

Todd A. Price
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Review: Brazilian Grill Steak House

EATS



DINING OUT

Brazilian Grill Steak House

How will you celebrate your Mardi Gras? Will you follow the Buzzards down to St. Charles and then beg Zulu for coconuts? Chase after Indians in the Treme? Or stuff yourself one last time before Lent at Crescent City Steakhouse? Me? This year I'll take the ferry to Gretna and gorge on a boeuf gras worth of beef at Brazilian Grill Steak House.

The Brazilian *churrascaria*, part of the new wave of Latino restaurants, serves beef, pork, lamb and chicken in the traditional *rodízio* style. A waiter walks the room with skewers of meat, slicing a little for each customer. For a price that hovers around \$20, you get unlimited meat—along with rice, yucca, fried bananas, bowls of beans and a salad bar stocked with mayo-based options that cover the full continuum from tuna salad to potato salad. Unlike fancy chains promoted in airline magazines, Brazilian Grill is an honest effort staffed with an efficient team that speaks lilted Portuguese—and sometimes little else.

The *churrascaria* takes the idea of cooking meat on a stick to its logical conclusion. After the waiter shaves off a piece of beef, the meat is sprinkled again with sea salt and goes back on the grill to get a new char. Every serving has a crusty, seared surface—the tastiest part of any steak. Brazilian Grill favors fattier cuts of beef, like short ribs and *picanha*, a traditional Brazilian cut from the top sirloin wrapped in a horseshoe of fat. When the meat arrives hot from the grill, the strips of fat aren't greasy but light, rich and almost liquid.

The sirloin was tender. The *picanha*, known as rump cover in English, was sublime. On one visit, the pork marinated in lime was moist and delicious. On another occasion, it was dry. The nuggets of chicken breasts, despite being wrapped in bacon, were also dry. When the crowds are bigger, the food is better because the meats spend less time waiting, and drying out, on the grill. With unlimited courses, focus on what you like and forgo the rest.

I'm not Catholic, so I can eat *carne* during Lent without guilt. After Mardi Gras, maybe I'll come back on Friday for another endless parade of meat.

500 Lafayette St., Gretna, 362-5353,
Mon-Sat 11am-3pm and 5-10pm.

—Todd A. Price