

Long wait detracts from otherwise fine meal

Your traveling taster visits area eateries and rates them on a 100-point scale. Up to 30 points are awarded for ambience, which includes general atmosphere and service; 55 points for food; and 15 points for price/value rating. A total count of 55 points or less indicates a restaurant is not recommended; 56-74 points signify from passing to good; 75-89 points designate very good with some extraordinary features; and 90-100 points show that a very special dining experience awaits you.

CAFE PICCIRILLI, 52830 Van Dyke, Shelby Township (731-0810), is a large, very noisy, busy restaurant. Although it may have pretensions of being a "fancy" Italian eatery, Piccirilli falls down badly because of the very small and uncomfortable bentwood, teardrop-style chairs and the crowded tables.

Fuddled waiters and strolling musicians cannot overcome dirty, glass can-

dle-holders and heavy overbooking of tables. We had reservations for 8 p.m. on a Saturday night. When we arrived, we were told there would be a 10-minute wait, which is not unreasonable. There were so many people waiting, and such a small bar area, that we were forced to stand in the lobby, like milling cattle, until our table was finally ready at 9:10 p.m. Make reservations, but don't plan on them being honored. **GENERAL ATMOSPHERE** — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 8.

Once we were finally seated, service was adequate. Our meal took about two hours and 15 minutes, longer than we would have liked. The buboyas were sometimes slow to respond. At one point, half the table was cleared while the other half was left with dirty dishes. Our waiter was helpful in suggesting menu items, but there just did not seem to be enough help to handle the

a counting for taste by D. Gustibus

big crowd. **SERVICE** — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 8.

We ordered a carafe of the house chianti which had a very pleasing taste. The waiter suggested a plate of mixed seafood hors d'oeuvres which was quite good. Both the breaded scallops and shrimp were tasty. The escargot was a bit salty, but nicely seasoned. The baked bread with cheese was also very good. The appetizer could have been a meal by itself. At \$43.80 for four people, perhaps it should have been. **DRINKS, APPETIZERS AND BREAD** — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 8.

The dinner comes with an attractive, fresh salad, featuring a selection of vegetables. The house dressing, a sweet Italian style, was a good complement. **SALAD** — 5 points maximum. Points awarded — 4.

Highlight of the meal was the homemade pasta. The sauce was delicious and the pasta tasted as though it had come straight from Italy. The cannelloni, also, had a very nice flavor. At \$10 to \$13, all the pasta dishes seemed reasonably priced. Fish, at \$13 to \$15 is also available, and we tried a sole with anchovies. Unfortunately, the batter was too heavy and overpowered the

fish.

We also sampled a veal piccata which was light and tender with good flavor. Veal dishes were priced from \$14 to \$20. The vegetables served with the entrees were unusually fresh and well prepared. **ENTREE, VEGETABLES AND GARNISHES** — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 26.

The desserts were good, but not great. The cannoli pastry was soggy and the filling a bit bland. The Cassia cake was better. At about \$3 each, these dishes did satisfy our need for sweets. **DESSERT AND COFFEE** — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 7.

Total cost of our meal was \$70 per couple, including tip. Without the very expensive appetizer, however, the cost would have been only about \$45 per

couple, much more reasonable and still plenty to eat. It was really too bad that the long wait and uncomfortable atmosphere detracted so much from the above-average food. **PRICE/VALUE** — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

A COUNTING FOR TASTE — 100 points maximum. Total points awarded: 71. Cafe Piccirilli needs to consider the discomfort and inconvenience of its patrons and to stop overbooking before it can be recommended very highly.

D. Gustibus welcomes your reactions, comments and suggestions of favorite restaurants in the Observer & Eccentric communities. Write to D. Gustibus, in care of Observer & Eccentric, Entertainment Department, P.O. Box 503, Birmingham 48012.

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