

# Eats

Dining Reviews ♦ Hot Stuff

## Accents Grill is serious about its good kosher food

By KAREN NITKIN  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The quality of the matzo ball soup can tell a lot about a kosher deli, just as good crab dip can set a high standard for a sports bar and hot, fresh tortilla chips can make a strong first impression at a Mexican restaurant.

### But the menu goes beyond traditional Jewish foods

The matzo ball soup at the recently opened Accents Grill in the Greenspring Shopping Center got our meal off to a terrific start. The steaming bowl of salty broth, studded with soft slivers of carrots and celery and large pieces of white-meat chicken, was dominated by a matzo ball so feather-light it hardly required chewing and swallowing — it seemed to just dissolve in the mouth. A delicious chewy, dense bread was served alongside.

However, as with the rest of the meal at Accents Grill, the presentation left something to be desired. The soup was served in a foam bowl with a plastic spoon, and the bread was cling-wrapped. Worse, the empty bowl was never cleared, even as our table grew crowded with main-course items and then desserts, all on disposable plates.

### Accents Grill on the Atrium

**Where:** 2839 Smith Ave., Greenspring Shopping Center

**Call:** 410-602-2224

**Open:** Sunday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday, 8 a.m. to about two hours before sundown, but no later than 5 p.m.

**Credit cards:** MasterCard and Visa

**Prices:** Appetizers, \$2.95-\$6.95; entrees, \$4.50-\$24.95

**Food:** ★★★

**Service:** ★★

**Atmosphere:** ★★½

I don't mind bussing my own table, but when I began throwing away some of the debris, I was told that somebody would clear the table for me. Nobody did. This may be just an early kink for the new restaurant.

Unlike many delis in and around Baltimore that serve Jewish foods such as pastrami and knishes but aren't truly kosher, Accents Grill takes its dietary restrictions seriously. It is a meat-only restaurant, meaning no dairy products. A sign taped to the front door says no outside



David Lapin (left) and Larry Franks observe dietary laws, even with Mandarin chicken salad.

ALGERINA PERNA : SUN STAFF

foods can be brought in, not even kids' sippy cups.

Owners David Lapin and Larry and Laura Franks have been in the food-service business a long time, and their food is good enough to attract nonkosher eaters. Lapin was most recently manager and kosher supervisor of Max's Kosher Cafe in Silver Spring, and his partners were caterers in California.

Together, they came up with a menu that includes traditional Jewish favorites, as well as hamburgers, barbecued ribs (beef, not pork) and a Mexican chicken wrap.

Salads in particular reflect the restaurant's desire to offer interesting flavor combinations. They include a Thai steak salad made with thin-sliced London broil and a sesame-fried fish salad with Asian accents.

The mandarin chicken salad is a large bowl of greens, carrots

and water chestnuts topped with slices of orange, strips of warm, pleasantly seasoned grilled chicken, crunchy fried noodles and a sesame dressing.

While all this creativity is nice, it is good to know you won't go wrong sticking with the Jewish classics. A pastrami sandwich comes heaped with thin-sliced, slightly fatty meat, and the hot dog has a garlicky, crisp-skinned snap. Both are served with excellent coleslaw, livened with the crunch of red and green peppers.

A Middle Eastern platter with pita bread includes a smoky, rich eggplant salad, a chopped vegetable salad given a vinegary twist with the addition of pickles, and a small container of creamy hummus.

Some desserts, including chocolate chip cookies and brownies, are made in house, while fancier cakes are purchased from a New York sup-

plier. A yellow layer cake with hazelnut and apricot filling was moist and flavorful, as was a checkerboard dessert that alternated chocolate cake with a pudding-like confection.

Much of the business at Accents appears to be takeout, but customers may order at the deli counter and eat in. The restaurant is long and narrow, with a few tables by the entrance in the front. The main dining area is a sectioned-off space in the rather dejected-looking mall, which at least has a nice skylight.

Before entering the dining area, customers can wash their hands at a sink that has been set up for that purpose. It's traditional, says Lapin, as are the prayer pamphlets written in Hebrew for saying grace after the meals. But even people who don't read Hebrew or keep kosher can enjoy a nice meal at Accents.