The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Yak House: A Shaggy Steak Story

Get a taste of the Himalayas with these melt-in-the-mouth burgers

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April 17, 2017



Yak House/Facebook

Yak House is a small cafe located in the back of a movie theater on the third floor of the Arcadia shopping center at the Novokuznetskaya metro station. This makes it a perfect place for a meal before or after a movie in a mall otherwise devoid of good dining options.

Yak House focuses on meat from the eponymous animal, a shaggy bovid originally from the Himalayas. Khasan Gorsky, the owner of Yak House, has a yak farm in the North Caucasus republic of Karachay-Cherkessia, and that's where the meat comes from.

A sign on the wall informs diners that yak meat is dense in protein, contains vitamins B1 and B12 and is almost devoid of fat (3.5 grams per 100 grams of meat). Yaks are raised as free-range animals, fed on mountain grass and spring water. Both the farm and the cafe are part of Gorsky's family business.

The chef is Kirill Kinchbaya, who used to work at Moscow's famous Dagestani restaurant Zhi Est and the Georgian food chain Khachapuri.

The menu is very short and rather confusing. There's steak #2, but no steak #1, which it appears is no longer on offer. What's more, the prices and items on the placemat menu on the table and the one on the wall don't always match up, so it's better to check availability with the waiter.

After making enquiries, it became clear that the bull steak (also mysteriously named #2) is not recommended since it is not from Gorsky's farm. The question is: Why put it on the menu at all?

The place's Facebook page advertises not just dishes made with yak meat, but with rare black Karachay lamb, which is bred at Gorsky's farm as well. Unfortunately, this was nowhere to be seen and the waitress sadly shook her head when I asked her about it.

Despite the shortcomings described above, the yak steak is truly excellent and great value for 1,200 rubles ($21). The grilled vegetables it is served with could have been less burned and the accompanying berry sauce needs some salt and spice, but the meat almost melts in your mouth.

The burgers, also made with yak meat, are great (from 300 rubles), the buns are freshly baked, the portions of sauce and vegetables are all well-balanced and, most importantly, the whole thing doesn't disintegrate on your plate from an excess of meat juice, which seems to be the case at many burger places in Moscow. The burgers come with decent home-made fries.

However, Yak House's pumpkin salad turned out to be a disappointment: A few thin pumpkin chips don't really justify the name. A browse through the photographs on Yak House's Facebook page confirmed that the salad was formerly accompanied by real pumpkin chunks, but now it's sadly just a different version of the Caesar salad with pieces of yak meat (300 rubles).

There's no alcohol available, but a homemade pear lemonade (350 rubles per liter) was tangy and bittersweet. There is also ginger with strawberry, as well as passion fruit to choose from.

Yak House shares its space with the movie theater in the mall so you can check the availability of seats on the screens above the box office, while enjoying your steak.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/04/17/yak-house-a-shaggy-steak-story-a57749