

Appe'teaser makes nice start

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 50 points or less indicates a restaurant is not recommended; 60-74 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.

We were told to expect an hour's wait, but our table was ready in about 35 minutes. Even with that wait, we were in and out in about an hour and 45 minutes. General Atmosphere — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

There are ample numbers of servers and bus people, but they seem to need additional training. The bussing, especially, was much too fast. Several times people tried to clear our plates while we were obviously still eating. Perhaps this was an attempt to turn the tables, but it affected our enjoyment of the meal. Our waiter was very pleasant, but some of the dishes he described — and that we then ordered — were not what we expected. Service — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 11.

APPE'TEASER, 280 N. Woodward, Birmingham (416-7001), is a newly opened restaurant that appeals to a wide range of people. "Eclectic" describes both the patrons — from young to older — and the attire — from very casual to business suits. "Trendy" characterizes decor, the menu and the staff. Tables are attractively decorated with fresh flowers but quite close together, and the noise level is high. The menu phrasing is "gimmicky" (the entrees are "served with appropriate carbohydrate"); the employees are young and trying hard, sometimes too hard. At present, only a limited number of reservations are taken for each evening. There is a piano bar that makes waiting more pleasant.

While at the bar, we ordered coconut shrimp (\$6.50 for four shrimp) and spinach tortellini do Pizzone (\$4.95). The shrimp, served with strawberries on the side, was well flavored but a little dry. The tortellini was excellent and well worth ordering. The "creamy tomato sauce" was light and delicious, and the dish would make an excellent entree. Bread was also very good, with a nice assortment of different types



a counting for taste

D. Gustibus

and tastes. Drinks were strong and reasonably priced. Drinks, Appetizers and Bread — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 9.

There is a choice of soup or salad with the meal. The salad was especially interesting, with a wide variety of vegetables and the dressing served on the side. The ranch dressing with spinach and garlic was very good; the house vinaigrette was too sweet. Salad — 5 points maximum. Points awarded — 4.

Our waiter recommended a daily special, red snapper charbroiled with tomatoes and mushrooms (\$14.50). We expected a light dish, but it came with a heavy sauce that overpowered the fish and the vegetables. Also disappointing was the duck with lingonberry sauce (\$13.50), which we ordered crisp but did not come that way. In fact, the duck had a gamy taste, almost undercooked. Of special note were the garnishes on both dishes, which were excellent. The vegetables and "carbohydrates" were presented artfully and cooked to perfection. Entree, Vegetables and Garnishes — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 22.

We enjoyed the best creme brulee in town for dessert. The dish (\$2.25) was rich and creamy, with a perfect

caramel crust and fresh strawberries on the side. We were nearly tempted to order a second serving. The chocolate, cherry cake (\$2.25) was also quite good. It was very light for a big, rich cake, but it was overshadowed by the creme brulee. Dessert — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 10.

The cost of \$82 for dinner for two with tip is not exorbitant, but it was a bit high for the rushed meal we were served. While some dishes were tops, others were lacking. Overall, the dining experience was not quite what it could have been for the money. Price/Value — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

A Counting for Taste — 100 points maximum. Total points awarded: 80. Appe'teaser lives up to its name, with a great beginning and ending. If the restaurant can improve the in-between and fine-tune the service, it will be a top spot in Birmingham.

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 3503, Birmingham 48012.

the movies

Dan Greenberg

Returning to school and skipping class are good for laughs

Ferris Bueller (Matthew Broderick) connives to escape while Thornton Melon (Rodney Dangerfield) buys his way "Back to School" (PG-13). "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" (also PG-13) wouldn't have been necessary if only Ferris enjoyed school a la Dangerfield.

If Dangerfield "U" were open to all undergraduates, there would be no drop-outs. On the other hand, if skipping school were as much fun as Ferris and his friends had, truancy would be the nation's number one problem.

In both cases, audiences benefit as Hollywood's vacation films turn their attention back to school days, with two well done vehicles packed with good humor and pleasant characters.

"Ferris Bueller's Day Off" opens as he fools his parents, Katie (Cindy Pickett) and Tom Bueller (Lyman Ward). They fall for his fake illness. Not only is Ferris a great con artist, but they're both preoccupied with their own affairs — Katie is about to close a real-estate deal while Tom is selling a major ad campaign. Only sister Jeanie (Jennifer Grey) realizes Ferris is malingering.

High school dean of students Ed Rooney (Jeffrey Jones) suspects, but can't prove, Ferris is skipping school. Jones screws up his face to propel his determined but whacky chase of Ferris the Truant.

