

Restaurant Review for Mokabe's Coffeehouse: Three bullets out of six

I've lived in St. Louis, Missouri since 2008 but never had the occasion to go to the quaint Mokabe's coffeehouse until recently. Locals raved so much about the place and their service, I simply had to find out for myself. A neighbor told me Mokabe's was designated as a "safe spot", so I assumed that meant the area would be friendly.

Weird location was like a war zone: Despite being conveniently located next to Tower Grove park in the artsy Tower Grove South area, it was difficult to find parking nearby amidst the National Guard humvees and tanks blocking the streets. Mokabe's might think about relocating to a spot where they are less likely to have hundreds of cops in full riot gear positioned at the entrance. Clearly, Mokabe's is taking their location on Arsenal Street a little too literally.

I'm not usually spooked by the presence of hundreds of loaded assault rifles and the threat of the deployment of chemical weapons, but there are certainly patrons with less tolerance to such obstacles. I'm afraid it might have a dampening effect on foot traffic. Could just be me, though. To each his/her own. I heard the place is owned by some bad-ass lesbians, and maybe they are into that machismo shit. The military motif seemed excessive to me, but I'm white and heterosexual. Any-hoo.

Loud patrons & difficult to hold conversations: After making my way through a gaggle (or is it a pride? a hoard?) of protesters chanting on the patio, I placed an order for hot tea flavored tea at the counter. I know. I know. I don't drink coffee, but that doesn't mean I can't write a review about a coffeehouse. I have rights, people. Don't tread on me! There were lots of people singing and chanting as well as stalwart dudes in full military garb shouting through bull horns from the street. Don't go there to relax over a cup of Joe to write your dissertation. If, however, you enjoy chaos and adrenaline rushes, pull up a chair.

Unusual Vibe: Everyone seemed a little angry and melodramatic. Truth be told, I wished everyone would lighten up a little. Also, I didn't realize that a lot of home improvement/construction industry types hung out there. I thought it was going to be more like an Indie coffee experience with some long-haired, tatted hippies but patrons had on safety goggles and paint ventilation masks like that was a perfectly normal thing to do. Seems like it'd make it hard to eat, but whatever. Several customers were also wearing this strange eye make-up that made them look more like zombie's than coffee snobs. I don't know if there were a bunch of groups in there doing midnight team-building exercises, but many folks had on the same t-shirts that said things like Amnesty International, black lives matter, no justice/no peace, unarmed citizen. I wasn't sure what the slogans all meant but I would have been embarrassed to have on the same t-shirt as everyone else. It felt like high school again.

Mediocre food: The food smelled like burnt firecrackers, but was otherwise interesting. They could be less heavy-handed with the pepper because the whole

restaurant reeked of it. As I was contemplating ordering a panini, this weird fog machine that seemed to come from outside started pouring in after these obnoxious popping noises. It was like the beginning of an Aldo Nova video (Life, after all, is just a fantasy) minus the skin tight cat suit. Patrons were coughing and choking. It smelled awful and was not remotely appetizing, unless you're into having your insides feel and taste like burning leaves. If Mokabe's was trying to encourage people to order more coffee, it was a weird way to do it. Pastry treats would no doubt have worked better. The whole scene just made my eyes well up with tears and sent me into coughing fits.

Hit or miss service (mostly hit): If you decide you need a caffeine infusion after confirmation that the justice system isn't just, don't sit near the front of Mokabe's. Service was terrible there as everyone was roiling around and gasping. It took FOREVER to get my tea. And you know how sometimes the wait staff takes a break from serving you and it's really annoying because you know they're ignoring you? Nearly everyone decided to take a break at the same time by flooding into the basement. To their credit, the wait staff was trying their best to serve incapacitated customers doubling over in agony from the aggressive military disruption of their peaceful assembly on private property, but it doesn't change the fact that the service was slow. There are no excuses in the service industry, even when riot cops are trying to gas you. Police like frappuccino too.

Needs more varied menu: Finally, Mokabe's should seriously rename some of their menu items to keep up with the times. Instead of the Who needs meat? sandwich, they should offer a Who needs tear ducts? plate. They could spice up the drink selection by adding some riot control chi latte. Add a Buffalo chicken MRAP to the line-up. Maybe some shot gun Gumbo. I think peppered cappuccino would be a real crowd pleaser. Vegan maaloX falafel, even.

Will I return? I gave them three bullets out of six because I do think they have an interesting menu and genuinely wanted to provide good service. I'm going to try them again for Brunch and see if I have the same experience with the family. You should give everyone a second chance.