

There's a new kid on the plaza - Ziziki's opens quaint bistro in the Dallas Arts District

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
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The restaurants in One Arts Districts in Dallas can't seem to find a key to consistency, making it difficult to attract loyal customers who keep their doors open.

Eateries come and go as quickly as the current opera or symphony season. The ones that stay are hit and miss – at best.

Jorge's used to be my favorite. It featured fresh, made-that-day Mexican food with some of the best guacamole on the planet and a killer tortilla soup, but the last time we were there, I couldn't finish my enchiladas and our guest took about three sips of her soup and put her spoon down.

On our last trip to Fedora's, who likes to mention its upscale night life – read: bar –?in its marketing, they didn't have Bloody Mary mix on a Sunday morning and had to go next door to borrow some from Jorge's. Who doesn't have Bloody Mary mix behind the bar on Sunday morning? In Dallas? What they finally served 30 minutes later was undrinkable. Then they sent someone to "the store" to get a proper mix. It was served with an olive, not a celery stick. I could go on, but what's the point? Their food – we left over half of the cold, gelatinous goop on the plates – and uninformed servers don't come close to meriting their inflated prices.

So imagine my disappointment when I recently discovered our one remaining choice, The Screen Door, had closed late this summer. Egads. What do to when headed to a performance in the Arts District?

Well, now we have a delightful option.

The Greek, a quaint little bistro tucked into a corner near the valet stand, has been open about a month. They're owned by Costa and Mary Arabatzis, the Ziziki people, who know their Greek food. The couple have not been without problems with The Greek, however. According to D Magazine, their original chef, Richard Silva, quit before they opened. Silva's replacement, Taylor Kearney, has already left, headed to Nick and Sam's.

Not sure who was in the kitchen last month when Sarah Smith and I dropped in for a light supper before the opera.

A lot of people measure a Greek restaurant by the way they cook their lamb. While lamb temperature, etc., is important, anyone claiming to be Greek knows how to cook it. That should be a given – and at The Greek, the lamb loli-pops were heaven on a plate.

It gets trickier when you dive deeper into the menu.

To me, there are three ways to measure a good Greek restaurant: Their retsina; their potatoes and their baklava.

Our server's face lit up when I asked for retsina (a Greek white or rosé resinated wine, whose unique flavor is said to have originated from the practice of sealing wine vessels, particularly

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amphorae, with Aleppo Pine resin in ancient times. Pine resin helped keep air out, while at the same time infusing the wine with resin aroma.)

“You have been to Greece, no?” he asked. “We have an excellent retsina.”

The Greek's retsina was as billed – crisp, lemony and bright. And, of course, there is that delicate resinous aftertaste.



We ordered grilled artichoke hearts (\$7), served with lemon aioli, roasted red peppers and potatoes that were roasted in olive oil, seasoned with salt, pepper and fragrant oregano. Crusty on the outside, smooth and creamy on the inside, one bite took me to a small café at the foot of the Acropolis.

We ordered Uncle Demetri's Burger (\$14), which was delicious, but it was way too much on top of the lamb and artichokes.

As full as we were, we could not resist the baklava – the most traditional of Greek desserts.

Most baklava is served cold here in the states, making it syrupy, dense and cloying.

Not at The Greek. It (\$7) was served warmed, fresh and flaky, lying on a bed of whipped yogurt.

Make sure to leave enough room for this philo dough/walnut/honey/nutmeg/cinnamon extravaganza. And add a cup of coffee. Sweet perfection.

Our service was outstanding. Sean, a former employee of Nick and Sam's, certainly knows his customer service. He took time to answer our questions. There were some hiccups, of course, that are to be expected during opening week.



Hopefully, they've had time to get a plumber out to fix the facility in the ladies' room – and they've sent someone to the store for paper products. Just sayin'.

The Greek is located at 1722 Routh St. #102.

When we were there, they had not decided on days/hours of operation. You might call ahead to find out if you're planning a visit.

Their phone number is 214-999-1311. There was no operative website as of this review.