

The Commie Café wins Healthy Living Award



WHAT NO CHIPS? HOW COMMIE CAFE SCOOPED HEALTHY LIVING AWARD

Hundreds of dedicated swimmers, divers and gym goers of all levels train at Edinburgh's Royal Commonwealth Pool every week, some from as early as 5.30 am, so they need nutritious, high energy food to keep them going.

Now Edinburgh Leisure's own brand cafe, Refresh, has scooped a prestigious Healthy Living Award.

The accolade recognises the high quality, nutrition rich qualities of the menu offered at Refresh.

It's a far cry from the old stereotype of cafes at public leisure centres, which in their heyday were associated with chips, sweets and cola.

But when Catering Manager Vanessa Sanal was brought in to develop a menu to offer an inspiring, energising, modern model of fitness centre catering, she was passionate about the project.

Cereal and hot filled rolls are among choices served from when the cafe opens at 7.30am to get early swimmers and gym goers ready for the day ahead, while hot filling mains such as baked potatoes, chilli and lasagne are served for lunch and onwards. There are also plenty of 'grab and go' options such as paninis, fruit, tasty salads and quick snacks.

When customers came in asking for chips and cheese – standard fare at many basic cafes – Vanessa would explain that these were not available but offer tasty, filling – and much healthier alternatives.

Vanessa said: “Edinburgh Leisure is all about ‘inspiring Edinburgh to be a more active and healthy city.’ So I decided the fried food had to go for starters!

“By introducing lots of tempting, but healthy, meals and snacks, customers who have worked up an appetite in the gym, the pool or caring for an excited toddler visiting Clambers softplay, can tuck into something nutritious which will boost energy levels in a lasting way.

“A lot of customers used to ask for things like chips and cheese and I would say ‘sorry, we don’t do that, but why not try this ...’

“People soon get used to a different menu – as long as it tastes good and fills them up they don’t mind and they appreciate that we offer something that doesn’t undo all their hard work

“Creating Cafe Refresh was an exciting challenge and very rewarding, so winning this award has been amazing for the team.”

A spokesperson for the Healthy Living Award said:- “Vanessa and all the team at Refresh can be hugely proud of proving that eating habits and expectations can be changed for the better by offering only nutritious, irresistible fare.”

Refresh is also open at Tumbles Portobello, Edinburgh’s first state-of-the-art gymnastic and soft play venue. The Refresh brand will also be unveiled as the new cafe at Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, Ratho, this summer. Edinburgh Leisure is working towards achieving the Healthy Living Award at all its Refresh outlets.