



The good, the bad and the downright naughty

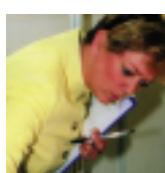
Watch out Nellie's about. We kick off the New Year with a new series in which **Nellie Nichols**, the well-known sandwich designer, now turned food consultant, visits sandwich bars incognito and checks them over. Her first visit was to EAT's Brompton Road, London outlet

Bargain bound, the first week of the January Sales finds me and a fellow sales fanatic tramping the Brompton Road - surely this is the way to burn off the Christmas excess of roast turkey, cold turkey, turkey curry, and the dreaded turkey soup. Even the dog's had enough. It's a cold day and what better place to rest up with a hopefully virtuous low fat, low calorie New Year temptation than EAT in Brompton Road, Knightsbridge.

Started in 1996 with a current total of 38 shops, it continues to give a rival I've worked for a couple of times a good run for its money.

A Scandinavian white theme welcomes us, lots of pale, nude wood and strange plastic mock-crocodile seating.

We are surrounded by Christmas. There's a festive Stilton Bloomer, a Turkey Christmas Works Bloomer, even a Club Sandwich with Turkey, and a very Christmassy Sausage Sandwich of the Week. Rigid branches of Christmas tree sadly adorn the Soup and menu boards. Are we in a time warp? Too much of a good thing think a lot of sensible retailers, who cut off the supply of turkey sandwiches in their prime, well before Big Ben chimes the New Year in.



NELLIE NICHOLS

We push on with a Hot Bacon Butty, along with a Chef's Salad, the "New" No Mayo Tuna Crunch on 8 Grain Bread, a Chef's Salad, a Carrot Slab and a Chocolate Honeycombed Mousse, with Lattes. There's no way of knowing what fat or calories we're eating and nothing is passing my companion's lips until she knows. An enquiry at the till results in a very charming and helpful Manager printing off the full nutritional on both the Tuna Crunch and the Chef's Salad. You see it's all on the website. But not much help when you're struggling under a mountain of carrier bags in the middle of Knightsbridge



without a linked up laptop in sight.

Finding a clean table without the obligatory dead tea or coffee remains proves quite a challenge. Someone's discarded tea is on the next table for twenty minutes before being cleared away. The tables are dotted with cups and sandwich boxes. We count three blobs of chewing gum on the Scandinavian floor and I feel duty-bound to enlighten the charming, helpful Manager that someone's spilt an entire cup of coffee under a table. Several of Knightsbridge's fag ends are with us on the large, luxurious doormat. Can't these lovely, helpful, smiling staff come out from behind the Christmas counter and do something?

In the excitement of finding a clean table we've forgotten the Hot Bacon Butty. Retrieving it reveals a tightly foiled and wrapped parcel cleverly branded inside. Disappointingly the muffin has been forgotten during its toasting and is a little burnt on the outside. Inside it's drier than a well picked turkey bone, and I recall not being asked if I would like any sauce or mustard. A great shame as the bacon itself is absolutely delicious, with a truly

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ALL PICTURES SHOWN HERE WERE TAKEN AT DIFFERENT EAT BRANCHES, NOT BROMPTON ROAD, LONDON

great sweet and Smokey flavour. Nothing would have been nicer than a little English mustard to go with it or a squirt of ketchup.

The No Mayo Tuna Crunch (377 cals, 10.52g of fat per pack) had a very interesting role call of ingredients: tuna, carrot, lemon zest, parsley, crème fraîche, spring onion, celery, and spinach, but had a slightly digested look to it, not helped by the tiny flecks of carrot and spring onion. The 8 grain bread it's on is simply delicious, bouncy and fresh with masses of different crunchy grains, compared to the norm of stale Granary overused by so many of the high street sandwich kings. Please let's have more of it. The sandwich has some really good flavours and would be perfected by a less mushy overmixed texture. Definitely a great No Mayo option and a sandwich I'd be happy to have again.

The Chef's Salad (322 cals, and a naughty 26.06g of fat) failed to please my co-bargain hunter. I wonder why. It had half a boiled egg, a few discs of dry chicken, some grated strands of cheddar and two mushy tired slices of avocado. The delicious bacon was back, but not nearly enough of it and everything sat on a very interesting variety of different lettuces, sadly several of which were a little brown at the edges. But we both very much liked the new robust and very visual packaging and the not for the faint hearted dressing.

The Carrot Cake and Honeycomb Chocolate Mousse were both on their last day of life and I can't help thinking would have been very much better in their youth. Conducting regular taste panels at the end of products' life are vital to ensure that the quality mark can still be awarded with conviction. The Carrot Cake was a bit too sweet for me and a little greasy. The Mousse, which only had honeycomb pieces strangely on one side was a bit runny inside. The Lattes were good, rich and creamy.

So come on EAT. Your stores are modern and well designed, your products normally a constant wow of innovation and titillation. Your staff ever helpful and smiling. Why aren't we allowed a hot soup on a cold day before lunch, a clean table and a swept floor. With Christmas well behind us let's have more of your great innovative products.

Nellie Nichols is a Food Consultant contactable on nellienicholsnpd@btinternet.com This review is based on her own independent views

OUR SELECTION

Bacon Butty	£1.75
Tuna Crunch	£2.10
Chef's Salad	£3.30
Carrot Slab	£1.00
Choc Mousse	£1.80
Latte	£1.40