

The Carnivore's CHOICE

From smashburgers to pulled pork or ribs, you can't go wrong with our meaty selection

WITH a culture of braais, burgers and boeries, South Africa really is the meat lover's playground. The meat on offer at our restaurants is generally of a very high standard, and you won't have to look very far to get your fix. However, there are a few establishments that go above and beyond what is expected, making your meal that much better.

Here is my pick of the top three spots every meat lover should visit:

Rocomamas

This casual diner style eatery offers "smashburgers", ribs and wings – that's it. The "smashburger" concept originated in the US and refers to the process of smashing a ball of ground beef on a hot grill to sear in the juices, rather than squeezing them out, resulting in a medium to well-done burger that is really juicy.

Rocomama's has only been open a few months, but has already earned itself a sterling reputation thanks to its funky, casual décor, reasonable prices and delicious food. Upon entering, you are given a form to fill in, where you can either choose from six smashburger options, or create your own.

We tried the "BaconCheeseGuac", 150 grams of smashed beef, bacon, fresh guacamole, tomato, red onion and rocomayo, R49, finished off with a small portion of shoestring fries, R10.

If you prefer, the beef patty can be substituted with a Fry's vegetarian patty – almost as good.

For the "make your own" option, the basic smashburger is priced at R35, with various toppings, including pickles, Italian relish, mushrooms and blue cheese dressing, costing between R3-R5

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each.

Ribs come in three flavours, "Old Skool BBQ", "Peri Peri" and "UncleJackBourbon", and range in price from R49 for ¼kg to R199 for 1kg, while wings are available in five flavours, including "MoFo F*HOT" and "Salt & Vinegar", with your choice of Ranch or Blue Cheese dip.

The combination of quality, great tasting ingredients, a no fuss, rock'n'roll vibe and a bill that won't break the bank, makes Rocomamas a must visit. Note that there is limited seating available, so takeaways are encouraged.

Open seven days a week, 9am until late. Visit www.rocomamas.com. Address: Appletons Village, Corner Hill Street and Malibongwe Drive, Randburg. Tel: 011 791 5928.

The Smokehouse and Grill

Everyone knows that Braamfontein is the place to be during the day, but its nightlife scene is buzzing too. On the corner of Juta and De Beer streets, you'll find a new restaurant that is getting tongues wagging. The Smokehouse and Grill is a bustling spot with face brick walls and whitewashed wooden floorboards. Situated across from Great Dane and Kitchens, the outside deck is a great spot for people watching. The owners felt that there was a gap in the market for traditional smoked ribs and meat, so they brought in a smoker from the US



Rocomamas... now where are those 'Smashburgers'?

PICTURES: RISHAV NAIR



Chicken burger at Smokehouse and Grill

and the concept has caught in Joburg like wild fire. The Smokehouse is most renowned for its pulled pork sandwich, 12-hour slow smoked pork shoulder served on a sesame bun with Carolina coleslaw and BBQ sauce, R85. The ribs are also excellent – choose from either beef or pork (we tried a bit of both.)

While this hit the spot, the highlight of the experience for me was unexpected. Despite being very full, I couldn't resist when the owner offered us some ice cream, homemade by his mother. The peanut butter ice cream, complemented by

butterscotch sauce, R35, was the single best ice cream I've ever had in my life – creamy, not too sweet, with chunks of peanut butter.

Open Mon-Sat 12pm until 10.30pm, closed Sun. Address: Corner De Beer and Juta streets, Braamfontein. Tel: 011 403 1395.

Thundergun Steakhouse

Upon walking into Thundergun, I felt like I'd been transported to the heart of Texas. Guests streamed in, were greeted by name by one of the jolly staff members and seated at their favourite tables. Men had their feet up on the benches outside, watching the rugby and

boisterously voicing their opinions of the ref. Admittedly, this was not my usual type of Saturday night hang-out, but I'd heard too many good things about this spot not to give it a try.

Open since 1968, Thundergun is a classic steakhouse, serving up generous portions. The restaurant goes through 2.5 tons of ribs and serves over 10 000 people each month. We didn't think twice about going with the manager's recommendation, and ordered the pork ribs, R116 for 600g. After the first bite, Thundergun immediately won the title of "best ribs in JHB" in our books. The ribs were tender and meaty, with close to zero fat on them.

Other popular dishes include the "Big Gun Burgers", which are served with chips or baked potato and a 150g patty, R60, as well as the 300g "Super Rump", R115. Even if you go hungry, you're likely to leave with a doggy bag for lunch the next day.

Open seven days a week, lunch and dinner. Visit www.thundergun.co.za. Address: Palala Centre, Corner Beyers Naude and Lewisham roads, Blackheath. Tel: 011 678 7224

Hasmita was hosted by the establishments above for the purposes of this review

For more restaurant ideas in and around JHB, visit Hasmita's blog: www.joziliciousblog.co.za

The three best places to satisfy your sushi craving

HASMITA NAIR

SUSHI is the one thing that I wouldn't order at an unfamiliar restaurant, because there's nothing worse than bad sushi. Raw fish is a delicate thing, and it needs to be absolutely fresh and, prepared in a spotless kitchen for me to willingly indulge. My sushi of choice is the tempura prawn California roll, but whatever your preference, you'll find the best in the city at these three sushi spots.

1. Yamada Sushi

When I'm in a hurry and want to grab a quick, tasty, takeaway that's affordable, Yamada is my first choice. The ambiance in the restaurant is somewhat lacking, but the delicious sushi more than makes up for that.

The selection of California rolls is among the widest I've seen; highlights include salmon skin and eel. Yamada sushi also does takeaway platters for events, and you can even book the in-house chef to prepare sushi at your do.

Visit www.yamada.co.za

2. Koi

Undoubtedly one of the restaurants most frequented by celebs, Koi is the place to go if you want great service in a trendy, upmarket venue. Contemporary Asian cuisine is blended with a touch of Western style to create a menu that leaves you spoilt for choice. Sushi is relatively expensive, but is presented with a flair that will keep you coming back. Try the Rainbow Re-

loaded, R129, prawn California roll wrapped in salmon and tuna and topped with teriyaki, mayo and caviar.

Visit www.koires.co.za

3. Yume Sushi Bar

The Yume experience is all about experimenting. Have a seat at the sushi bar, and take your pick from the wide selection that drifts past you on a sushi conveyor belt. Yume's sushi moves away from simply wanting to fill you up – it aims to create sushi that looks as good as it tastes. You even have the option to design your own sushi – dream it and the chefs will create it.

Visit www.yume-sushi.co.za

Hasmita was hosted by Koi for the purposes of this review.



Tempura Prawn California Roll at Koi

PICTURE: RISHAV NAIR