

BRIEFLY NOTED

Sliders

546 W. Broadway, 604-559-0040

→ The branding is dull and the menu concept seemingly five years late, but Sliders plates a convincing argument as to why its namesake comestible hasn't yet worn out its welcome. This unremarkable-looking space was clearly created with the aim to replicate itself into a fast-food empire. Luckily, whatever it lacks in aesthetic character it makes up for with a diverse menu of addictive hand-held flavour bombs.

An Original Beef slider is more than the sum of its parts: properly charred Alberta beef, aged cheddar, good pickle, and the clever addition of Hickory Sticks—an excellent burger, diminutive or not. Better still are the Oyster Po' Boy (with pickled onion and horseradish aioli) and Mushroom & Goat Cheese, one of three vegetarian options that rival many of their meat-centric counterparts.

Each palm-sized slider costs \$4, which might seem steep given that you'll need two to make a meal, but their uniform deliciousness forgives this, as does the option of adding a fountain soda and an almost-too-generous hillock of fries for a mere toonie.

Steel Toad Brewpub & Dining Hall

97 E. Second Ave., 604-709-8623

→ Does Olympic Village really need another beer-focused spot? There's already 33 Acres, Brassneck, Craft, and Tap & Barrel. The consistently full house at Steel Toad suggests it does. The historic Opsal Steel building has been expensively refurbished inside with a sleek mix of glass, iron, and

wood—and it has more people working the door than its competition has working the taps. A cavernous space, Steel Toad has an insatiable desire to please: live music, big TV screens, and a food menu that aspires to haute levels.

The food is better than it need be. (The chef, Robbie Robinson, worked at Claridge's and Le Crocodile.) Pizzas have a solid Napoli-inspired crust but are hampered by a more-is-more approach to toppings; nevertheless, they're priced aggressively low (starting at \$12 for a Margherita that can feed two). A Montreal smoked-meat sandwich isn't revelatory except when—again—you're only charged \$12. One suspects the "bistro" menu is rarely explored by most patrons, but those who do get offerings like a cauliflower-and-whiskey soup with sablefish that could easily pass muster at a fine-dining establishment (for double the \$8 price).

Young brewmaster Chris Charron has settled into a nice groove, with options that range from the very topical (a sauvignon saison that uses New Zealand hops) to the nicely authentic (Yorkshire Best Bitter). Better still, a flight here is \$6.96, versus \$8 at 33 Acres and Brassneck. Welcome to the neighbourhood.

Jamjar

2280 Commercial Dr., 604-252-3957

→ In 2003, Nuba introduced to Vancouver its elevated notion of Lebanese food: falafel, hummus, shish tawook, and other usual suspects, but prepared with local, organic ingredients and an uncommon attention to detail. Jamjar, the brainchild of two immigrants who recently arrived here from Lebanon, offers a still more sophisticated take that's attracting packed houses.

Jamjar takes its name from the Lebanese tradition of using surplus



BEER BUZZ

Steel Toad is named for those who worked in the Opsal Steel plant that formerly occupied the brewpub's premises. (The term "steel toad" is typically used in reference to whomever operates or works in close proximity to the blast furnace.) Head brewmaster Chris Charron, 27, is a Vancouver native who developed his skills at Muskoka Brewery before returning here. He created five inaugural beers for Steel Toad and hopes to add more in time

produce to make jams and spreads that are dispensed into jars and shared with friends and family. That practice is expressed here with a selection of "cold mezze"—most vegetarian or vegan—that are uniformly fresh and vibrant: try the hummus trio, including a rich, tahini-forward house iteration and a pair of ever-changing seasonal flavours. Lunch offers wraps (fried-to-order falafel delivers epic crunch) and salads (chickpea lentil is a fortifying protein powerhouse), while dinner adds heaping plates of beef-okra stew, lamb shank, a daily fish, and more. (We found the lamb's bath of yogurt-mint sauce a bizarre match, but our neighbours devoured it.)

Clever cocktails and a brief but thoughtful wine list, combined with the dining room's gentle buzz, will make you want to linger. If only the metal seating didn't seem so eager to send you on your way. **VM**



Roasted butter nut squash pizza and beer flight at Steel Toad