



Peter's Yard,
Quartermile,
(on Middle
Meadow
Walk),
Edinburgh
0131 228
5876
Breakfast
£5.50-£6.50
Lunch £8-14
Food rating
8/10

ACHING FOR THE BAKING

RESTAURANT REVIEW **PETER'S YARD** BY JOANNA BLYTHMAN

If you ask me, there are four categories of cakes. There are the ones that look crap and taste crap (I'm thinking of those red, patent-leather strawberry tarts and greasy custard slices in your unreconstructed "Scottish" bakery); the cunning ones that look OK but taste crap (eg blueberry muffins found in chain coffee shops, trains and planes); those that surprise you by tasting better than they look; and last but not least, those that both taste and look good.

That latter elusive category is precisely what you'll find in Peter's Yard, an immensely skilful Swedish bakery that has popped up in Quartermile, the flash new housing development behind the old Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. In a mini-parade on Middle Meadow Walk, the Peter's Yard output, baked on the spot, is a different animal entirely from products with similar names on sale in Sainsbury's or Starbucks next door. Take the brownie. Last time I wasn't paying attention and bought one of these at an airport, it turned out to have mayonnaise as an ingredient. At Peter's Yard, the eponymous cake, made with the legendary Valrhona chocolate, is a dark squidgey delight, perfumed with orange and bearing a zebra stripe of vanilla-scented cheesecake.

But this brownie is positively hiding its light behind a bushel compared to the parsnip, yes parsnip cake, which offers an epiphany for the sweet-toothed. Statuesque, it flaunts all the qualities found in the best cream-cheese, icing-topped carrot cake, with other enhanced dimensions thrown in for good measure. The short, crumbly pastry base, the superlative Scandinavian sleight of hand with cardamom,

cinnamon, nuts and citrus zests ... blimey, you feel like falling on your knees and worshipping it.

Peter's Yard seems to have been jettied in from Planet Foodie, or failing that Sweden, to show us all what a really excellent café can be like. There's a full complement of artisan bread, all made with excellent Shipton Mill organic flour, a freezer full of lovely, natural, homemade ice creams (Tahitian vanilla, Gianduja, blueberry), a connoisseur's selection of special teas (including Japan's world-famous Gyokuro) and a posse of homemade preserves, all cooked up in small batches in copper cauldrons. When you order butter, you get the impeccable French Lescure. Even the crispbreads, usually about as interesting as hamster bedding, are out of this world.

The interior is clean, plain and modern, a soothing, airy, urban place to while away some time, civilised and green too in that admirably rational Scandinavian way. There is, for instance, an abundant supply of tap water in jugs so you don't have to fork out silly money for water in plastic bottles. Eat in at Peter's Yard and as a prelude to the sweet delights, there's soup (beetroot and parsnip the day we visited) which comes with slices of the home-baked bread, and sandwiches, which are the weakest part of the operation. The flatbreads and focaccia used are the least special in Peter's Yard's portfolio, and although the coronation-style chicken filling was most delicious, the crayfish filling was not hugely better than Pret à Manger's chain offering. The savoury muffins made with polenta are altogether more enticing: cheese/bacon and mustard, or a feta, sundried tomato and basil version. On the savoury front,

Peter's Yard is missing a trick. A slice of various breads accompanied by potted shrimps, pickled herring, decent cheese and chutneys, dips, or charcuterie would be an obvious development. This approach prevails at breakfast anyway when, if you don't go for the homemade granola muesli and fresh pressed orange juice, you can work your way through a bread basket with those great jams and marmalades.

To be honest, though, everything else on offer is just crafty cover for the cakes. Yeasty sugared cardamom buns, dense chocolate and tart raspberry muffins, a rich, bittersweet biscuit made from spelt flour (an archaic forerunner of wheat) and ground coffee, buttery heart-shaped shortbread, puffy doughnuts filled with vanilla cream, mouthful-sized biscotti of various sorts, poppyseed cake doused with lemon juice ... the only faults I can find with these is a certain trigger-happiness with dustings of icing sugar and the fact that you'll buy more than you mean to because the stuff is so damn good.

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