper into our seats wondering how we were going to finish the two burgers we had ordered. When the heady aroma of truffle and rosemary fries (\$2.50) entered our nostrils, we knew the burgers were close behind, so we sat up straight and took aim at the mozzarella-coated holy basil (\$7). Every bit as herbaceous as it was meaty, with pesto, arugula and a spiced tomato chutney, this burger was a favorite of the table. Then came the Southern comfort (\$7), a thick-pattied burger prettied up with a heart-startling mix of cheddar, applewood-smoked bacon, house-made barbecue sauce and mac & cheese.

As much as we enjoyed every bite, this fromage overload proved to be the *coup de grâce*. And so with glazed eyes and slouched torsos, we made our kudos to Yarmuth's Temple of Curds. As bloated as we felt, there was no denying that his cheesy creations were Toasted's bread and butter.

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