

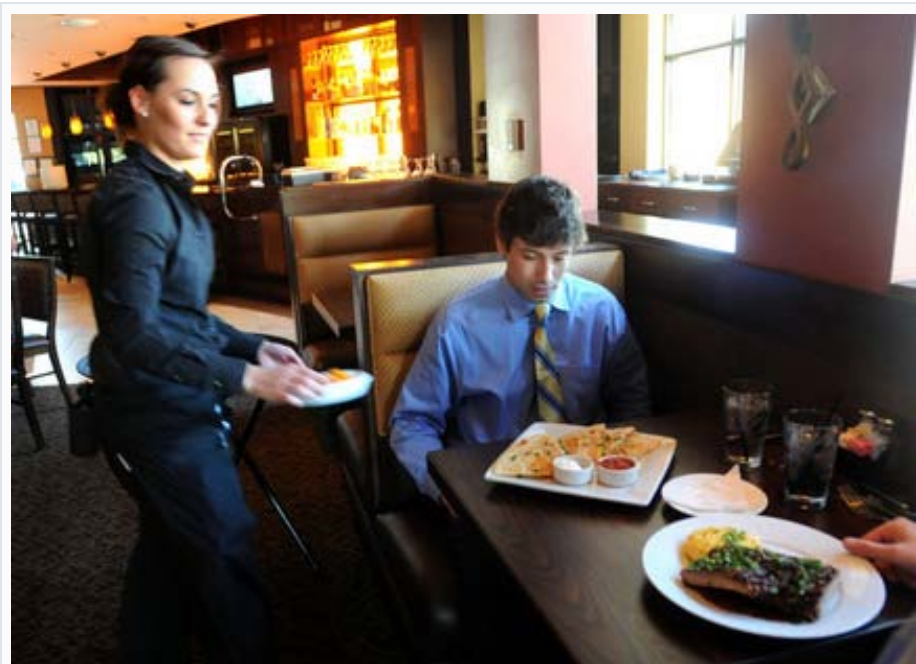


Zea Rotisserie & Grill has wide menu with good service

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by Tom Gaskin



Kristen Snell serves lunch to her husband, Jonathan Snell, at Zea Rotisserie & Grill. (News staff/Linda Stelter)

[Zea Rotisserie & Grill ★★★★★ 595 Colonial Brookwood Village; 380-3118]

Zea must be Louisiana slang for good.

Zea Rotisserie & Grill is an informal Louisiana-influenced restaurant located in the old Cooper Grill property in Brookwood Village. The location is convenient, and the construction is very handsome. Copper accents still abound. The seating is comfortable with large tables, good spacing and a separate area more or less private. It is separate but still open, and if there is a large group in there, don't sit adjacent to it. It's too loud.

You're going to like the menu, and the food lives up to its promise. For appetizers there are two kinds of hummus, roasted garlic (\$6.95) and Mediterranean (\$9.50). The Mediterranean is unequalled – the hummus itself is creamy, not chunky, but is covered with a blanket of a Greek-inspired salsa. Sundried tomatoes, feta, black olives, roasted garlic, olive oil and a good dose of oregano with pita wedges make this really exceptional.

There is also a spinach dip (\$8.95), Thai rib stack with a sweet chili glaze (\$9.95), fried shrimp with a soy ginger sauce (\$9.95), duck empanadas (\$7.95) and a chicken quesadilla (\$8.95).

There are eight creative salads, most of which would qualify as a dinner salad. Certainly with the entree-portion sizes and the sizes of the salads, you might consider either/or but not both. They range in price from \$4.95 to \$13.95, and some of them come in two sizes.

There are different soups each night (\$5.50). We can vouch for the tomato basil, one of our favorites overall. It is creamy and well flavored with pieces of fresh tomato throughout.



Zea's focus is on their rotisserie. They have a variety of rotisserie choices as well as a daily special. Available every day are ribs, chicken, ribeye steaks, crispy duck and a huge Kobe beef burger. These are prepared individually or in a number of combinations. There is a fairly extensive choice of seasonings as well. For the daily specials add veal (\$17.50), pork (\$13.95), beef with mushroom glaze (\$15.95) and lamb (\$18.95).

Seafood follows the same plan with shrimp, tuna, salmon, trout, and redfish prepared in different ways. Rainbow trout (\$17.25 - \$18.95) is prepared four different ways. Fried shrimp (\$18.95) were big and can be prepared Alabama style (overcooked) or more lightly, as we requested. The shrimp are large and the buttermilk batter is not too thick or bready allowing the wonderful fresh shrimp taste to come through. A platter full of shrimp was accompanied by two of a number of choices of sides. Sweet potatoes were creamy and rich and paired well. The grits needed help.

Crispy duck (\$19.95) soy honey sauce was two leg quarters. The skin was crispy and the meat inside was still moist – a neat feat in itself. Vegetable of the day was cabbage and black-eyed peas — very good and recommended. Thai snap beans actually were sugar snaps with sesame seeds flavored with Kaffir lime and just a gentle little bite from tien tsin pepper. A repeat performance unfortunately lacked both of these in any substantial way. The first however has these three wonderful flavors – sugar snaps, Kaffir lime and that special little bite.

Redfish with shrimp etouffee (\$18.95) was a grilled filet of a delicately textured and mild-flavored fish grilled and bathed in a mild etouffee sauce with more than half a dozen medium sized shrimp. It was tender and well flavored and not at all hot (until doused with Tabasco).

Veal special (\$17.50) was braised, tender, delicately seasoned and generously sized veal. It was also delicious.

The dessert list is half cheesecakes. Leading the rest is a bread pudding made with sweet potatoes (\$6.50). It's not traditional but it was still rich and flavorful. A chocolate mousse (\$6.25) was very light. Each crackle (think cobbler) had some complex flavoring.

All the glazes, dips, coatings are pretty fancy and tend to overpower. We had nothing we didn't really like and several things are championship contenders.

Parking is a problem in inclement weather. Valet parking is across the street, and self-parking was more practical but not at all convenient. The table service is very good for a new restaurant.

Despite a hitch or two here and there, Zea was clearly above average and the atmosphere adds measurably to the enjoyment.

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Ambience

Excellent location, beautiful property, Louisiana-influenced menu.

Prices: Lunch \$9.95 – \$12.95; dinner \$13.95 – \$24.95

Hours: Sunday - Thursday 11 a.m. – 10 p.m.; Friday – Saturday 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.

Alcoholic beverages: Yes

Credit Cards: Yes

Personal checks: No

Reservations: Yes

Smoking: No

Handicap access: Yes

Health Department rating: 89