

JUKEBOX, BRUNCH AND APPLE PIE

JOHN'S PLACE

723 Pandora Ave., 389-0711

Mon-Thurs 7 am-9 pm, Fri-Sat 7 am-midnight,
Sun 9 am-3 pm (brunch) and 5 pm-11 pm
Visa and Mastercharge

A FRIEND of mine loves to eat, but when he's at John's Place, the jukebox takes precedence. He arrives so laden with quarters that his walk takes on an odd swagger. He sits down just long enough to place an order and later, just long enough to consume it. The rest of the time he's at the box, lost in another era—the '50s and early '60s. If for no other reason than to allow me the pleasure of my friend's company, I beseech the management to have the tune selectors at each booth repaired.

This six-month-old restaurant with its high ceilings, glassed front wall, hardwood floors and rotating artwork is a place I've returned to many times. It's inexpensive, has a refreshingly eclectic menu and is fun to visit, for all ages. With the staff openly enjoying themselves, how can the patrons not?

When is the last time you had yankee corned beef hash topped with poached eggs and side orders of toast and home fries?

Breakfast or brunch is my favourite time at John's Place. My eyes grew large as saucers the first time I saw the huge Belgium waffles go by (peach, banana-rum with yoghurt or blueberry). When is the last time you had yankee corned beef hash topped with poached eggs and side orders of toast and home fries? Or, how about Celia's special of scrambled eggs with onions and a bagel with lox and cream cheese? Or, eggs Benedict—their version—two poached eggs on a bagel with Virginia ham, hollandaise and home fries. Or eggs Florentine, or omelettes (16 variations) or eggs any way with bacon, ham or sausage, or kippers and eggs, or sourdough French toast or . . .there's so much more. I've tasted almost all of the above and will vouch for any of it. All orders arrive with fresh fruit.

The dinner menu offers an equally interesting mix. One evening with three friends, we began with an order of baked brie in filo pastry with sliced almonds and a surprisingly suitable marmalade sauce. The attractively arranged anti-

pasto plate of salami, green olives, marinated artichoke hearts, feta cheese, cucumber and tomato over a lettuce bed would serve two quite nicely and was as good as it looked. Only the Caesar salad was a letdown. One member of our party had been on a Caesar kick, sampling inordinate numbers of them all over town. Her consensus (and we agreed) was that it was too oil and vinegary and it required more garlic. A good hot bread was served along with the openers.

Our dinner ranged from the evening's special of Basque chicken to a falafel burger, pork chops and teriyaki cod kebobs. The grilled pork chops were very large, not overcooked which dries them out, and were topped with a rather bland green peppercorn sauce. They arrived with crisp broccoli and fresh cut fries. The cod had been marinated along with mushrooms, onions and green pepper, and the two skewers were served over rice. Again, broccoli was the vegetable. Although nicely presented, the dish was not hot enough when it arrived.

The falafel burger, made with ground chick peas or garbanzos, was large and moist, with sprouts, tomato and a spicy sauce, on a whole wheat bun. The fries appeared again along with a too-dry cole slaw. The three large pieces of chicken (breast, leg and thigh) had been cooked in a tomato base with onions, saffron, garlic, green pepper and black olives, served over rice.

On other occasions, I have sampled the fettucine with fresh shrimp, which I would highly recommend. The shrimp were crunchy and abundant, and bits of fresh tomato and feta cheese were in the large portion of pasta. The London broil, a marinated and grilled tenderloin topped with mushrooms, has always been tasty.

Occasionally, the chips have been overcooked and the burgers a bit dry, but my personal complaint lies with the light hand used with seasonings and spices. Perhaps the chef is trying to please everyone, but it makes for lacklustre taste.

Desserts, on the other hand, do not lack anything that makes them sweet. All are made on the premises and the two I have had were outstanding. The pecan pie, with its perfect crust, is topped with whipped cream. I recommend sharing a piece as it is exceedingly rich. The apple pie yields layers of thin apple slices in a creamy sauce topped with walnuts, brown sugar and whipped cream. There is also cheesecake, banana splits, sundaes, floats, sodas and dessert coffees. My only other complaint pertains to the service and kitchen timing. We felt very rushed with our appetizers and some were whipped away before we were finished.

John's Place is licenced and has live entertainment on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings with no cover charge. Breakfasts range in price from \$3.25 to \$5.50 and dinners from \$3.50 to \$6.

—Susannah Miers