

# Reviews

## Where People Know Your Name

*North Chuck gets a great new neighborhood pub with Madra Rua*

BY LEE JENKINS

**T**hank goodness for the old-fashioned neighborhood — and for the old-fashioned neighborhood pub. Madra Rua is a comely, authentically Irish space situated perfectly for the resurrection of the Park Circle neighborhood in North Charleston. Park Circle, with most of its homes built in the fifties and many of its new residents in their 20s and 30s, is an ideal place for this pub.

“The Pub,” as those who live nearby refer to it, is owned by Stephen Connor and Robert “Spence” Spencer. Connor came to the United States from Ireland 10 years ago and joined forces with Spencer to open the pub in March.

In the few short months since it opened, Madra Rua has become the default meeting place for several young new homeowners. The atmosphere is good for small groups of friends to visit, with dividers between groups of tables, but the bar is available for those who like to mingle.

The food is basic, fattening, and good, the “black and tans” are served at the proper temperature, and the service is laid-back and friendly — sometimes a little too much so. Several recent visits have resulted in new

friendships and broken diets, due to delicious fish and chips, comforting shepherd’s pie, and one really good steak. The menu is a good solid blend of authentic Irish dishes and plain old bar food.

The Madra Rua burger (\$6.50) is a thick, flavorful burger on a big, soft bun. It’s dressed with a mild horseradish sauce and served in a basket with house-made fries that are surprisingly crisp and flavorful. Other bar favorites include Wicklow wings (\$5.95), which have received excellent reviews on several occasions. They are generously sized and flavored with just enough heat to be interesting without inducing pain. The salads are basic as well, just a little bowl of spring mix with a side of unexciting dressing. However, this is not a place to go eat salads. It’s a place to eat too much and drink with friends.

My eating team chose to really pig out on our official visit, indulging in three entrees for two people. I don’t recommend this method for the Madra Rua novice; that kind of gluttony for the unpracticed stomach could be dangerous.

The dinner special was a sirloin steak (\$10.95). It was not only a well-prepared meal but also an excellent value. The generous portion of steak was exactly medium rare,



**Lauren Dauscher, a server at the Irish pub and eatery, enjoys Shepherd’s Pie**

and carried the extra flavor of sirloin without the toughness that can sometimes accompany it. Truly delicious tiny green beans sautéed in butter and a perfectly baked potato filled out the traditional plate.

My favorite dish was also the least healthy of the lot. The basket of fish and chips (\$9.95) included another big handful of the crispy house-made fries and a huge, crispy, heavily

## Review

**Madra Rua**  
1034 East Montague Ave.  
554-2522  
7 days a week  
11 a.m. — 1 a.m.  
Full menu served  
until 9 p.m.  
Bar menu from  
9 p.m.-Midnight  
Thurs., Fri. and Sat  
Smoking allowed

battered hunk of cod. We carefully applied the condiments of malt vinegar, ketchup, and salt to achieve the perfect combination of tart, sweet, salty, and “fried” flavors, and the result was decadent, junky, and wonderful.

In an effort to explore the traditional portion of the menu more thoroughly, we also dipped into a shepherd’s pie (\$8.95). This large ramekin held about two cups **CONT. P. 63**