

— D E S E R E T —

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Dining out: Paradise Bakery & Cafe

By Stacey Kratz

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There's a happy sort of buzz at Sugar House's newest lunch spot, Paradise Bakery & Cafe.

And it's a good thing, because the place is darn crowded, and without that pleasant ambience — occasioned, no doubt, by a mixture of the urban-rustic decor, the good service and the tasty food — the lines might be the only thing visitors noticed.

Instead, they see earthy colors and two walls of windows, the huge fireplace, the crusty breads on display, the smiling worker offering samples from a basket of chocolate or oatmeal "chippers," minicookies that are a house specialty.

Service is cafeteria-style. At each station — sandwiches, salads, soups — the requested food arrives lightning-quick but fresh. Some sandwiches, presumably the most popular, are ready-made and waiting on the sandwich board, but they're not wrapped, so they don't get soggy or old-tasting. The salad fixings are laid out behind a glass case, and we watched my salad being assembled right there.

There's also a short kids' menu consisting of child-friendly sandwiches plus mac and cheese and "bites from Mom and Dad," an item listed as "free."

Our three kids shared two kids' meals, the peanut butter and jelly sandwich and the mac and cheese. The kids' meals are a great value, delivering a hefty half-sandwich, fruit, drink and a chocolate chip cookie for just north of three bucks. The mac and cheese seemed like the Kraft type, and the PB&J was on fresh, crusty white bread, liberally spread with peanut butter and raspberry jam.

My husband went the classic route, the ham and Swiss on sourdough. Paradise Bakery's sourdough is actually sour, with a pungent and yeasty finish. It was delicious paired with the sweet, thin-sliced honey ham, tangy cheese and Dijon mustard, not to mention the fresh green-leaf lettuce and tomato — an old favorite well interpreted. And, just like in the kids' meals, the sandwich came with a chewy-crisp chocolate chip cookie.

We also shared a cup — actually, a small but ample bowl — of savory, creamy potato-cheese soup with skin-on potatoes and carrots.

I didn't feel like a sandwich, so I had quiche and a salad. The

"quiche pie" is an individual-size round of puff pastry filled with a tender, earthy mixture of egg, three cheeses and spinach. It's warmed up just enough to bring out the flavors, and even though the quiches are made ahead, Paradise pulls off the tough feat of keeping the bottom crust from getting soggy.

My Greek salad was a bracing counterpoint, with fresh greens sheltering sour-bitter olives, tomatoes, thin-sliced red onions, feta cheese and a light dressing.

For dessert, my husband had a plain chocolate brownie with thick chocolate frosting. He likes brownies without nuts, and this was a fine sample of its kind, but I always miss nuts in brownies that don't have 'em. As it was, this brownie begged for a tall, cold glass of milk to wash it down.

We also tried several kinds of cookies. The chocolate chip I've already mentioned, but that's just one of many available at Paradise Bakery. We sampled snickerdoodle, sugar, lemon, oatmeal-raisin and chocolate chip-coconut flavors. You'll be delighted no matter which ones you choose.

Paradise also is open for dinner, with the same lunchtime menu, and for breakfast, with such items as omelettes, breakfast sandwiches and wraps, waffles, French toast and parfaits. The "Paradise waffle," in particular, sounds delightful: a fresh waffle topped with honey butter, maple syrup, fresh strawberries and whipped cream. Bet that "happy buzz" I mentioned before is there at breakfast, too.

Breakfast \$3.75-\$5.95; sandwiches, panini and wraps \$6.50; salads \$3.50-\$6.75; combos \$6.25-\$6.75; soups \$3.25-\$5.95; kids' meals \$3.29.

Rating: ***

Where: 1010 E. 2100 South

Hours: Monday-Saturday, 6 a.m.-9 p.m.

Sunday, 6 a.m.-6 p.m.

Payment: No checks accepted

Phone: 485-6100

Web: www.paradisebakery.com
