

Adventures in Dining

Tales of an Everyday Eater

La Piastra

25 Shunpike Road
Cromwell
860 632-7528

La Piastra is the sort of place you might not find if you weren't looking for it. Years from now, you'll thank me telling you where it is.

Nestled behind Mortensen's Ice Cream on Shunpike Road in Cromwell, La Piastra offers gourmet food to go. Take it home, heat it up, or eat it right from the container.

The storefront is small, but cozy, clean and inviting. Old world charm meets modern amenities. The staff is both friendly and helpful. Owner Lauren DeLisa warmly greeted me with a smile and a helping hand. Boy, did I need it.

The task at hand was a delightfully daunting one. Brightly lit refrigerated cases line the wall where neatly stacked and labeled containers beckon. I decided the best approach was to work off the menu so I wouldn't overlook anything. With Lauren's help, I was able to choose a couple of green salads, some sides, and both a vegetarian and meat entrée.

I drove home with the smell of Marsala wine permeating my car vents. As soon as I got in the door, I threw the entrees in the oven and concentrated on the salads. First up, La Piastra's Chopped Green Salad (\$6.95). A bed of lettuce carefully piled with chopped cucumbers, carrots and tomatoes served with a side of house made ginger dressing. I had my eye on the Mesclun version (\$6.95). Mesclun greens sprinkled with dried cranberries, shaved red onion, Gorgonzola cheese and topped with just the right amount of sliced almonds for a touch of crunch. The accompanying balsamic vinaigrette finished the salad off with a sweetness that more than pleased my taste buds.

Next up were the side salads. The sort of dishes perfect on their own or as an accompaniment to almost any meal, La Piastra has left no stone unturned. Curried Chicken Salad (\$5.95) with shredded meat, dried currants, celery and scallions in a curry mayonnaise was a favorite in my household. Other selections include Mediterranean Orzo Pasta Salad (\$4.95) with sun-dried tomatoes, cucumbers, feta cheese and olives and a Roasted Potato Salad (\$4.95) with bacon and scallions. I adored the Asian Cabbage Salad (\$4.95), a light and wonderful substitute for your run-of-the-mill coleslaw with crunchy noodles, sesame seeds and almonds tossed in a rice wine dressing. Other tempting sides include Broccoli Rabe (\$4.25), Steamed Green Beans (\$4.25) and Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes (\$4.25).

Entrees at La Piastra include a wide variety of pasta, vegetable and meat dishes. Dinners come packed in portions that serve two. I enjoyed the Eggplant Rollatini (\$6.95). Stuffed with the perfect amount of ricotta and mozzarella cheese was filled with creamy goodness. The Chicken Marsala (10.95) was a big hit with my

guest. Sautéed with mushrooms and onions, perfectly cooked with just enough sauce to satisfy. Other offerings include Vegetable Lasagna (\$8.95) with roasted veggies and ricotta, Chicken Picatta (\$10.95) in a lemon white wine sauce and Salmon Over Orzo (\$12.95) with roasted onions and tomatoes.

Homemade sauces and pastas are available to take home, for those intent on dirtying pots and pans. Freshly baked goods are made on the premises daily and conveniently placed at the counter where you can grab them and go. Unable to resist, I snatched a chocolate chip cookie large enough for two, but too tasty to share.

La Piastra has carved a niche for itself in a little corner of Cromwell convenient and accessible to all. Easy to get to from Route 9 and 91, it's worth the trip from almost anywhere. Their vast menu selections offer something for everyone and are sure to please even the pickiest patrons. Dietary needs are accommodated and catering services are also available.

With so much good food to choose from, why would anyone cook?

For more information, call La Piastra at 860 632-7528 or visit them online at www.lapiastra.com

**Based on a five-fork rating system,
we give La Piastra five forks.**

