

Todd A. Price
OffBeat Magazine (Jun. 2008)
Review: Sammy's Deli

EATS



DINING OUT

Sammy's Deli

Before the storm, I'm not sure I'd seen a car without scratches and dents in New Orleans. Afterwards, the streets were full of mint automobiles. I'd bet the number of kitchens with marble countertops increased fivefold after Katrina. And before the waters washed through the city, there probably wasn't a single neighborhood joint like Sammy's with sparkling tiles and flat-screen TVs on the walls. We treasure grit in New Orleans, but we're not foolish enough to say "no" to a little modern comfort.

A blue collar crowd from nearby plants pack Sammy's for platters that need a "wide-load" warning. Even in this city of big portions, I was shocked by the gargantuan plates. Two moist, grilled pork chops, served with two sides, were each larger than a big man's hands and seasoned with an entire spice cabinet of herbs. For the sides, try the potato salad with a zing of mustard or the jambalaya with almost more chicken and sausage than rice. The Ray Ray po-boy is an enormous 11-inch loaf stuffed with ham, cheese and a breaded and fried chicken breast spilling out the side. The red beans were full of flavor and didn't need even a dash of hot sauce.

Sammy's can be inconsistent, though. Although the pork chops were moist both times I tried them, they once tasted like cayenne was the only spice used. A side of baked macaroni was rich and stringy one time, but slippery and tasting of fake cheese the next. A roast beef po-boy was dry despite the generous helping of gravy.

Are New Orleanians always suspicious of the shiny and new? Although Sammy's looks like a restaurant that could be found anywhere, the flavors are strictly local. And when you can still see waterlines taller than a man from the dining room of Sammy's, maybe we've got enough grit in this city. *3000 Elysian Fields Ave., 947-0675, Mon-Thr 10:45a.m.-5p.m., Fri 10:45a.m.-7p.m., Sat 10:45a.m.-4p.m.*

—Todd A. Price