

Casa Armando's proves to be a cozy hideaway

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 59 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.

CASA ARMANDO'S, 29200 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills (726-2982), was recommended by Mr. D.W., a reader from Birmingham. The restaurant, which has only been open for a few months, has a Mexican tavern-like appearance. It is comfortable and clean, with paper place mats and a lively casual atmosphere. The decor, although typical, is

bright and pleasing. Several other restaurants have been located in the building but the interior has been completely renovated and it seems that at last the site has a winner. Reservations are not available and dinner took about an hour and 20 minutes. General Atmosphere — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

Service started out very well. The staff is extremely friendly and gracious. Our waitress appeared as soon as we were seated and took our drink and appetizer orders. In fact, the first half of our meal moved right along. But something happened after our dinners had been served. Water, which had come whenever needed, was not brought. We could not seem to get our table cleared; and, in fact, we finally insisted that the waitress take the remains of our drinks and dinner when she brought the dessert. The last portion of our


meal took quite a bit longer than it needed to. Still the waitress was helpful even though the busing was inexperienced and at times inept. Service — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 9.

Margaritas are \$2.75 each or \$7.05 a half pitcher. They were well prepared, tangy and made with enough liquor. Our waitress (and our reader) recommended the panachitos (\$4.95) as an appetizer. These tortilla chips covered with beans, guacamole, sour cream and cheese were delicious. They are well worth trying. The homemade chips were also excellent and the salsa sauce was hot and spicy as it should be. Drinks, Appetizers and Bread — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 14.

The paella dinner (\$13.95) was loaded with seafood, but the rice was a bit on the soggy side. While the dish was good, it lacked the clean,

sharp taste that makes paella so appealing. The flauta (\$5.95), a deep fried tortilla stuffed with chicken and covered with guacamole and sour cream, tasted like such Mexican mixtures should. The food was plentiful and the flauta was well seasoned. The house special (\$9.95) is a skirt steak covered with Spanish sauce with guacamole on the side. It is served with two delicious cheese enchiladas. The steak itself was a pleasant surprise; its good flavor, especially combined with the guacamole, made it a bit. Entree, Vegetables and Garnishes — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 25.

If you like sopapillas, you'll enjoy dessert here. These cookie-like chips (\$1.75) were generously covered in honey and cinnamon. If you want something else, you're pretty much out of luck. While most Mexican restaurants don't feature a large dessert selection, some ice cream might



a counting for taste

D. Gustibus

be a nice addition here. Dessert — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 7.

Our meal cost about \$32 per couple with tip, but we spent more on food than would be usual because of the special entrees we ordered in place of the usual and less expensive tacos, burritos, etc. Portions were generous. The food was good and the value was there. Price/Value — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 13.

A Counting For Taste — 100

points maximum. Total points awarded — 86. Casa Armando is a welcome addition to the northwest scene. It is fine for couples and families, young and old. Thank you, Birmingham reader, for calling it to our attention.

D. Gustibus welcomes your reactions, comments and suggestions of favorite restaurants in the Observer & Eccentric circulation area. Write to D. Gustibus, in care of Observer & Eccentric, Entertainment Department, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham 48012.

upcoming things to do

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the show. Dinner and bar service are available. Call 353-5170.

• JAZZ TRIO

The George Benson Trio exhibits its jazz style from 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 3 in the Center Court Somerset Mall, 2801 W. Big Beaver, Troy. Open to the public; free.

• ROBIN WILLIAMS

Comedian Robin Williams performs at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 3 in the Royal Oak Music Theatre. Tickets are \$17.75. For more information call 546-7610. Tickets are available at the Royal Oak Theatre box office, Hudson's and Ticket World.

• ACCESS TO EXCESS

INXS appears at 8 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 5 at Meadow Brook Music Festival on the Oakland University campus, near Rochester. The Del Fuegos

open for the headliners. Tickets are \$18.50, \$19.50, available at Meadow Brook box office, Royal Oak Music Theatre box office, Hudson's, Ticket World, all AAA offices and J.C. Penney. To charge by phone, call 377-2010. No bottles or cans allowed into the concert area.

• REED SOLO

"Walk on the Wild Side" with Lou Reed at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 6 at Meadow Brook Music Festival on the Oakland University campus, near Rochester. Opening act, the Del Lords. Ticket are \$18.50, \$19.50; available at Meadow Brook box office, Royal Oak Music Theatre box office, Hudson's, Ticket World, all AAA locations and J.C. Penney.

• MARCH MUSIC

Salsa marches and Broadway tunes are the order of the day when the Franklin Village Band performs

Please turn to Page 7



Phil Marcus Esser and Barbara Bredius bring out some audience favorites when they begin their lounge entertainment series this week in Southfield.

Duo offers favorites

Two well-known performers in the metropolitan area cabaret scene, Phil Marcus Esser and Barbara Bredius, begin a lounge entertainment series Friday at the Red Cedars restaurant, Nine Mile at Telegraph, Southfield.

Performing favorites from their past productions, the duo's shows are set for 8:30 p.m., 10:30 p.m. and mid-

night, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday through Sept. 13. Reservations are suggested. Call 353-6170.

Esser of Livonia was named one of 1985's 10 Michiganians of the Year by the Detroit News. Bredius of Troy was named 1985's best vocalist in the metropolitan Detroit area by Detroit Monthly Magazine.





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