

HOW THEY RATE

\$\$ Average meal \$30 and under, pp
\$ Average meal \$15 and under, pp

★★★★ Exceptional
★★★ Excellent
★★ Very good
★ Good

cheapeats

By Joan Reminick
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Hooters of Farmingdale

FOOD Half a star
25 Smith St.
Farmingdale
631-249-5250

COST \$-\$\$
AMBIENCE Good
SERVICE Very good
ESSENTIALS Sunday to Wednesday, 11 a.m. to midnight, Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m., Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 a.m.; accepts major credit cards; wheelchair accessible.

So, I'm hooting out loud watching my girlfriend, surrounded by waitresses in short-shorts and tank tops, all of them belting out a birthday song in her honor. She's wearing a paper "beak" and waving a menu to simulate an owl flapping its wings.

It's 1 p.m. at Hooters of Farmingdale, where a group of us have gathered to celebrate our amigü's big day. "Now I know where most of the world goes for lunch," another



Curly fries and burgers are popular choices at Hooters.

PHOTOS BY BRUCE GILBERT

friend whispers. I have to agree. The place is jumping. And somehow, I don't think it's about the food.

UPFRONT ASSETS

Our waitress is charming, intelligent, interesting; we learn she's going for a degree in mortuary science and works nights as an embalmer. On the floor of the restaurant, she's a hit with anybody who has a heartbeat. She heartily recommends the boneless wings (actually breast meat) which we order two ways — medium-hot Buffalo style and Daytona Beach style (fried and then caramelized on the grill in a spicy barbecue sauce). Both versions come up big hits. Fried pickles are salty, tangy, crunchy, addictive.

Hooters puts out a truly fine

juicy cheeseburger as well as a respectable Philly cheesesteak involving onions, peppers, mushrooms, Provolone and thinly shaved beef. It's greasy in the best possible sense.

And I'm pleased with the sweet-tart Key lime pie, moist chocolate mousse cake and creamy peanut butter pie.

FALLING FLAT

I've rarely met a hot dog I didn't like, but the "gourmet" dog topped with chili, cheese and onions is wet, soft and altogether unappealing. Seasoned and previously frozen "curley" fries are purely pedestrian. I expect to like a friend's pulled-pork sandwich, but it has a tired, reheated flavor. Still, it's preferable to my sandwich of grilled mahi mahi, more like cardboard masquerading as

fish. One bite and I'm through. A chicken Caesar salad seems to be topped with wood chips.

BOTTOM LINE

Serious dining, it's not. But for beer and a burger served with good cheer, it's a scene and a half.



This recently opened Hooters has 40 beers on tap.

LI CHEESESTEAK

George Martin's Grillfire

FOOD ★ ★
33 W. Sunrise Hwy.
Merrick
516-379-2222
georgemartingroup.com

Known for burgers, this polished yet kid-friendly spot does a juicy cheesesteak with Provolone, crisp onions and steak sauce.

Taxi's Grille

FOOD ★ ★
217 New York Ave.
Huntington
631-470-9480
taxisgrille.com

This counter-service spot slings a cheesesteak to remember: shaved juicy rib-eye piled high on crusty garlic bread topped with — you decide — provolone or Cheez Whiz.

D'Angelo's Sausage & Pepper House (formerly Francesco's of New York)

FOOD ★ ★
918 E. Jericho Tpke.
Huntington Station
631-424-0653

This outdoor stand (new name, same owners) offers enclosed seating for winter and a sublime Philly cheesesteak wherein meat, cheese and onions meld delectably.

— JOAN REMINICK



Waitress Trish Gutierrez; service here is very good.

goodbuy

The Main Street Bar

\$4.50
Main Street Bakery
170 Main St., Port Washington
516-304-5214

BY ERICA MARCUS
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I fear that I cannot adequately convey how delicious the Main Street Bar is, though if you imagine a Snickers that died and went to heaven, you begin to get the idea.

The invention of Michael Mignano, proprietor of Main

Chocolate to live for

Street Bakery, it got its start in 2005, while Mignano was executive pastry chef at the Four Seasons Hotel in Manhattan. He was brainstorming for a new confection, something high-end but also unquestionably American.

One day, on the train to work from his home in Lindenhurst, he recalled the episode of "Seinfeld" where Elaine's boss, Mr. Pitt, eats a candy bar with a knife and fork. Mignano began to sketch: The lower two-thirds of the bar would be caramel punctuated with cashews and macadamia nuts and sprinkled with Hawaiian sea salt. The upper

third would be chocolate ganache encasing caramelized Rice Krispies. The whole thing would be enrobed in dark chocolate and sprinkled with more salt.

In December 2005, Mignano was called upon to create a



NEWSDAY PHOTO/ERICA MARCUS

dessert arrangement for Oprah Winfrey, in town for the Broadway premiere of "The Color Purple." The chef sent up an elaborate display that included The Bar. Soon, he was summoned to Winfrey's room. As she struggled to get into her dress, he said, she turned to Mignano and asked: "What are you trying to do to me? I've been working on getting into this dress for weeks." The following week, Winfrey raved about The Bar on her talk show.

A few months later, Mignano got a call from Hersheys. Would he be interested in interviewing

for the job of executive pastry chef for Hershey Park and its hotel? It was after he took the job that his new employers asked, "Did you make that candy bar for Oprah? Would you be interested in being on our research and development team?"

Mignano never shared the recipe with Hershey (fearing it would become the company's property), and after a year, he returned to Long Island. He opened Main Street Bakery in April 2008 but, for some unfathomable reason, didn't put The Bar on the menu until this week. Better late than never.