

# LuLu B's in North Naples takes diners back in time

Stepping into LuLu B's Grill & Café is like stepping back in time, and you'd be forgiven for mistaking it for an old soda fountain, with its long gold-flecked Formica-topped lunch counter and shiny purple glittered plastic bench seats at the booths.

Photos of Elvis Presley performing in his heyday and Marilyn Monroe smiling coyly at the camera adorn the walls, bordered in wallpaper that depicts scenes that make you think of Johnny Angel at the local soda fountain arriving in his restored 1948 Ford De Luxe convertible.

And that's the point.

At LuLu B's, their goal is to provide customers with "a rock'n good time, fabulous food and the place to be forever cool."

Opened in 1997, LuLu B's was inspired by owner Jeri Holecek's own teenage experience, when she had burgers, cherry Cokes and malts with her friends after school, and she's kept that vibe alive for the last 20 years in The Marketplace at Pelican Bay, home of LuLu B's.

When we walked in during the lunch rush, the restaurant was busy but didn't feel overly crowded as the tables and booths are well spaced out. Our waitress greeted us right away and took good care of us throughout our visit.

First up was the huevos rancheros on the "breakfast all day" menu. LuLu B's managed to keep the tostada base crunchy, and it didn't begin to get soggy until the last couple of bites. The pico de gallo was freshly made and very flavorful, with lots of cilantro and jalapeno giving it a verdant and spicy kick.

However, the pico was very cold, and it translated to the rest of the dish, making the eggs taste cold as well. The eggs were also sunny side up but there was too much raw egg white left on the top, so we opted not to eat those out of safety.

Next, we tried the LuLu Burger (\$8.29 plus \$.99 to substitute french fries for potato chips), their house specialty burger featuring grilled mushrooms, bacon and provolone cheese, and topped with fresh produce including lettuce, tomato and pickles. The burger was very tasty and wasn't the least bit greasy, but it was more bun than burger.

The bun was tall and airy but it extended out quite a bit from the edges of the burger, making for a lot of wasted bread, and it concealed a rather small burger. While the burger as a whole was good, the meat was a bit overcooked and lacked seasoning, but the bacon addition when eaten as a whole added some of that flavor back.

The french fries were a good portion and well-seasoned. They weren't greasy either, and it kept them crispy throughout the meal.

We also tried the Rockin' Club Wrap (\$8.49), which featured a generous amount of deli-sliced turkey, fresh produce toppings including lettuce and tomato, swiss cheese and crispy bacon in a spinach wrap,

and is served with potato chips and two fresh avocado slices. The wrap was good but dry and needed something to balance out the amount of salty deli meat. Also though the menu says there is mayonnaise on the wrap, we didn't taste any. My dining companion said he would have preferred it to be served with a ranch or honey mustard sauce.

The biggest star of our meal came at the end: the brownie sundae (\$4.49). This mammoth dessert features LuLu B's own warmed homemade brownie topped with vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce and whipped cream. While the vanilla ice cream tasted as though it came from a carton and, as my dining companion said, "It's really a crime to not serve a sundae with real hot fudge," the brownie was amazing. Its deep, fudgy chocolate flavor was one of the best I've had. The brownie was warmed and maintained a slightly crispy exterior, while its rich inside was chewy and dense.

The brownie was by far the highlight of the visit.

While LuLu B's offers excellent service, a fun atmosphere and is priced right, most of the food wasn't up to the moniker "fabulous."

### **LuLu B's Grill & Café**

**Where:** 8795 U.S. 41 N., Naples 34108

**Information:** 239-594-5330; [lulubsgrill.com](http://lulubsgrill.com)

**Hours:** Open seven days 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Prices:** Breakfast: Eggs and omelet dishes: \$5.29-\$10.99; Pancakes and French toast dishes: \$3.89-\$8.49. Lunch: Soup and salad: \$3.29-\$9.49; Burgers and sandwiches: \$6.49-\$8.99; Sides: \$.79-\$3.99. Desserts and shakes: \$1.19-\$4.49

**Forks:** Three out of five