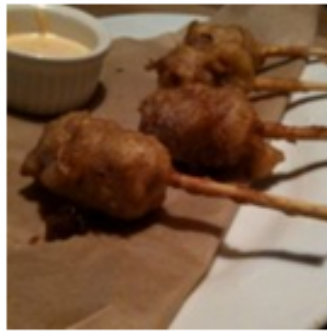


Ormsby's: That new kind of tavern

1:49 pm February 2, 2010, by John Kessler



Hi, my name is John, and I've eaten a lot of deep-fried brown things.

Where? At **Ormsby's**, the White Provision tavern that has become a huge, huge, crowded, crowded destination on the Westside dining map.

Owner **Warren Bruno** (the late **Aunt Charley's** in Buckhead, **Atkins Park Tavern** in Virginia Highland) teamed up with **Michael Goot** from SweetWater Brewing Co. and really tapped into today's dining/drinking zeitgeist.

What are the elements for a new-style public house?

1. **Serious beer list:** Check — Ormsby's doesn't have the most encyclopedic around, but it flaunts a bunch of the new gotta-haves on its draught list (Brooklyn Brown Ale, Dogfish Head IBA) and a whole lot of Belgian beers in bottle.
2. **Semi-speakeasy vibe:** Check — Ormsby's only calling card is a discreet door with an "O" on it on the bottle level of White Provision. When you open it, you find a big, freaking scene on two levels. Drinking and dining are on the top floor, while stairs lead to a subterranean expanse filled with....
3. **Games:** All kinds of games — darts, bocce, shuffleboard — make people very happy to hang out. There's also another bar downstairs, as well.
4. **Foodie food:** As much as I hate the word "foodie," there you have it. These new bars/taverns/public houses/gastropubs/what-have-yous are all about updating their menus of time-tested grub with local, organic, seasonal ingredients. Ormsby's hits a lot of buzzwords with its house-cured pickles, hand-cut fries, White Oak Pastures grass-fed beef hamburgers and — hello! — hand-dipped corn dogs.

So how is the food? I don't know; after one meal, it just seems like typical bar food to me. The fries (top left) are fine for a split second but go limp quickly. From the list of Belgian-style sauces, we chose a tasty taleggio fondue and a pot roast gravy. We ended up mostly using ketchup.

Those hand-dipped corn dogs (center) are delivery vehicles for grease and hot dog juices (also known as grease) but not particularly corny. I think the pleasure of a corn dog lies in the layer of springy cornbread, which was absent here.

The daily fish and chips special is fine. Our waitress let us substitute onion rings for the fries to complete the fully-battered picture.

Ormsby's brings to mind some other new-style pubs that hit some of the same notes. I'm thinking of **Leon's Full Service**, **Kozmo Gastro Pub**, **Salt**, the **Porter Beer Bar** and the granddaddy of this new movement locally, **Holeman & Finch Public House**.

Did I miss any? Which do you think has the best food? The best beer list? The best vibe?