

Second R's Diner a tasty home-cooking plus in Golden Gate



The Collier Boulevard offspring of R's Diner looks just like its parent, and if its food is a carbon copy, Naples diners are doubly lucky.

The walls seem to have a little more cream in the gold tones, but the strip-mall architecture, the blue-and-violent checked booths and dark furniture are nearly identical to the original R's Diner on U.S. 41 South. The menu, too, hews close to the original, and traverses territory from various riffs on eggs benedict to chicken with roasted vegetables.

Food display isn't fancy, just plated up on oversized Fiestaware-style china. But the helpings, as the original's are reported to be, tip the needle well into "generous." My Santa Fe chicken sandwich (\$8.95) came with a cup, and I mean a full 8-ounce cup, of coleslaw. No measly little paper receptacles with a dollop of slaw dumped in.



R's Diner interior (Photo: Harriet Howard Heithaus/Staff)

The fact that R's opens at 6 a.m. for breakfast hints that it's a strong suit, and both my dining companions couldn't resist. Among its eggs benedict offerings were the standards: country, on a biscuit with sausage and gravy; veggie, with spinach, onion and mushroom; standard; shrimp; and seafood, ranging from \$9.95 to \$12.95.

The shrimp benedict (\$11.95) was calling to one of my companions and she found it so delicious that after fretting whether she could eat it all, she did. But she couldn't finish her accompanying potato cake, and we had to help. Oh, darn.



Shrimp eggs benedict (\$11.95) (Photo: Submitted photo)

The benedict sauce here is a little less eggy, and lighter, and three fat shrimp swam under it. That was one of her two concerns because the shrimp still had tails, it was a bit messy de-shelling the tail. The first bite of the English muffin was also a little hard to cut, it's a common problem with benedict dishes, and I've sent a few ricocheting off the plate in the effort.

Both are problems easily solved if you can substitute a biscuit for the muffin as your base and ask that the shrimp be loaded tails up on top of the hollandaise. Even in its current form, it was hot and obviously delicious. For those who brook no moderation, the seafood benedict (\$12.95) offers all this on a crab cake.

The benedicts came with a choice of potatoes — home fries, hash browns or potato cake — and her potato cake, nearly the circumference of her eggs benedict, was a fortuitous choice. It was creamy and lightly seasoned inside, golden and crispy on the outside.



Eggs with bacon, grits and pancakes (\$6.25) at R's Diner (Photo: Submitted photo)

My other dining companion wanted to keep it simple and ordered an three-egg-plus-meat breakfast (\$6.95), opting for the pancakes over toast. If you want your eggs a little less than well done, you'll have to specify that; his came firmly cooked and nestled up against 3 crisp slices of bacon that were around 7 inches in length, a much better than average serving.

He also chose the grits, which poured at a Southern respectability, and our server was there fast to oblige his request for a slice of cheese to top them with. His side trio of pancakes, however, were the sensation of the meal. A quarter-inch thick, hot, tender and fresh, they were the size of a salad plate, a meal unto themselves. Both of us barked at him to get some butter on them while they were hot — so we could steal tastes. Next time, these are on my order.

But then again, this restaurant also has huevos rancheros (no beans, however) at \$8.95, and egg-cheese meat burritos and sandwiches from \$6.75 to \$10.50. Omelets come in three- and five-egg (\$7.50 and up) editions and \$6.50 gets you a pair of biscuits with sausage gravy; bring your Tupperware for the leftovers.

As the lone lunch devotee, I chose the Santa Fe chicken sandwich (\$8.95) over such variations as a Cordon Bleu, honey mustard or Southwestern and was extremely happy with the decision. The blackened chicken breast was slender but in total a large piece of chicken, smothered in pepper jack cheese that blanketed a small mound of mushrooms, with lettuce and tomato on the bun. The chicken was still moist and the flavor mildly zippy.



R's Diner , 11985 Collier Blvd., Unit 1, Golden Gate (Photo: Harriet Howard Heithaus/Staff)

There are also four types of meat-topped Caesar salads (\$8.50 to \$13.95) and salad wraps (chicken caesar, \$8.25; chicken salad, \$9.50). Burgers? Of course; \$5.25 to \$10.25 for Ray's double with cheese with bacon. Chips or slaw come too, but you can substitute fries or onion rings for \$1.95.

The country club sandwich is \$8.95, but you can indulge in too much of a good thing with the combo club (\$10.95), which adds ham and cheese to the three decks of bacon, turkey, lettuce and tomato. There are fish and taco or fajita entrees — yes, this is one broad menu — for from \$10.95 to \$15.95. \$2.95-\$7.95 dessert menu includes pie, ice cream, fried ice cream and churros, those addictive little cinnamon-sugar coated fried-dough sticks.

This location doesn't serve dinner, as the original does, yet. But it does offer wine or beer for those who are looking for a celebratory meal.

The second R's Diner, owned and operated by six brothers and sisters whose names all begin with r, replaces a short-lived Asian fusion restaurant in Collier Plaza that didn't outlive Hurricane Irma. Its name was WOW. The family could have just kept the name; it nicely describes R's No. 2.

R's Diner Collier Boulevard

Where: 11985 Collier Blvd., Unit 1, in Collier Plaza, Golden Gate

Hours: 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays, 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Sundays

Prices: Breakfasts from \$4.95 for a short stack of two pancakes to \$13.95 for a prime rib skillet with mushrooms, onion, home fries, eggs, cheese and all the trimmings; lunches range from \$3.25 for its country crock soup cup; daily specials are available

More information: 239-529-5806 or on Facebook under the search name R's diner; currently there's no menu on it, however

Forks: 4 out of 5