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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Debra Magnus holds a few Coney Island offerings, like the Cyclone Dog and Big Lebowski Fries.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Island life

Every sandwich, quarter-pound burger and all-beef “snappy” frankfurter at the just-opened Coney Island Dogs & Burgers is named for old-time gangsters, New York City landmarks and pop culture references. A large mural depicting the Coney Island beach and boardwalk graces the wall.

Our group of five adults and four kids dug in as soon as trays hit the table, starting with the Danny Boy (\$9.99), an eight-inch sandwich roll containing corned beef brisket, mayo, mustard, sauerkraut and melted Swiss cheese. The quality of the meat and kraut were pretty good, but there was far more bun than filling. The Buggy Siegel (\$9.99) was stuffed a little better. Though described as an au jus-dipped Italian beef in the Chicago style—with melted mozzarella and spicy giardiniera—the roll and thin-sliced meat were both a bit singed, quite dry and served *sans* jus. We received a small bowl of savory broth on request, which definitely helped.

We tried the Mac Daddy (\$6.99), with mac and cheese, bacon and even more cheddar cheese; the Mickey (\$9.99), with corned beef, mayo, mustard, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle and cheese; and the Outlaw (\$6.99), with bacon, barbecue sauce, coleslaw, onion, and cheese. The ingredients did their best to disguise dried-out beef patties, with mixed success.

Sabrett franks and sausages from the Bronx are featured. The snap is there, but the flavor and texture remind me a bit of convenience store beef sticks.

The Mac (\$4.99) was the Mac Daddy burger in hot dog form, though with a lot more cheese. Their take on a “Coney dog” was the Cyclone (\$3.99), named for the famous—and antique—wooden roller coaster. The frank was loaded with hamburger chili, cheese, onion and mustard, though this form of bland chili reminds

me more of a Midwestern “loose meat” sandwich. The brown mustard did its best to liven things up.

The Capone (\$3.99) had all the ingredients of a Windy City dog “dragged through the garden,” with mustard, onion, tomato, dill pickle spear, neon green sweet relish, sport peppers and celery salt. Dressing a New York sausage in this manner would probably annoy folks in both cities. The Clyde (\$4.99) was a spicy polish sausage with mustard, kraut and onion. This one was really good, and if you substitute the toppings for barbecue sauce and slaw, you get the Bonnie (\$4.99).

A basket of Big Lebowski fries (\$6.99) with sliced polish sausage, barbecue sauce, slaw and cheese was the crowd favorite. The slaw was chunky, and the overall combination seemed like something you’d order while binging on beer and bowling.

An “original Coney Island square kinish [sic]” (\$3.99) was deep-fried until quite brown and crunchy, with a smooth potato filling. The flavor and texture made me think “funnel cake stuffed with mashed spuds.” Though quite a bit oilier and crunchier than knishes I’ve had elsewhere, it wasn’t bad with a schmear of mustard.

Service slowed down quite a bit near the end, unsurprising for a brand-new crew navigating a Saturday lunch rush. Neither the serving of chocolate cake nor cheesecake (\$3 each) were quite as sweet as a large chocolate Coke (\$2.49). Hershey’s syrup plus soda pop isn’t something I want to repeat, but the kids were deeply intrigued. □

Coney Island Dogs & Burgers

3600 Warren Way, 432-1237

Coney Island Dogs & Burgers is open Monday to Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and from 1 to 7 p.m. on Sundays.

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SEPTEMBER 28 5:45P.M.

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