



CHAIN REACTION

Portland-based Little Big Burger brings hot ketchup to Eugene

BY SARAH DECKER & SHANNON FINNELL

Little Big Burger, which opened its doors in Portland in 2010, has finally descended upon Eugene. With its wallet-friendly prices and loyalty to local and sustainable foods, it's no wonder LBB won a cult following in Portland, and its location right next to Knight Arena will add to the Eugene eatery's appeal for sportsgoers.

LBB uses all-natural Cascade beef in its burgers, sea salt and truffle oil on its fries, and buys local veggie burger patties from Marie at Chez Gourmet. The menu is basic, with four food items, soda and floats, though its beer menu does pack a more complex punch. We counted 29 options — but that was after a couple bottles, so someone might need to recount for us. Hopefully they'll add some local brews like Ninkasi or Oakshire to the menu.

All of this creates a fabulous dining experience, but the real cherry on the sundae is the ketchup on the french fries. LBB uses — and sells — its own variation on ketchup. And this ketchup has a kick. Veering away from the corn syrup industry standard, LBB serves up Camden's Catsup, which gets its sweetness from honey and its kick from Sriracha. If the tasty, filling food isn't reason enough to stop in this joint, this ketchup is a powerful motivator.

Co-owner Katie Poppe told *EW* that ketchup for purchase in Eugene should be available right around publication of this issue. ■

Little Big Burger is located at 1404 Orchard St., 357-4771, littlebigburger.com

PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTHA

THAT'S A SPICY TRUFFLE!

Chilies in your chocolate and other winter warmers BY SARAH DECKER

Winter is upon us. The air is crisp, the breeze is brisk and the days are short. This season inspires in me a desire for warmth in any way possible, right down to the foods I eat. And where temperature leaves off, spices kick in. I want spicy and flavorful, as well as something to bring the heat.

Right off the bat I'll admit I'm more or less a wimp when it comes to spices. I like my Thai food mild and have been known to order medium salsa when I'm feeling particularly adventurous, but that's about as far as I go. Because of this, I have been amazed lately to find that many of my favorite haunts for chocolate — a food I consume with voracious regularity — have started to add a wide variety of spices in their sweets. Naturally, I had to give this a try.

My first spiced chocolates came in the form of Euphoria Chocolate's spiced truffles. I bought these in a three pack because, as everyone knows, one truffle is never enough. The candies themselves are divine, and the spices (cinnamon, paprika, chipotle and cardamom) are evident, but I would hardly label them "spicy." The flavor is rich and warm and a definite welcome sensation on a cold winter's day.

Next I hit up Divine Cupcake for a double dose of spiciness. The first cupcake I sampled, the Thai Me Up, was incredible. Instead of being set in chocolate, the cupcake itself is a peanut curry cake topped off with peanut buttercream frosting and sprinkled with ground chili peppers. Again, the overall taste of the cake is less heat, more spice. But the ground chili peppers resting atop add just the right kick.



DIVINE CUPCAKE'S THAI ME UP

go down real smooth and your stash will be gone before long.

Also at Sweet Life, for the time being, is Red Hot Chocolate Cheesecake — the February dessert of the month. Sweet Life certainly doesn't hold back on the spice. The cheesecake was by far the spiciest thing I'd bitten into during this survey and has proven to be my favorite of the bunch. Its heat comes from cayenne and cinnamon, but the kick is undeniable.

In the end, I've learned two things: "Spicy," in this case, can mean either loaded with the flavor of spices, or downright hot. And spiciness mixed with chocolate, although foreign and strange sounding, can bring you some of the best desserts you'll eat this long winter season. If chocolate isn't your bag, the Thai Me Up is the way to go. But if you're a chocoholic like me, you'll find that the chocolate mellows the chilies just enough to make them tolerable, though their kick provides a keen balance to the smooth and sweet cocoa.

If you're looking for a way to warm up your winter, indulge in all the culinary delights this season has to offer. And don't skip the dessert. ■



EUPHORIA CHOCOLATE'S SPICED TRUFFLES

The other cupcake was the Swizzle Stick. This is a South American chocolate cinnamon cake with a hint of cayenne pepper and a slathering of chocolate ganache. Now we were nearing the neighborhood of actual heat. Mild and flavorful, the chocolate cake is finished with a small jolt of spice. I was leery of the combination at first, though once I'd experienced the sweet of the chocolate meeting the spice of the pepper, I immediately understood why these combinations are so widely available.

Now I was on a roll, so I headed to Sweet Life, where I sampled two entirely different desserts. The first taste came from their rather new case of handmade chocolates: the chili pepper chocolate. These are far more delicate than a truffle, deriving their kick from dried red chilies. The head in these little babies is more of a sting than a lingering heat, and it moved quickly through my mouth, finishing warm. Caution: These things



SWEET LIFE'S RED HOT CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE