

# Greggs: 'just out of the kitchen' freshness

It takes a good operator to expand rapidly and also maintain high quality standards. Greggs seems to have achieved both, according to **Nellie Nichols**, Pret's ex-head of food, now turned consultant, who continues her series for *Sandwich & Snack News* with a look at the High Street baker turned sandwich maker

I'm going to tell you a secret. It's not necessarily something to be proud of, but I'm definitely not ashamed of it either. It's something I do, but I'm not the only one. Far from it – builders and painters do it; lots of naughty (yet to be Jamie indoctrinated) children, Johnnie Vaughan from the Breakfast Show at Capital Radio, and the boys from Right Said Fred do it. We are talking here about eating Greggs Sausage Rolls -

or rather, it used to just be Sausage Rolls until they launched the All Day Breakfast Sausage Beans and Cheese Melt, which is awesome, hang the fat and calories.

Don't get me wrong, this is not something I eat often or I know I would become enormous – just now and then. If I walk past on a cold and rainy day and that wonderful warm pastry smell fills the street, I sort of ... well ... have to go in!

Jackie is the Manager of Greggs in the Fulham Road and is the owner of a big wide smile that lights up her face. She's worked at Greggs for nearly eleven years she tells me. In fact, she doesn't think she'll ever work for anyone else. Nor does Angela who's worked there for eight years. They love the company who, they say, looks after them very well - they care a lot. Then there are the customers, they care about them too. And there are clearly a lot of them as well; four million every week going into 1,000 shops nationwide, with the recent expansion in Europe of four stores which have opened in Belgium.

This is a simple family bakery success story started in the 1930's with a target

turnover in excess of £1 billion by 2010. And they built it on care. At least 1% of profits are donated to charity every year, along with a Charitable Trust that runs a lot of care in the community projects.

So what of the product? Their sandwiches certainly don't stay on the shelves for long. But Jackie and lots of others like her are more than happy to go and make up anything you like that's missing while you wait. In any store you are met with a smile and a genuine 'nothing is too much trouble' attitude that is lacking in far too many outlets nowadays.

The shop is busy and the queue is building up so I'm off to try a selection of sandwiches personally chosen by Jackie and her team; some personal favourites and others they are keen to recommend.

Piri Piri Chicken comes in a Sesame and Poppy Seed covered roll, the very good spicy chicken is layered with care and generously spilling out of the front. It's made with sour cream mayo as a foil for the chicken which has attitude and a good mixture of different leaves. This is a filling and very reasonable £1.95. However, the weight of all the chicken is





slightly squashing the leaves that I think would possibly be better placed on top.

There's a new line of Baguettes, baked and filled in store. I tried the Mature Cheddar with Apple Ale and Chilli Relish (£1.75). The cheddar slices are positioned in triangles invitingly poking out but again the lettuce is under the weighty cheese and needs to be moved. I love the Relish and it works very well with the cheese but the baguette is a little under baked and is definitely needing five more minutes in the oven for a golden tan.

The Tuna Crunch Bloomer has every characteristic a Tuna sandwich should have. The market place is saturated with average tuna sandwiches. But a simple product so easy to get wrong is here for all to taste, a shining example of near perfection at £1.85. The Bloomer bread is soft, fluffy and firm and inviting all at the same time, like the best pillow you have ever put your head on when you are truly too tired. The Tuna is perfectly mixed with crunchy pieces of red onion and red pepper and delicious mayo. Delicate mixed leaves round it off. This is a tuna sandwich

worth going to try - I don't know of a better one.

Red Leicester and Spanish Onion at £1.55 on Wholemeal bread is a tasty combination but has some tired cucumber spoiling it and the filling isn't spread to the edges which always makes me throw the crusts away I'm afraid. I don't need too much encouragement (so don't have curly hair.)

Chicken and Bacon on Malted Bread (£1.85) is good and the bacon is lovely with a good smokey taste. And good to have some change from £2.00 and a good and tasty sandwich.

The Sandwich of the Week is Egg Mayo Tomato

Cucumber and Lettuce bulging at a giveaway £1.00. That flaccid cucumber is back though and the sandwich aches for some black pepper.

But true value for the money again is the naughty Jumbo Sausage Rolls at 62p and the wondrous Sausage Cheese and Bean Melt at £1.00 – the big selection of hot products have a serious Mecca following, and justly deserved.

So when all is said and done, its clear expansion to an enormous national size looks achievable. There is great continuity throughout their stores in food and service, genuine affection and true team spirit.

The cucumber is easily fixable, as is the elevation of the lettuce. The quality is there to be offered again and again by sandwiches made on site, affording that wonderful 'just out of the kitchen' freshness. Long may it last. See you soon Jackie.

### Our selection included:

GREGGS	
Piri Piri Chicken on Sesame/	
Poppy Seed Roll	£1.95
Cheddar Apple Relish Baguette	£1.75
Tuna Crunch Bloomer	£1.85
Red Leicester & Spanish Onion on Wholemeal	£1.55
Chicken & Bacon on Malted	£1.85
Egg Mayo Sandwich of the Month	£1.00
Jumbo Sausage Roll	£0.62
All Day Breakfast Sausage & Bean Melt	£1.00



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*This review is based on Nellie Nichols' own independent views*