

Published based on [Reviews: Regal Heights Bistro \(Toronto\)](#)

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As our car approaches the Regal Heights Bistro on St. Clair just east of Dufferin, the windshield wipers slap at pouring rain that's turned this stretch of Corso Italia into a churning sea of gravel and muck. The streetcar track/road improvement work on St. Clair Avenue West is still not finished, limiting the traffic to one lane. Fortunately it seems like everyone else stayed at home in this bad weather, so the traffic is light and we find a parking spot just across the street from our restaurant. Jogging along the cracked pavement and among the orange cones in this no-man's-land, I gaze at the building where I the Regal Heights Bistro is supposed to be located. After a short look, I have to observe: "There's no sign, there used to be a big sign, and it looks like a pub inside. I hope this is still the right place." But my partner says: "Yep – Regal Heights Bistro," pointing at the front window, displaying a small hand-lettered sign and also the trademark Jazz Brunch sign.

Just after we cross the threshold, a hostess is already waiting to seat us, and we can choose a place according to our preferences. At eight fifteen, most patrons are sitting near the bar, with the whole place being about a third full. "This is your first time here? Our sign blew down, and when we write it on a chalkboard, the rain washes it away." "Tonight you are going to have lots of fun, there's a birthday celebration and a jazz band is coming." So now we are sure we are indeed in the right place, although when I look around us, I can see more of a pub than an upscale bistro interior, with the smell of French fries in the air. Next we focus on our menus - a two-sided thing that really disappoints my partner.

"They've sure changed their menu," he observes sadly. Perhaps as an elitist jazz musician himself, he is just uncomfortable about the prospect of a live band. I have to read the restaurant name written at the top of the menu again and again, so that I am completely sure we really are where we want to be. I tried to look up the restaurant's website but I couldn't find any, and the only internet information available was a couple of bare-bones positive reviews. But I found some posted menus with dishes like caprese salad, provencale escargots, chicken liver pate, smoked salmon crepes and black squid ink linguine. There is no menu needed to tell me that the chance of a homemade black squid ink linguine coming out of this very kitchen is zero. When we look at the current menu, we can see it's mostly typical pub food, if a bit gussied up by some unusual flavours and toppings.

When our hostess comes back and takes our order, I ask her what happened, that the menus are completely different from the information we found on the Internet. Different owner? "Oh no, it's still the same ownership," she answers reassuringly. "Well, we haven't updated the website in a long time, our menu has been this way for the last few years. Only the chefs have been changing a lot here. But we strongly focus on fresh food: we shop daily, we cut the meat ourselves, we prepare our own burgers, we don't use any microwaves... we just want the overall atmosphere to be more casual." The pub is definitely very casual, even with the paper napkins... but I would still expect a little more sophisticated gastronomy, regarding the wall signage from around the world.

"We shrink from that term gastro-pub," she laughs, putting us at her ease with a charming, pleasant behaviour.

See the rest of the story at our original [restaurant writeup](#).

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