

Restaurants

Jessica Sportsman

Rigolo Cafe

The Rigolo Cafe is a delightful addition to our neighborhood! In fact, "Rigolo" means "a little funny" in French. Now the Richmond District has a new "uptown" Euro cafe to delight our palates. The cafe has plenty of seating and an extensive French-European menu that has been dutifully developed within the California Cuisine genre.

Located at Laurel Village in a space that once housed several bakeries, Rigolo is more than just another small deli-cafe. It is a great lunch spot. The staff is very willing to answer questions, make changes, describe entrees and share the story of this new addition to the Bay Bread Family. The proprietor of Rigolo is Pascal Rigo, whose other establishments include cafes on Polk, Pine, Cole and Fillmore streets.

Besides breakfast/brunch, lunch and dinner, they also have catering available. You can read about the various menus and the story behind Rigolo on the Web site listed below.

Before I went to Rigolo I was famished and hungry for a full luncheon, as was my business partner, Lilia. I wanted something else – something savory and different from the usual. Rigolo has a large menu – its fare is presented on great wallboards for delicatessen-type ordering. It is a daunting decision as everything looks and smells wonderful. Besides the menu that offers items like omelettes, soups and salads, sandwiches and sides, the pastry cases are filled with prepared treats, including desserts, breads and quick items "to go." You can also order coffees, sodas, beers and wine to accompany your meal.

The ordering system is somewhat cumbersome, as standing in line to order is not always pleasant, and it was a little crowded

and noisy but the help behind the counter tried not to rush anyone and accepted substitution suggestions with glee. I mention this because

the salad I selected was offered with frisee, which is not my favorite.

They suggested making the salad with baby greens, instead, and it was very flavorful. The salad I ordered was full of baby greens, toasted walnuts, red seedless grapes, apples, bleu cheese and dressed with a robust garlic vinaigrette. The ratio of all ingredients was perfect and there was no skimping on the walnuts or bleu cheese!

As an entree, I ordered one of their specialty "pizzas" which was not like any pizza I've had. The flaky pate brisee was sim-

ilar to philo (puff pastry) but it was more delicate, like pie crust. It was baked to light brown and topped with caramelized onions, spicy chicken breast, prosciutto, fontina cheese and crowned with a drizzle of truffle oil. It was delicious! I took my small leftover portion home for dinner.

Lilia first ordered the lasagna, but after noticing a fellow diner's plate of garlic shrimp scampi, decided to change her order (which the help was more than happy to accommodate). It was a perfect balance of quickly fried shrimp on a bed of tomatoes, bean salad and a small mound of arugula to dress the plate. Great wedges of fresh French baguette were served with both meals. There is no table service but there is a handy wait station that is full of ice-cold pitchers of lemon water, cold pats of butter, and other accompaniments, including silverware and napkins. It was well stocked and kept impeccably clean, which is nice since most "help yourself" stations usually look unkempt.

If there was one thing that definitely needs attention it is the noise level, which was so high it was difficult to have a conversation. But this can be easily corrected with soft wall hangings or other decorator touches to absorb sound.

Next time you are in the mood for a little something different try Rigolo. I think you will enjoy this new addition to the diverse restaurants available here in the neighborhood.

Rigolo Cafe

3465 California St., in the Laurel Village Shopping Center
(415) 876-7777

Open seven days a week for breakfast, lunch and dinner

www.rigolocafe.com

Jessica Sportsman is a neighborhood resident and the CEO of Spec, Print Experts and publisher of "The Good Book."

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