The dean is aided and abetted by his nutty secretary (Edie McClurg) whose innocent, round plxie face betrays the devilish gleam that lurks in her heart. Her softly muttered comments, in counterpoint to Rooney's resolute air and firm attitude, are extremely funny.

McClurg also appears as Rodney Dangerfield's secretary, although in a much abbreviated role. In "Ferris Bueller" she shines with seemingly innocent comments about Ed Rooney's attempts to catch Ferris. Excellent supporting roles by McClurg and others, greatly enrich both films.

While Rooney is self-destructing in his obsessive and very funny pursuit of Ferris, our hero cons his hypocritical buddy, Cameron Frye (Alan Ruck), into a madcap day driving the classic Ferrari that Cameron's dad had lovingly restored.

Ferris and Cameron finesse Rooney who accuses Ferris' girl, Sloane Peterson (Mia Sara), to attend her grandmother's funeral. She joins the boys in an exciting day on the town.

As they tour the city, we're treated to interesting aerial views of Chicago's Loop, a viewpoint seldom seen. The upper levels of skyscrapers are hidden from the streets but those buildings have intriguing architectural features. Panoramic views of the contrasts between old and new buildings reinforce the film's age/youth theme and the film's quality is enhanced by this expensive footage of unusual scenery.

Ferris, Sloane and Cameron



Matthew Broderick (at wheel) as Ferris Bueller, Mia Sara as Sloane Peterson and Alan Ruck as Cameron Frye tool around town in his dad's Ferrari in "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," when they skip high school classes.

have an exciting day, certainly more enjoyable than boring classes. The film works well and amuses us all because the satire of adults' teachers/authority so common in "youth films" today is done realistically and pleasantly.

Let's face it, there are boring teachers and preoccupied, overly indulgent parents, as well as indifferent ones. The best satire makes us laugh and helps us understand our foibles. In other words, have a good laugh at your own expense and learn what it means to be human.

The satire is cleverly drawn without ridicule and focuses on teenagers as well as adults. Sister Jeanie is as obsessed with her brother and his high jinks as is Dean Rooney. With great comic style, the dean is defeated and Jeanie meets a druggie, neatly portrayed by Charlie Sheen, who "cures" her addictive brother-hate.

"BACK TO SCHOOL" features Rodney Dangerfield as millionaire entrepreneur Thornton Melon, who never went to college, is widowed, divorced and faced with a troubled son, Jason (Keith Gordon). Jason attends college but is not a great athlete, has no social life, is doing poorly in class but writes great "Freshman-Piction" letters.

Thornton decides to attend college and buy up his son's high school records. Thornton has no high school transcript, just lots of money, so the dean (Ned Beatty) figures a new Bus-Ad School is the appropriate price of admission.

The business school dean, Philip Barbay (Paxton Whitehead), a gentleman with a marvelous sneer, a facial expression fixed in place from smelling sour fruit, has other ideas. His discomfiture is heightened when his paramour, literature professor Diane Turner (Sally Kellerman), takes a liking to Thornton.

Jason is also uncomfortable as his father spends money left and right, thus making college an entirely new experience. Jason's only friend is a clever satire of freshman Marxism, Derek (Robert Downey Jr.), complete with punk hair and a firm belief that Karl Marx wrote "Communist Chicks in Bondage."

Burt Young plays Thornton's chauffeur/bodyguard, Lou, with the same uncouth appeal that characterized his role as Rocky's brother-in-law. In fact, "Back to School" is filled with a number of nifty characterizations that offset the Rodney Dangerfield persona, which only occasionally overwhelms the good-spirited proceedings. As long as Dangerfield plays Melon, he gets my respect. Only when Dangerfield surfaces do things get sticky.

There's a little bit of kid in every adult, and vice versa, so these two well-done, realistic satires ought to please every audience with their good humor, pleasant entertainment and mild swipes at all our foibles.

table talk

Mexican style

Casa Armando's, new in Farmington Hills, concentrates on Mexican cuisine. For breakfast, there's Huevos Rancheros, eggs with Spanish sauce; Spanish Omelette; Huevos con Chorizo, Mexican sausage with

eggs, and Nopalitos, cactus and eggs. Lunch specials are burritos, tostadas, enchiladas, tacos and soft-shell four tacos, as well as salads. Listed among Mexican favorites are such dishes as Carne Asada Fajitas, marinated steak with onions, at \$6.95, and Pollo Asado, chicken breast with Sangria sauce, at \$5.95.

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