

[This was originally prepared around 2008 as a proposed promotion.]

What's Your Definition of a Good Out-of-Home Dining Experience?

TO ME, IT'S SIMPLE:

I want my money's worth of food! I like to go to a restaurant or diner that serves meals in tasty and healthy portions, and that also does not seriously dent my wallet in the process. I am not interested in fancy *service, surroundings* or *table settings*. What strikes my fancy is being served a meal in ample portions. A heaping plate of food does wonders for one's morale and also opens up good table conversation with your dinner mates. When the meal is over, you leave the table or counter with a good feeling in body and soul from having acquired a full stomach, and also having taken part in a food feast laced with good talk.

That is why North Bergen, New Jersey's Coach House has "preferred seating" in my list of favorite dining places. Located at a busy intersection on that city's heavily trafficked Kennedy Boulevard, right on the border with Jersey City, the Coach House's pitch to potential customers is to offer "good food and plenty of it." The many patrons who frequent this eating house provide ample testimony that this sales pitch has a lot of substance to it! *Once you go there yourself, I think you will join this "chorus" of satisfied customers.*

Eating at the Coach House is a customer-friendly experience. To start with, you will notice the restaurant provides ample parking facilities—three lots—so you don't have to waste time finding a spot to place your vehicle. When you walk up the stairs and enter the restaurant proper, you encounter a friendly, informal (and busy) atmosphere. You sort of realize that this place is in the business of pleasing its customers! A good sign for a restaurant!

The times I have gone there, I have found the waiting time to be minimal, the waiters friendly, and the service decent. Beverages are served in large glasses and a complimentary basket of bread accompanies the lunch/dinner menu. That menu is extensive, and the "specials" featured make it wallet-friendly. Usually, I get a dinner entrée that serves as a passport to the well-stocked salad bar.

You could get full on just that salad bar alone! This is the meal before the meal. As you move from one end to the other, the food piles up on your plate—the leafy lettuce, the crisp, cut peppers, the tangy onions, the cherry tomatoes, the small corn, the coleslaw, the macaroni salad, the stuffed grape leaves, the creamed herring, the various salad dressings, the toppings, the oil and vinegar. Wow! You make your selections, go back to your table, and start the feast. What makes the salad bar even more of an attraction is the privilege of going back for seconds!

Your cooked food comes well-prepared. By the time you are finishing up the salad bar appetizers, the waiter/waitress arrives with the main meal: large portions served on large platters. You wonder whether you can devour all of it! In the back of your mind is the thought how this place can turn a working profit when it serves such large amounts of food at such low prices. And you will find the food is good!

Your seating is not on an assembly-line rushed basis either. The management provides ample time for its customers to finish up their meals and conversations. You ask the waiter for the check and you pay up and leave. (I skip the rich desserts the Coach House offers.) The reasonable prices make me want to go back again.

One other thing to note: The Coach House is a family-run business. It is not run by some large, impersonal corporation. The Pappas family has been in charge of the business since around 1939. They take pride in running it to their customers' continued satisfaction. They want to make sure their many patrons keep coming back for more visits. And I am convinced you will come back!

The Pappas family invites you to visit their restaurant in the very near future. I think you will find that visit to be an enjoyable experience.

Every decent-sized locale should have a place like the Coach House. Hudson County, New Jersey is a better, more livable place for having it within its borders. *Why don't you and your family find this out for yourselves?*