

# Montys Deli: Jewish Soul Food in the Heart of Shoreditch

Monty's Deli began its humble existence as a market stall under the bustling railway arches on Maltby Street in 2012. When Tom Kerridge declared their Jewish soul food the "best value lunch in London", curiosity quadrupled the queues and owners Mark Ogus and Owen Barratt turned their aspirations to a proper brick-and-mortar restaurant.

Enthusiastic followers funded the kitchen equipment through a successful Kickstarter campaign. (Rewards included enamel pickle pins, tea towels with a quote from their worst Trip Advisor review – "When I'm lying on my death bed, I'll regret the hour I wasted here." – and a black card scooped up by one £5,000 backer who now has free food for life.)

Guided by the creative minds at Dan Marks Studio, they then transformed a Hoxton Street space (once home to a butcher and then a bakery) into an alluring 65-seater deli. Monty's opened in April 2017, its unassuming façade sporting a widely spaced, hand-drawn red logo on a clean white background. Simple yet sophisticated.

The retro menus, bottomless coffee, secret recipes and generous portions are reminiscent of institutions like Katz's in NYC and Langer's in L.A., though there's a distinctly London vibe here.

Monty's seems a modern nod to the long Jewish history in the East End. Mark's own grandfather "Monty", after whom the deli is named, was the one who introduced him to traditional Jewish tastes. It's fitting that the establishment is now serving giant potato latkes just streets from where Monty spent his childhood in the 1920s.



What sets them apart is that Monty's is one of the only places in Britain to make their own salt beef. It takes a week to perfect. Bite into mountains of mouth-watering meat piled into a Rubeen sandwich on toasted rye, smothered with melted Swiss cheese, Russian dressing, tangy mustard and the fermented goodness of sauerkraut and you'll agree it's worth the wait.

In fact, as much food as possible is made at the deli. They bake their own bagels, whip up the mustard themselves, cure those piles of meat right there and have even developed their own rye recipe for their award-winning sarnies.

Pop in for peppery pastrami, chicken soup with kneidlach cooked slowly over two days and roles of chocolate-filled babka. There's also a "Shabbat dinner" with chopped liver and challah bread, chicken soup, roast chicken and lokshen pudding. For drinks, a choice of anything from cocktails to whiskies to Palwin's No. 10 (a Kiddush blessed wine served at the beginning of a Shabbat dinner) to a nostalgic egg cream.



Did you know that London was the world's original bagel capital before New York stepped in? Owen has researched old-school bagel-baking methods that give them their distinct flavour and texture. Their secret recipe involves proofing bagel dough in the fridge for two days, boiling and then baking them on hessian-wrapped cedar boards that are soaked in water.

Food is available to take away, but you'll want to stick around for a bit to check out the interiors. Prop yourself up at the bar with its bespoke lighting (hollow blackened steel fitted with led bulbs) and watch the meat being sliced, or slide into one of the diner-style booths.

An old kneading table that is bashed and battered from decades of working with dough in the bakery that was once in this

location takes pride of place as part of the décor. It sits with its fuchsia “Bagels” lettering above towers of the freshly baked plain, poppy seed and sesame seed varieties.

Many of the old Victorian features were exposed and preserved by the designers. The original white and green tiles lining the walls complete with the butcher’s insignia have been revealed and the porcelain black and white chequered floors remain.



History lives on through the food too as visitors recall stories from delis of their past and memories that were made around challah and wine. Mark emphasises the nostalgia that comes with creating each dish from his childhood. This type of cooking and baking – for sustenance and comfort – is what he and Owen strive to re-create at Monty’s: food reminiscent of the way things once were – made un-rushed, by hand, with love.