



The Islander – pork belly, pineapple sriracha cilantro jam, Thai basil, cucumber and cheddar – and, behind, the Parmesan & Chimichurri fresh cut fries at The Grilled Cheese Bistro along downtown Norfolk's Granby Street. [Stephen M. Katz](#) | [The Virginian-Pilot](#)



The bistro's fare is both cheese-packed and locally oriented, with beers brewed here. Communal seating has a European air. [Stephen M. Katz](#) | [The Virginian-Pilot](#)

The Grilled Cheese Bistro: A bit of sass, a lot of innovation

By: [Jerry Cronin](#) Virginian-Pilot correspondent November 10, 2015

One of the recent flurries among my Facebook friends was the sharing of the Forbes online article about Norfolk as a cool, up-and-coming place. Grilled Cheese Bistro on Granby Street was cited as one of Norfolk's wow factors. With that kind of national press, I figured I should head down there and see if it was really worth the fuss. It was.

Think small, then reduce that again. GCB occupies a little storefront. Necessity being the mom that she is, the menu points out that seating is communal to encourage conversation. You can make friends at the bar, at long shelves with chairs surrounding the exterior walls, or the one larger table squeezed into the space. When we first got there we grabbed a shelf in the back but then pounced on bar seating when another couple left. A funny thing is that I am in Italy as I write this, and this sort of arrangement would be right at home over here. With growing public transportation and a burgeoning downtown nightlife, maybe Norfolk is becoming like other great cities.

GCB joins the trend of other mono-themed eateries that have popped up in the area and around the country. Their bit is that favorite of kids, and adults in the know, but taken to a whole new level. Grown-ups no longer need to get a Croque Monsieur or Madame to satisfy the primal urge for cheese between wheat. You can go with a whole variety of delicious cheeses, dressed up between two slices of bread and grilled to golden deliciousness.

On our evening's visit we had the pleasure of tasting three of the grilled wonders, along with a side of fries and a bowl of tomato bisque for dipping. All were different, and all were very good. The Fall for Guiseppe (\$9.50) was an Italian number with poached pear, basil, local honey, balsamic, mozzarella, and fontina. The fruitiness of the pear played well with the cheese, and the whole thing was a wonderful dripping mess.

My female companion went with the Big "O" (\$12). This is the priciest sandwich on the menu, but it is ridiculously packed with innuendo and flavor. Picture the combination of French toast with peanut butter, Nutella, banana, local bacon and mascarpone, and you can imagine the explosion.

I particularly liked the Don Quixote (\$10). It was a classy combination of Gouda, caramelized onions, sautéed oyster mushrooms, roasted red peppers and olive tapenade. Definitely grilled cheese gone Mediterranean.

If the over-the-top combinations of ingredients aren't enough, you can dress up your order for a fee with everything from an egg to cheeses, veggies and bacon. I just couldn't go there.

In addition to the grilled wonders, GCB does offer a number of sides. That evening we went with a cup of delicious tomato basil bisque (\$3)– great for those who like to dip – and fresh-cut fries with smoked sea salt (\$4). The chipotle mayo that accompanied the fries was a true wonder, and I could have just eaten those with a pint or two of the local brew and been sated.

GCB offers two dessert choices, the GCB Delight (\$8) and the root beer float (\$6), made with draft root beer from Dominion brewing. We went with the Delight, a chocolate cookie sandwich with coffee ice cream and bacon marmalade. There wasn't too much of a bacon kick, but the marmalade appeared to be fig based, which gave it a dark sweet flavor. The scuppernong grapes used for garnish were unexpected and fun. It all worked.

GCB supports local brewing, and I enjoyed how the Smartmouth IPA nicely cut the fattiness of the sandwiches.

I really liked GCB but would definitely need a younger metabolism to go there often. It would be a great place when you were famished or had just spent the night clubbing.

Now that I have been to Grilled Cheese Bistro, I can agree wholeheartedly with Forbes. GCB is yet one more wow factor for Norfolk.

The spot: Grilled Cheese Bistro, 345 Granby St., Norfolk

The vibe: Bustling and hip.

To try: Don Quixote with a side of fries with smoked sea salt.

If you go: Menu: Grilled Cheeses, \$8 to \$12; sides, \$4 to \$20; desserts, \$6 to \$8.

Hours: Monday, and Wednesday through Saturday: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. then 6 to 10; Sunday, noon to 6. Closed Tuesday.

Payment: Amex, MasterCard, Visa, Discover

Reservations: No

Parking: On street.

Handicapped access: Yes

Child friendly: No special seating

Phone: 77.233.2512

Website: www.thegrilledcheesebistro.com