

## Herbstreet

Hanover Quay, Dublin 2

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“Here’s what we’re into: Homemade, cooked to order food using locally sourced ingredients where possible. Keeping a watchful eye on our carbon footprint, good tunes and a happy work force.”

So states the succinct menu at Herbstreet, a funky daytime addition to what is shaping up nicely as one of Dublin’s most attractive areas for casual dining. Squashed into a small, slightly poky space between Riva and Ely on Hanover Quay, but boasting the same light-filled views over the basin of the Grand Canal, Herbstreet delivers confidently on its statement of intent.

It was too cold to snag one of the outside tables, so we retreated indoors to the bustling dining room. An unusual layout creates a kind of Tardis effect, making it feel intimate on arrival and yet spacious too. Bucket style designer chairs are as comfortable as they are cool looking. The short menu, which runs from 12pm through to 5pm, manages to offer lots of choice; everything we had tasted even better than it read; and once all the diners had had their lunch, the happy-looking staff sat down together for theirs.

Service starts at the early hour of 7.30am with an inventive breakfast menu that includes breakfast burritos and blueberry pancakes alongside a choice of organic porridge and granola. At the weekends this morphs into a brunch menu with the help of some quirky beverages such as the Ginger Pimms with fresh pineapple chunks and mint leaves. There are eight wines by the glass, and several ciders and beers, including the intriguing Brahma from Brazil.

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The weekday lunch menu, served from noon through to closing at 5pm, offers about a dozen hearty lunch dishes: think hot corned beef sandwich (€9.50), burgers with choice of toppings such as a fried egg or Monterey Jack cheese (€12.95), or pan-fried salmon and crab fish cake with a mango and coconut salad and home made sweet chilli sauce (€13.95).

There are no starter-sized portions so we created our own, sharing a very delicious ham terrine: chunky sweet meat held together with an unctuous binding, spiked with whole capers, and served with fresh mixed salad leaves with bright flashes of roast red pepper. It came with a very good picallili: bright, sharp and slightly sweet.

For mains I was swayed at the last minute by the fish pie which made a happy match with my fresh and zippy glass of Crozes-Hermitage Marsanne Roussanne. The pie came topped with some light flaky pastry, and had lots of decent if slightly pedestrian prawns and salmon swimming inside a creamy sauce.

The real winner was the cous cous salad, flecked through with finely diced black olives and red and green peppers, drizzled with a verdant green rocket pesto, topped with slices of grilled haloumi, and clinched with an excellent baby fig and apricot compote (€12.95).



Desserts are great fun (€6 each). The ice cream sandwich involves Tickety Moo ice cream from Co Fermanagh, some still-warm and slightly soft home-baked chocolate cookies, and a jug of warm chocolate sauce. Fab. Banoffee sundae came piled in a glass: gooey toffee sauce, crumbled biscuits and bananas, with a scoop of Jersey ice cream and some candied pecans.

Many restaurants are keen to bandy about the buzz words of the day – home made, locally sourced – without really having proper follow through on them as central concepts. Herbstreet comes across as sincere, and stands out from the crowd for it.

Aoife Carrigy

### WE LOVED

The focus on doing something quite simple, but doing it unusually well

### WE SPENT

€80 for three-course lunch for two with wine, coffee and tip