

The Breakfast Queen

Ina Pinkney is a name well-known to Chicago breakfast lovers. After closing her namesake restaurant, Ina's, a year ago after 33 years in business, Ina has now turned the tables (yes, pun intended) by dining out for a living. The Chicago Tribune was smart enough to ask the acknowledged Breakfast Queen to periodically visit and review her former competitors, and two things are clear: she knows her stuff and she takes no prisoners. She may like your Benedicts but she'll tell you if your coffeemaker needs to be cleaned.

Here are a few quotes (and menu ideas) from the Breakfast Queen's Tribune columns:

"I want to like breakfast sandwiches, but the density of the bread and squishy ingredients usually leave me annoyed and hungry. But not here. The bread was soft and delicious on its own and held the perfect little egg "pancake" folded to fit, fresh spinach and roasted red pepper with just the right amount of basil mayonnaise." (Flo)

"I'd never had a homemade lamb patty, perfectly seasoned with Turkish spices with my eggs before, and now I know what I've been missing! It's a thoughtful alternative to pork and chicken." (Prairie Joe's)

"I also had the Flying Saucer Benedict, which had baby spinach, mushrooms, artichoke hearts, two poached eggs and roasted red pepper sauce on an English muffin." (Flying Saucer)

"My New Orleans Breakfast with a salmon croquette, one piece of thick, slightly sweet French toast and eggs over easy lived up to my hopes and dreams." (Pearl's Place)

"What really surprised and delighted me was the option to have the breakfast potatoes mixed with chorizo or corned beef with some egg dishes!" (Fuel)

"When you give me three scrambled eggs topped with fresh mozzarella and sliced tomato, served with house-made basil pesto, Amylu's apple and gouda chicken sausages, and sautéed potatoes, I'm happy." (Cafe Selmarie)

"The Aztec omelet with corn, avocado, Chihuahua cheese, bell peppers, jalapenos and onions served with house potatoes and my choice of toast was a winner." (Whisk)

"There are so many biscuit options, from plain to way over the top, it took me a while to settle on these two: Huevos – black beans, spicy chorizo, tomatillo salsa and two sunny-side eggs – and the BLT – candied bacon, butter lettuce, heirloom tomato and basil aioli." (Bang Bang Pie & Biscuits)

"I ordered The Stevie, which has spicy fried chicken, crispy bacon, a fried egg and sharp cheddar. Since they brine the chicken in some hot spices, I didn't order the Nashville Hot preparation because it would knock me out. Except for the bacon, which I think they

dropped in the deep fryer to cook and became impossible to chew, this was a shockingly good way to start the day.” (The Roost Carolina Kitchen - food truck)

Ina says what she feels. She may not have liked the bacon but it was still “a shockingly good way to start the day!”