



HOME COMFORTS

Discover the Black Wheat Club in York as it hits the hot list top 100 of local restaurants in the UK

WORDS: CATHERINE TURNBULL

Just three months after Tomek Mlynarski and Marta Obuchowska-Mlynarski opened Black Wheat Club bistro and micro-bakery in York's Fossgate in February they received an exciting email. In July it was announced that they joined Skosh in York in the Good Food Guide's list of Top 100 local restaurants in the UK.

The guide judges headlined the entry 'A breath of fresh air for the city's food scene' - and went on to describe 'fresh and modern décor (dark panelled walls, light oak furniture, bright kilims) make for a relaxed bistro with food that's hard to resist.

'We didn't have much money when we opened,' Marta tells me when I visit for dinner. 'We didn't employ an interior designer, we did it ourselves, like we would

at home, but a much bigger and challenging project, which took eight months.'

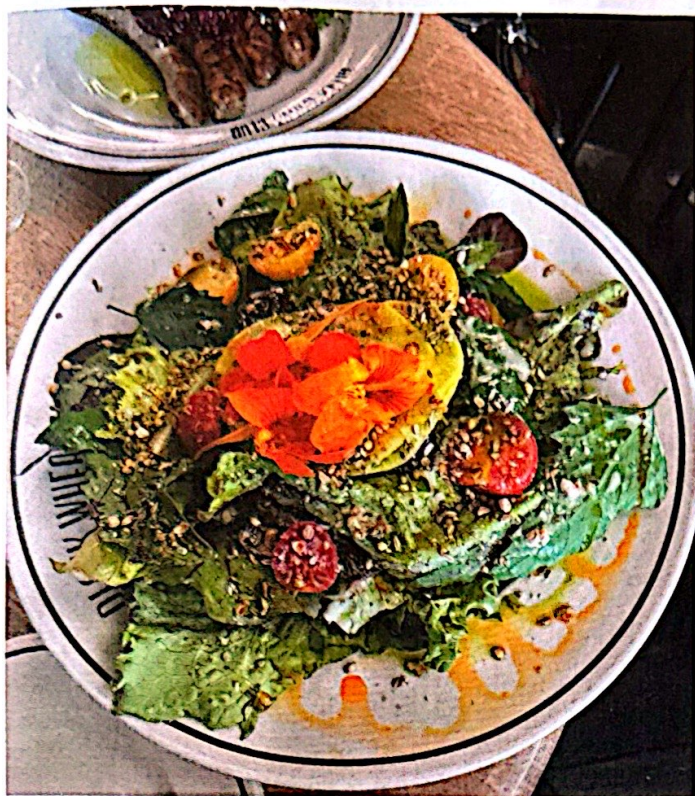
The word 'home' features often during my chat with the pair, who launched Krep artisan pancake stall in Shambles Market in 2017. 'We grew up in Poland in the 1990s when eating out wasn't common and home cooking was made by our mothers and grandmothers from seasonal produce that they had grown or knew who had,' Tomek says.

'They also knew how to forage and preserve food with pickles, ferments, cordials and sausages. We do this here at Black Wheat Club where we make everything in-house. It's extra work but we believe in the concept of being creative whilst serving simple dishes of comforting honest food.' However, Tomek stresses: 'We are a European bistro in style, not a Polish restaurant.'

When they launched a pop-up kitchen called Mokosh their customers appreciated the effort that went into the dishes and reinforced Marta and Tomasz's motivation to open a permanent restaurant. 'We started off with brunch with coffee, pastries, bread and breakfast dishes, and wanted to expand into evenings,' Marta adds. 'The guide listing is a great boost for us, the team and the city.'

The name Black Wheat Club (BWC) comes from their use of deliciously nutty buckwheat, a popular grain in Poland - known as blé noir in France or black wheat - in their crepes and galettes at Krep. They also love to use the word 'homecoming' whilst describing the concept as 'returning to something familiar and meaningful'.

Many restaurants claim to source produce from the neighbourhood. At BWC they do



– from Harrisons, the farming couple who grow near Selby who are my go-to fruit and veg stall in Shambles Market – to Food Circle social enterprise of local producers, who sell at a twice-weekly market at Tang Hall. Botton Creamery makes a wonderful Summerfields cheese from raw milk at Danby Dale, a great Yorkshire alternative to Parmesan, whilst Yorkshire Pecorino in Otley is another supplier. Their naturally leavened bread is made in-house in the bakery upstairs.

What's the food like?

We nabbed a couple of stools with a birds eye view of the open kitchen where head chef Louis Gilroy wrangled a flow of plates to the pass whilst George fired up some pans on the

griddle. Portions are somewhere between a starter and main course size and our waitress suggested we share five between two of us. They arrive when they are ready with a natural rhythm.

The salad had all the hallmarks of those local producers with intensely flavoured tomatoes, unusual leaves and flowers perked up with pickled kohlrabi and dukkha seasoning and a sensational dressing with orange juice (£11). We kept this on the side as we tucked into the tenderest pork – collar cooked for 12 hours, with elderflower and lovage, a tomato salsa and chive butter (£21). The couple sitting behind us were oohing over this and we joined in.

Four sausages arrived – a spicy variety and marjoram white sausage with beetroot and horseradish ćwikła, a lovely Polish-style relish, with an earthy dill and chervil pesto (£12). A quartered spring cabbage was charred (hence the flame-throwing on the hotplate) and was dressed with turnip puree and a fennel pickle (£16). Our main, main course was a perfectly cooked pan-fried plaice with pickled crunchy agretti, similar to samphire (£22). We shared a bottle of Lo Petit Fantet d'Hippolyte Blanc, an organic blend from Corbières, which cost £36, and went agreeably with everything.

It was all very tasty and good to know that you can visit again and have a variation as the seasons change. Next time I'll be trying the bread and butter pudding. There was no space this time.

Evening service is Thursday to Saturday, 6pm to 11pm. Brunch is Thursday to Monday, 10am to 3pm.

blackwheatclub.com

