

Boudin offers more than just good sourdough

<u>Tanya Henry</u> Posted: 03/24/2009 10:06:17 PM PDT



ONE OF MY 7-year-old son's favorite places for lunch is Boudin SF in The Village at Corte Madera. Unlike most kids, he prefers eating at home to going out to eat. That might be because I have been dragging him to restaurants long before he could even walk. So, unless the menu includes pizza or pasta, the noise level is low and there are cushy booths for sprawling out in, he would just as soon stay at home.

Boudin SF meets all of his criteria. But, along with being super kidfriendly, it also appeals to grown-ups. Reliably prepared salads, pizzas made with its renowned sourdough crust and a range of sandwiches with just enough flair to keep them interesting make Boudin worth visiting.

Yes, this is the same outfit that has been operating in San Francisco since 1849. Famous for its sourdough bread, the bakery chain has expanded its concept to include cafes that serve breakfast, lunch and dinner. Six are now sprinkled throughout the state and an outpost just opened in Illinois.

The restaurant sits across from Nordstrom and shares a courtyard with the retailer where tables can accommodate as many as 40 diners. Inside dark wood-trimmed eggshell walls and pendant lighting give the large 80-seat space a contemporary feel. Colorful prints of the Golden

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MARINIJ.COM MARCH 24, 2009 Gate Bridge adorn two walls, and several booths are intermingled between chunky dark wood tables and chairs.

We placed our order at the front counter where piles of freshly baked (on-site) breads, bagels, muffins and cookies

tempt customers. I opted for a BLT on sourdough, of course, and a cup of tomato soup (\$7.39). My companion, who works at the mall and eats here at least once a week, opted for vegetarian chili and a turkey cranberry sandwich (\$7.39).

Despite the casual order-at-the-counter, get-your-own-drinks concept, Boudin offers more than a bare-bones eating experience. The attractive interior and consistently good food make for better than average cafe dining. My BLT was crispy and fresh, and the pureed tomato soup was a thick, rich version that was piping hot. The hollowed-out sourdough bowl is an option, too, but I requested a flourless cup.

Likewise, the vegetarian chili was chockfull of corn, hominy and peppers and reminded me of my own homemade recipe. The turkey cranberry sandwich boasted a tart, chunky house-made cranberry sauce and generous folds of turkey breast. I haven't tried dinner here yet, but a crab macaroni and cheese (\$9.99) looks tempting.

Other dinner items include a baked chicken rigatoni (\$8.59) and a tilapia al forno (\$8.99). Salads and soups are also on the menu. A selection of pizzas prepared with the restaurant's signature hand-stretched sourdough crust include such toppings as spinach and mushroom alfredo (\$7.99), barbecue chicken (\$7.99) and, of course, cheese. Cheese pizza also appears on the kids' menu along with butter noodles, mac 'n' cheese and a turkey sandwich. All the kids' entrees are \$4.99 and come with applesauce, a drink and a cookie. Even the adult entrees are all under \$10.

Breakfast is also an option and even if you're not up for a sausage and tomato scramble (\$5.79) a lighter granola and yogurt parfait (\$4.29) is also available. Even a fresh-baked muffin or bagel from Boudin is enticing.

This chain might be ubiquitous - Disneyland's California Adventure Park now has a Boudin Bakery and the San Francisco Airport offers travelers a last taste of the city's famous live yeast sourdough bread before they leave. But, thankfully, Boudin has remained true to its quality baked products and appears to have taken their time to get its formula just right before expanding. Consistency and a superior product make for a winning combination for one of San Francisco's longest-running establishments.

REVIEW

Boudin SF

Address: 1734 Redwood Highway, Corte Madera

Phone: 737-1849

Web site: <u>www.boudinbakery.com</u>

Cuisine: California

Service: Good

Noise level: Quiet

Recommended dishes: Pizzas, sandwiches and soups

Liquor selection: None

Corkage: N/A

Heart-healthy and vegetarian selections: Salads and soups

Parking: Shopping center parking

Wheelchair access: Yes

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, to 8:30 p.m.

Sundays

Credit cards: All major

Summary: One of San Francisco's oldest establishments has rolled out its expanded cafe concept. Boudin Bakery has moved beyond its infamous sourdough bread and now serves pizza, soup and salads in its handsome cafes spread throughout the state.

Tanya Henry, the former senior food editor at cooking.com and a judge at the James Beard Foundation journalism awards, has degrees

in culinary arts and nutrition and lives in Marin. Contact her at lifestyles@marinij.com. The IJ invites readers to post their own opinions and experiences about the restaurants featured in Wednesday's dining reviews. Enter your comments at the bottom of this story online at www.marinij.com.