

## A taste of hipster Brooklyn in the heart of Ridgewood, Queens

By **Suzanne Parker**

If you're too broke to live in Brooklyn, but still want to patronize joints that have B-borough attitude, Julia's Wine & Beer Bar is your kind of place.

Nestled in the heart of rapidly-becoming-trendy Ridgewood, it has that on-a-shoestring charm, quirky menu and locavore orthodoxy our sister borough is known for.

The shoestring, by the way, came in the form of a Kickstarter campaign. It was the second such venture for owners Denise Plowman and Crystal River Williams. Their first was Café Norma, a coffee shop and bakery on nearby Catalpa Avenue.

Julia's offerings are restricted to beer, wine and biggish small plates. As far as we could tell, none of the beverages have transgressed the boundaries of New York State, with several of the beers claiming Queens origins.

While there is no hard liquor served here, there is an intriguing selection of wine and beer cocktails.

We loved the "Green Goddess" made from muddled Thai basil ginger, fresh squeezed lime juice, and sparkling wine. The glass was rimmed with sugar. Other intriguing options included Pepper Infused Riesling with candied jalapenos, or the Queen Bee with honey mead, sherry and vermouth and port infused cherries.

If complicated cocktails aren't your thing, there are local beers like Transmitter's NY2 Oak Grisette, a farmhouse ale/saison that uses all New York state malts and hops, and does their brewing in Long Island City.

The wines are all identified as "NY or organic/sustainable."

Plan to linger over your drinks for a while, as it took a good 45 minutes for our first morsel of food to arrive.

We probably should have ordered Julia's beer nuts: spicy bacon fat roasted mixed nuts with brown sugar and sesame. Surely a bowl of nuts, no matter how special, can't take 45 minutes. Our server offered no explanation or apology for the long wait. It must be genuine slow food.

Fortunately, the food was mostly worth the wait, and we had cleverly mellowed out with a couple of drinks.

Buffalo flowers was a vegetarian version of that other popular bar food from Buffalo. Roasted cauliflower and halved Brussels sprouts came tossed in a spicy Buffalo sauce, topped with shaved blue cheese with a side of chive yogurt. All the zip with much less fat than the original.

Purple Prosciutto hash was a fry-up of purple potatoes, sweet potatoes and Prosciutto in a pesto sauce. It was tasty, but kind of too much of a good thing. A portion about half this size with an egg on top would be wonderful.

We managed two of the four types of turnovers offered — pork and beef. Both came in hefty pairs with a delightful mini salad of baby spinach and toasted pumpkin seeds. The pork which had been slow cooked in NY beer with peppers had a nice kick and a deep rich flavor. The beef version, braised in NY red wine was equally pleasing, but without the heat. The pastry was light and flaky, as it should be.

There are no sweets on offer here, but if you're looking for a finale, the Savory NY Cheese plate might just do the trick. The cheeses are from Sprout Creek farms, an artisanal cheesemaker in Poughkeepsie. The two cheeses on offer here are both made from raw cow's milk. Toussaint is a crumbly cheese with a distinctive Alpine flavor. Kinkead is semi-firm, and a bit pungent. The cheeses are served with black garlic onion jam and house-made wheat crackers.

## **The Bottom Line**

Julia's Beer and Wine Bar abounds with creativity in décor and menu. Its prices are surprisingly wallet friendly for such handcrafted fare and generously portioned. If you're looking for a place to enjoy the pleasures of artisanal food without leaving our borough or breaking the bank, you need look no further than Julia's.

Julia's Beer & Wine Bar

818 Woodward Ave., Ridgewood

(917) 909-1314

Price Range: Small plates \$5--8

Cuisine: New American Hipster

Setting: Small, woody, changing art shows on walls.

Service: Excruciatingly slow

Hours: Monday — Sunday, 5 p.m. -1 a.m.

Reservations: Yes

Alcohol: Wine, beer, cider

Parking: Street

Dress: Casual

Children: Not ideal

Music: Recorded

Takeout: Yes

Credit cards: Yes

Noise level: Can be noisy when busy

Handicap accessible: Yes

WIFI: For phones and tablets only