

Business Lunch Review



JASON BURTT

Patio Pizza brings a pizza veteran, Anthony Butler, to the east side of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus.

Patio: Good Pizza, Fair Service

THE BRICK OVEN-BAKED PIES at Patio Pizza & Beer Garden bear a striking resemblance to those at U.S. Pizza Co., not surprising considering that Patio Pizza's general manager, Anthony Butler, was director of operations at U.S. Pizza for 10 years.

That's not a complaint. We thoroughly enjoyed the pizzas. The salads, however, were another matter.

The restaurant, which opened Jan. 5 in what used to be two houses, was inviting and comfortable, like going to a friend's house for dinner. The freshly glossed hardwood floors were a nice touch. Also, from nearly any point in the restaurant, one can observe all the goings-on in the kitchen. We like that.

The mounted plasma TV screens indicated this joint might not be a bad place to watch sports.

As for the food — well, we started with an order of bruschetta (\$5.39), which we enjoyed. The light snack of toasted French bread topped with olive oil, garlic, parmesan cheese and diced tomatoes that had been tossed in garlic and fresh basil was marred only by the tomatoes, which weren't the best. But then, it's January, so that's understandable.

The Patio sticks (\$3.89) — breadsticks stuffed with mozzarella, butter and garlic and served with a side of marinara — are an excellent starter.

We also shared a bowl of the soup of the day (\$3.89). And we were oh-so-lucky to have come on chicken tortilla soup day. The soup, so thick it approached nacho territory, was one of the highlights of the meal.

Our party's mixed feelings about the pizzas consisted only of disagreements about which one was best.

The most interesting was the Caramelized Onion and Gouda (\$10.89). The soft and savory sweetness of the caramelized onions joined with the zesty Gouda to create an artful combination. We'll come back for that one.

The Classico Supreme (\$11.89) tasted much like the supreme at U.S. Pizza.

Patio Pizza
3307 Fair Park Blvd., Little Rock
(501) 570-8514

Cuisine: Gourmet pizza
Dress Code: None
Noise Level: Moderately high
Price Range: \$2.29-\$18.89
Credit Cards: All major
Reservations: Same Day
Receipts: NA

☺☺☺☺ = Outstanding
☺☺☺ = Good
☺☺ = Fair
☺ = Poor

No problem there. The wafer-like crust of the pizzas is excellent too.

One of our party argued valiantly on behalf of the Margherita (\$10.89), a mixture of olive oil, tomato, fresh basil, garlic and mozzarella and parmesan cheeses.

The Classico Meat Pizza (\$12.89) is a meat lover's dream. The pie offers plenty of toppings — sausage, beef, pepperoni, Italian sausage, andouille sausage (our favorite) and Canadian bacon. You won't leave hungry after this one.

Our only gripe concerned the salads. The My Own Garden Salad (\$2.99) comes with strips of American cheese. We can't like that. And the dressing on the Caesar salad (\$4.89) tasted like a mix of Caesar and Thousand Island dressings.

The Three Cheese Calzone (\$7.39), stuffed with provolone, mozzarella and ricotta, was good but not great.

The service, though only adequate, was genial. We didn't lack for anything, but didn't feel like esteemed guests either.

We were in and out in under an hour. We'll likely be back whenever we're over that way.

**With assurance
the server
It was bus**

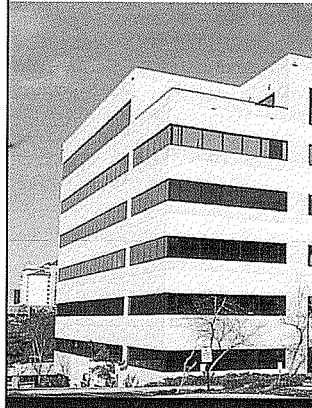


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