

Summer dining in Skokie a real treat

New Billy Berk's adds fun to Old

w Jenna Temkin
Staff Writer

There's a new spot in town for local diners and shoppers who are looking for a more upscale spin-off of the Max's restaurants in California and makes

Billy Berk's is surprisingly small and has an intimate feeling, with plush furniture throughout. However a mural of this restaurant's claim to fame, the the sophisticated decor. The room also hosts a huge bar that makes way for a

Beginning at 6 p.m., a piano player sings and plays his renditions of overpower the small room and adds some sophistication that many

Billy Berk's extensive menu encompasses all types of cuisine could spend hours examining the menu and deciding what to many types of sandwiches, pasta, entrees, steak, seafood, All of the portions are huge.

Although the peppercorn sauce covering this reviewer's Boneless Short Ribs, was creamy and outstanding, the meat more cooking time and was very chewy. However, the mashed were a perfect side dish, especially covered in the peppercorn

While its name is a bit deceiving, The Ultimate Grilled and is anything but kid friendly. This gourmet treat, sandwiched six cheeses and is layered with onions and tomatoes. Surprisingly this dish is not as rich and gooey as it sounds. The tomatoes and onions contrast nicely with the cheese.

The Backfin Lump Crabcake BLT costs \$12.95 and has more crab than expected. The roulade contrasts with the hearty meat and has the perfect amount of spice.

Both of these sandwiches are served with a broccoli salad containing almonds, cabbage and cranberries. This light, crisp side dish is served with a sweet vinaigrette. The sweetness of the cranberries add a lot to each meal. Billy Berk's also adds a whimsical touch to each sandwich with a little flag containing the slogan "eat me."

"Our desserts are excessive because nothing succeeds like excess" is Billy Berk's dessert motto and should not be taken lightly. Handling one of these desserts alone could result in a massive stomach ache. The Niagara Falls Cake is a little expensive, at \$11.95, but can be shared by at least two people and is worth the money. This dense, moist chocolate cake covered in fluffy butter cream frosting offers another show (along with the pianist.) Once the cake arrives at the table, the waiter douses this treat in warm chocolate ganach in front of the table that dribbles down the sides of the cake. This dessert is the perfect way to end a meal at Billy Berk's.

Billy Berk's opened recently and its service reflects that. Although our waitress seemed unfamiliar with the menu and admittedly didn't know how spicy a dish was, she was very attentive. One expects that service will become better with time.

Billy Berk's shows more of its fun side in its menu, where there is a list of "Berk's Laws." Some laws include being careful with drippy Reubens and promising to buy a round of drinks for a table that spots a food critic. Fortunately, this critic was not spotted.

With fun touches and great food, Billy Berk's is a great addition to restaurants at Old Orchard.

The restaurant's hours of operation are 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-midnight, Friday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 4-10 p.m., Sunday. For information or to make reservations, call (847) 763-4600.

Lai Thai offers Asian delights and congenial atmosphere in unlikely setting

w Carrie Hokl
Staff Writer

Any Chicagoan looking for an inexpensive, tasty meal should try Morton Grove's Lai Thai Restaurant, located at 7168 Dempster St. in Skokie. Open seven days a week, this tiny, family-run restaurant has an inviting feel.

Although it is located in the middle of a strip mall, Lai Thai's ambience reminds the diner of a restaurant in the heart of downtown Chicago. The quiet Thai restaurant has soft music playing, and the minute one walks in, a friendly waiter or waitress is greets him/her.

After a friendly greeting customers are seated immediately at the table of their liking. While sitting and perusing the menu, one can't help but notice the authentic decorations on the walls, giving the restaurant a cozy feel.

The menu includes such typical Thai fare as sweet and sour meat, rama chicken, mixed vegetables, five star chicken and an assortment of salads, soup, noodles and rices ranging \$4.25-7.25. The entrées are delicious as well as affordable.

If one has a little more money in his/her pocket, (s)he might be interested in a more expensive dish, like the red snapper fillet, a fresh red snapper fillet deep fried to golden brown, topped with red-green pepper, white and green onion, carrots, baby corn, all in a delicious sweet and sour sauce, making the price of \$9.95 worth it.

The spring rolls are a great starter. For the price of \$3.50, the diner receives two pre-cut spring rolls, filled with cucumbers, bean sprouts, tofu and scrambled eggs, and drizzled with thick and tasty plum sauce.

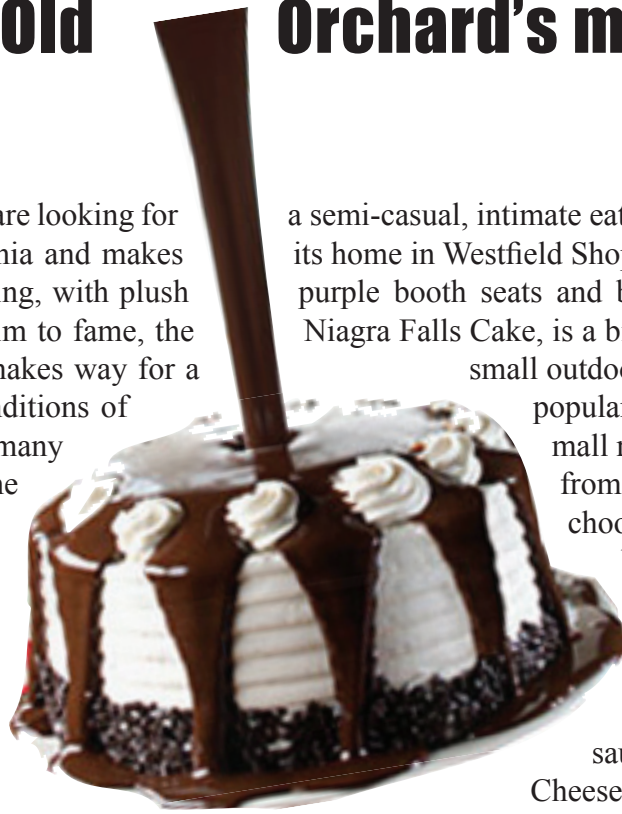
If the spring rolls don't seem appetizing, one may want to try the fried wonton for a mere \$3.50. An order is served with five fried wonton filled with freshly ground shrimp and cabbage and wrapped with a golden brown wonton skin. This dish is great dipped in the tangy sweet and sour sauce.

For an entrée, the rama chicken is mighty tasty. For the small price of \$7.25, one is served enough food to supply an army, with approximately eight medium-sized pieces of chicken, topped with the spicy peanut sauce and served with an enormous side of broccoli. The Thai food aficionado can never go wrong with this dish.

Furthermore, Lai Thai's service is prompt, with water refills the minute a glass is half empty.

With amazing prices accompanying the phenomenal service, one can arrive with little money and a big appetite and leave completely satisfied. For information or to make reservations, call (847) 966-8216. Lai Thai is open 11 a.m.-9 p.m. daily.

Orchard's menu of eateries



a semi-casual, intimate eatery. The recently opened Billy Berk's its home in Westfield Shoppingtown Old Orchard.

popular music. This nice touch doesn't small outdoor patio. popular music. This nice touch doesn't

mall restaurants lack.

from Asian-inspired to deli-style. One choose. The menu includes appetizers, barbecue, salads and weekend brunch.

entree, the Braised Fork-Tender itself would have benefited from potatoes served alongside the ribs sauce. This dish costs \$16.95.

Cheese (\$10.95) is not on the kids' menu between slices of crisp dark pumpernickel, contains

The tomatoes and onions contrast nicely with the cheese.