

Affordable Twisted Tangle Cafe does southern comfort food right



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(Photo: Shelby Reynolds/Naples Daily News)

Tucked among the Everglades Wonder Gardens' grand oaks and stately banyan trees along Old 41 is one of Bonita Spring's newest restaurants serving up Southern-style barbecue.

Tender smoked brisket and barbecued pulled pork is the specialty at Twisted Tangle Café, 27120 Old 41 Road, but the "brisket on a biscuit" and a side of corn "nuggers" were certainly the stars of my plate.

After a recent Sunday morning visit to the Wonder Gardens (what a treat that was), I headed over to the café, which has been open for a little more than a month, with my two dining companions for lunch. From outside, the restaurant might not look like much, but I'm a firm believer in not judging a book by its cover. The exterior is faux painted to look like a jungle, featuring a panther, deer, alligator and other woodland creatures, a pleasant nod to the restaurant's namesake and next door neighbor.

We had just missed breakfast — which is served from 8 a.m. until offerings are sold out — but were seated at a table in the cozy dining area with a hint of island vibes. The interior walls were lined with straw, resembling a chickee hut, and a tin roof overhead completed the ensemble. Little mason jars painted in pastels and filled with sunflowers, succulents and petunias were charming centerpieces on each table.

The tables and chairs were mismatched sets, which fit well inside the whimsical, at-home atmosphere. On an adjacent covered outdoor patio, the café hosts a bluegrass band Friday and Saturday nights.

It was a bit slow; only two other diners were there for lunch.

The menu was simple, the way I like it. We selected the beef brisket (\$10), quarter-baked chicken (\$9) and the brisket biscuit (brisket sandwiched between a homemade biscuit for \$7), with sides of slaw, macaroni and cheese and baked beans. Each entree came with a choice of side, but we were so desperate we also ordered an extra side to try the corn "nuggers" — fried gobs of creamed corn, a fond reminder of home.



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Brisket from Twisted Tangle Cafe can be ordered on a bun or by itself. A side of coleslaw and corn nuggers. (Photo: Shelby Reynolds/Naples Daily News)

Consider this my pledge to the corn nuggers at Twisted Tangle Café. They came out piping hot, crunchy on the outside, sweet and creamy on the inside.

They were so good we got another order, and I'll be back for more.

The menu promised each entree would come with cornbread, but we realized after leaving we didn't get any in our baskets, which is too bad.



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An order of the quarter baked chicken with a side of mac n cheese. *(Photo: Shelby Reynolds/Naples Daily News)*

The macaroni and slaw were common fare, but the baked beans with bits of brisket were another highlight of the meal. The same can be said for the tangy barbecue sauce slow-roasted to perfection right there on site. Our helpful waitress told us they will be selling the sauce by the mason jar soon, which can't be missed.

The baked chicken was a sizable portion and had a tasty, buttery skin that was flavored well and just a little crispy on the outside.



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The Twisted Tangle Cafe is home to the "Brisket Biscuit," slices of lean brisket on a biscuit. A side of baked beans. (Photo: Shelby Reynolds/Naples Daily News)

The brisket, which can be ordered on a bun or by itself, was juicy, tender and thinly sliced. While it was great with a biscuit, the portion was a bit small for my growling stomach after walking through the gardens next door, so order the beef brisket by itself for a larger serving.

The brisket and pulled pork can also be ordered by the pound for \$11.99 and \$9.99, respectively. Other sides include waffle fries, scalloped corn, sweet potato french fries, collard greens and cornbread; they cost \$2 a piece.

Next time I visit I'll be sure to catch breakfast, which is only served on the weekends and includes an all-you-can-eat, buffet-style of hodge-podge breakfast items for \$11.99.

The build-a-biscuit also piqued my interest. Diners can top a biscuit with any item from the buffet for \$5.99. Yes, please.

As far as Southern comfort food is concerned, Twisted Tangled Café knows what it's doing. Its staff is still working out the kinks; we didn't receive cornbread (the menu and the waitress told us we would) and the brisket came on a bun even though we ordered it without.

Even so, between the tangy sauce, the homestyle corn nuggers and tender brisket, former Southerners can find barbecue salvation in Bonita Springs.