

Sleepy Bee: Modern, healthy happiness for breakfast



Photo 1 Joe Simon

Polly Campbell, pcampbell@enquirer.com 11:36 a.m. EDT April 11, 2014

Obviously, Cincinnati needs some more places for breakfast.

Since the Sleepy Bee in Oakley started serving their healthy, generous breakfasts in December, they have had waits for tables, especially on the weekend. The surprisingly large sunny room is full an hour after they open on the weekend, and there's at least a short wait all day.

Maybe it's because there aren't enough egg and pancake places, but it also must be because Sleepy Bee offers a breakfast for just about everyone.

Their menu makes me think of what a modern Mom would serve because she wants you to have a treat and be happy, but also cares that you eat your fruits and vegetables. And remembers your food allergies. And is conscientious about where the meat and dairy comes from.

Sleepy Bee also serves lunch, with a similar vibe: you can eat kale for your main course and have a cookie for dessert.

So have a meal of comfort and home-spun luxury, or leave feeling clean and healthy but well-fed. It's not cheap, but it's reasonable, and you're paying for good-quality ingredients.

I've had breakfast here a couple of times. Once by myself, which I love. Just me, the crossword puzzle and the Broakley. (Plus, I should say, the lovely server and hostess on duty that day, both of whom I've known since their mothers cut their pancakes up for them.)

The Broakley (\$10.50) is named for the neighborhood and for the broken yolk egg that chef Frances Kroner uses in many of the egg dishes. She starts with Ohio free range eggs, and one theme at breakfast is their deep-hued yolks running like liquid sunshine over the other ingredients on the plate.

The Broakley starts with a rich brioche bun, adds thick bacon criss-crossed inside, sprouts, the deliciously runny egg, avocado, white cheddar, onion and tomato. Closely related is the Queen City Bee (\$10), another breakfast sandwich with goetta, apple, egg and arugula.

On the side: "hive fries," which are like home fries, roasted vegetables or a fruit cup. The fruit cup was the best I've ever had, with fresh raspberries and blackberries, sectioned oranges, pomegranate seeds, apple slices fanned out on top. Another time I got the full-spectrum ROYGBIV (\$7.50) – those fruits spread out on a plate with Greek yogurt.

You can get eggs scrambled a la carte if you'd rather, or a nice fat omelet, like the Avi (\$9.95) with avocado, spinach, mushrooms and cheddar, or one you build yourself.

Gluten-free is something of a specialty. I didn't try the Bee cakes (\$9.50) made with almond, quinoa and buckwheat flour, but what a lovely thing to be able to order if you need to. Instead, I had piggy cakes (\$10.50), which is a stack of buttermilk cakes, cooked with bacon, topped with whipped cream and candied nuts. They are what I think of as flapjacks: tender, thin and flexible, not those restaurant cakes that are thick and taste like baking powder. (Personally, I'd like them with whole-grain flour.)

Lunch is a fairly short list of salads and sandwiches, and breakfast is also available at lunch. I had a bee chop salad (\$9) with salmon (\$4) on top. The greens included kale and shaved beets, fennel and carrots along with feta and nuts. It was tossed in a minimum amount of lemon olive oil dressing, which I appreciate, but I got a little more on the side because it was delicious.

I added another healthy element by getting a cup of butternut squash soup (\$3.50), which tasted very good, but was almost too thick to be called a soup.

The chicken salad wasn't described as curried, but it is, and has lots of crunch from jicama and sweetness from raisins. As a sandwich (\$10) on crisp toast, it seemed a little dry. And the crisp killer bee cookies (\$2) did not impress.

There were a few other imperfections: some hive fries not cooked crispy and a raspberry cheesecake muffin that had nothing of cheesecake about it.

But overall, I love the vibe of the place, full of families and babies, the bottomless cups of coffee, cheerful servers, people in line being served mini-muffins and coffee and dedication to really good ingredients.

Sleepy Bee Café 3 stars

Where: 3098 Madison Road, Oakley

When: 7 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Reservations: Not taken

Prices: Breakfast \$8.50-\$10.50; Sandwiches and salads \$8.50-\$13

Vegetarian options: Many. Vegetarian chili, veggie burger, salads, quinoa and rice salad, veggie omelets and soup.

Miscellaneous: Many gluten-free items. Parking half a block east (not next door.)
Accessible to disabled.

Phone: 513-533-2339

Website: www.sleepybeecafe.com