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Restaurant Review

No mystery why Yours Truly is truly good

reviewed September 2007 by Laura Freeman

It's sometimes possible to decide how good a restaurant is based on one dish. At Yours Truly that dish could be the spinach. Now get the image of Popeye squeezing greenish goop from a can out of your head. Instead think fresh, green leaves sautéed with lemon juice and olive oil and tossed with grilled onions and you'll have an idea of YT's spinach.

YT's spinach (I usually eat at the Mentor location on 615, but it's served at any of the soon to be eight locations.) will help you outgrow your childhood aversion to the leafy green stuff.



Yours Truly server Lisa McBirney serves a BLT, notso fries and Asian veggies. Lisa has worked for Yours Truly restaurants since 1989.

In fact, eating anything at Yours Truly might actually give you an aversion to eating anywhere else. YT is good for breakfast (served anytime), lunch and dinner with a huge selection of entrées for all three.

Unlike some chain restaurants where enormous menus run the gamut from China to Mexico, and everything is just so-so, you'd be hard-pressed to find something even just OK on the menu. The atmosphere at YT restaurants is that of a neighborhood diner, but with nicer décor, better service and healthier food.

In three trips to check out Yours Truly from a review standpoint, I somehow managed not to get the notso fries, (waffle-cut potato rounds with a gooey topping of cheese, bacon pieces and sour cream, mmm.) opting for something notso fattening instead.

And there are quite a few healthy choices. Besides the afore-mentioned spinach, the Asian veggies are another good-for-you choice. My companion said she'd come back just for these and YT co-owner Jeffrey Shibley says they're his personal favorite.

The medley of teriyaki-steamed broccoli, bok choy, pea pods, julienned carrots and zucchini drizzled with hot wasabi sauce also comes as a platter with a grilled chicken breast.

Besides veggies, you'll find omelets, salads, sandwiches, burgers, steaks, chicken and more to choose from. Grilled tuna steaks, served atop the spinach or as a sandwich is something you wouldn't expect to find on the menu. My companion said hers could have been a little rarer, yet finds it hard to deviate from it each time she visits.

I thought I remembered going to Yours Truly in Chagrin Falls as a child with my family but the first restaurant in Beachwood didn't open until 1981. Evidently my memory is a bit flawed, but I couldn't find any flaws at Yours Truly.

In fact, the restaurant was just honored by its customers in Northern Ohio Live magazine's restaurant survey for Best Breakfast, Best Burger and Best Cheap Eats. The burgers are some of the best I've ever eaten – juicy and cooked just how I requested.

My companion, who is a YT aficionado too, tried the Monte Cristo sandwich for the first time. Served on French toast, the triple-decker sandwich is piled high with Swiss cheese, frizzled ham and turkey and served with YT's signature tango sauce, a combo of honey mustard and horseradish. She loved it, even picking the melted cheese off the plate.

The survey doesn't have a category for best servers, but YT could have won that one too. It's family-friendly yet business people find the place just as welcoming. Shibley is proud of the fact it has become a place for business meetings. On any given morning or lunch hour, he says you can glance around the Mentor restaurant and "it's a Who's Who of Lake County decision-makers."

Every diner seems to know someone else. People stop by at each others' tables then move on when they see someone else they know. All this gathering around tables and standing in the aisles doesn't seem to faze the happy servers. Happy is not always an adjective used to describe servers at busy, fast-paced restaurants, but YT servers actually seem to like their jobs.

Yours Truly Restaurants are owned and operated by Jeff and his siblings Art and Larry Shibley and Darlene Shibley Ziegenhagen. Spelled out in their corporate mission statement, "Make people happy, have some fun and be No. 1," is the Shibley family recipe for success.

"It starts with the management team and the general manager," Jeff said. "Servers are a product of their environment – if the cooks are yelling at the servers, they won't be happy. Our kitchen is a happy kitchen. They laugh and joke and they bring that happiness out to the dining room."

It comes down from the top. The Shibleys share an open-door policy – wide open. A sign on Jeff's office wall declares, "No Mystery."

"We are small enough that any employee can call me directly," he said. "There's no mystery. All our meetings are open. Every decision ties back to our mission statement. We want to make everybody happy."

Shibley says thousands of people eat at YT restaurants every day. The restaurants employ more than 400. That makes for a lot of happy people.

Yours Truly server Lisa McBirney has worked there since 1989. She says it's a great place to work and she loves the people she works with and for. "Really," she adds. "I'm not just saying that."

The eighth YT location is set to open this month on Rockside Road in Valley View. Towpath users can ride their bikes right up to the door. Or take your pick of locations in Beachwood, Chagrin Falls, Hudson, Mayfield Village, Shaker Square and Medina.

A friend, who claims to be a professional milkshake taster, says YT has the best milkshakes around. Next time I'm going to see if he's right. I'll have one myself, with the notso fries. Or maybe a burger and a berry blast dessert with ice cream and whipped cream.

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