

Food spies find Paradise at Gainey Village

SPY #1
LISA DZIUK
SCOTTSDALE



The output: \$26 for two people. No tipping required.

The scene: Paradise Bakery & Cafe, a staple of mall food courts, has expanded into a free-standing

restaurant in Gainey Village. The effort has paid off with a spacious dining area, lots of windows and a patio with mountain views. The ordering concept is the same as at the mall, with a cafeteria-style line.

Who's there: Upscale Scottsdale

What's on the menu: An abundant selection of fresh salads, soups, sandwiches and baked goods, as well as quiche, brick-oven pizzas, grilled panini and calzones. Beverages include specialty coffees, beer and wine. The menu is large and somewhat daunting to read from the wall. They were out of our first soup choice, so we settled on chicken noodle. It was thick and filled with chunks of white- and dark-meat chicken and small, fat noodles. It tasted homemade and comforting. The turkey cranberry sandwich was a bit nondescript and average. They were out of the dark molasses wheat bread it normally comes on, which is too bad since the substitute was just a ho-hum whole-wheat bread. The hands-down favorite item was the Southwest barbecue chicken pizzetta. Excellent crispy crust, full of flavor and perfectly spiced, this dish was one I could easily have eaten by myself but was willing to share in the name of matrimonial peace. The pizzettas take a little longer to cook than the other menu items but were well worth the 10-minute wait. For dessert, a nice double-fudge brownie and a slice of cheesecake sent us home full and happy.

The howdy factor: We were greeted warmly, and lots of smiling young people were ready to take our order. We did find the ordering system slightly confusing, and we were undercharged for our meal. When it was brought to the attention of the cashier, she cheerfully refused to charge us, saying it was her fault.

The lowdown: Paradise Bakery & Cafe is a perfect spot for a delicious snack, a casual business lunch or a bite before or after shopping.

Meet the spy: A graduate of Scottsdale Culinary Institute, Dziuk, 43, is a resident of Scottsdale and devotes her time these days to cooking for her family. "My kids don't know what hit them," she says.

Judging by the name alone, who wouldn't want to visit Paradise Bakery & Cafe? This week's food spies make the trip and let us know whether this expanded, spiffed-up mall favorite is worth the trip.

DINING

Paradise Bakery & Cafe at Gainey Village

8777 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale
(480) 951-2500

Hours: 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday

Prices: \$5.95 to \$8.95



PHOTOS BY LI FRANK WILLIAMS JR. / SUNDAY ARTS



Paradise Bakery & Cafe at Gainey Village in Scottsdale includes an al fresco dining section, top, for days when the weather is bearable. Carrot cake, above, is a hit, as are the many types of bread available.



SPY #2
REBECCA HOWE
TEMPE



The output: Around \$11 per person for a main dish, drink and dessert. No tip required.

The scene: This branch of the Paradise Bakery & Cafe chain is located

on the outskirts of an upscale strip mall in Gainey Ranch. Inside, imagine an old-fashioned bakery set in a New York loft, and you have the idea.

Who's there: When we visited on a Tuesday evening, the dining area was stocked with several yuppie couples, a handful of seniors and two teenagers. Young business types, mainly women, frequently dropped in to pick up orders at the bakery counter. One in three customers was glued to a cell phone.

What's on the menu: A nice selection of sandwiches, salads, baked goods, soups and light fare. Breakfast is also offered, featuring a limited number of meals (including granola and quiche), a delectable array of bakery items and several coffee options. Phone orders are accepted, and made-on-the-premises goodies are available to purchase and take home. I tried the Roma tomato panini, which was hearty, flavorful and brimming with grilled vegetables and melted cheese. It came with a soft chocolate chip cookie, as do all of the sandwiches. My gal pals chose the spinach quiche — wonderful, with a flaky crust and tangy filling — and the Southwestern chicken sandwich. The latter was the favorite of the group. Served on freshly baked multigrain bread and blending thinly sliced chicken, jicama, avocado and chipotle mayonnaise, it was a unique treat. After a piece of mind-blowing cheesecake, a delicate and savory cinnamon roll and a double-fudge brownie so rich that this certified chocoholic couldn't down the entire portion, we blissfully squeezed ourselves out the door.

The howdy factor: There are no formal servers, but the behind-the-counter staff was helpful and friendly.

The lowdown: Paradise Bakery & Cafe at Gainey Village is a nice place for an informal rendezvous or a quick, uncomplicated meal.

Meet the spy: This is Howe's third Food Spies review, and she says it is her favorite to date. Although an equal-opportunity food lover, Howe, 32, has a soft spot for bakery foods and claims to never have met a pastry she didn't like.