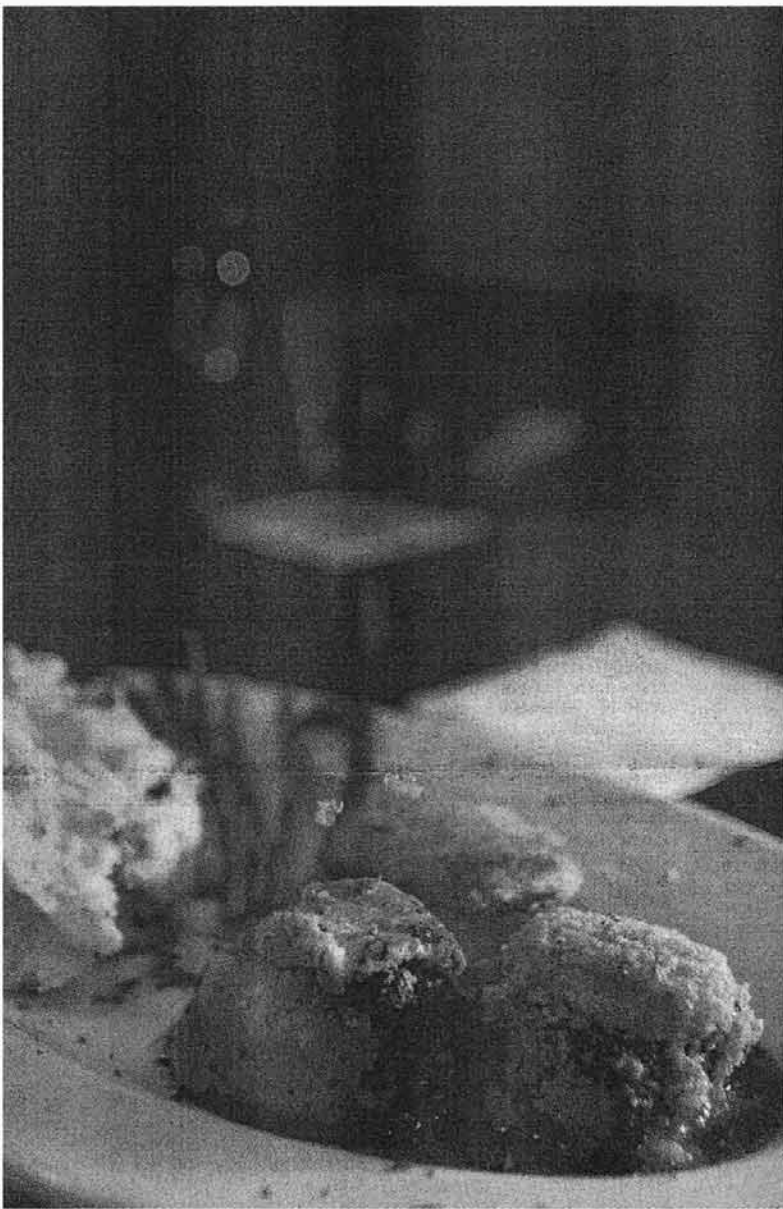


Fine Steaks, Italian Style



nature offering at Johnny's Italian Steakhouse at Village Pointe shopping center is the filet medallion trio, consisting of filets charbroiled to order, then individually topped with Maytag blue cheese, horseradish and Parmesan cheese. They're served with roasted garlic mashed potatoes and a demi-glaze.

REVIEW

■ A Sinatra vibe permeates this retro steakhouse.

By JOHN KEENAN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

I took a friend to Johnny's Italian Steakhouse. The friend, just coming off of jaw surgery, hadn't had a steak in four months because he couldn't chew one.

He loved it.

Johnny's Italian Steakhouse, a four-unit Midwestern chain with no link to south Omaha's Johnny's Cafe, is the type of place where Frank Sinatra plays overhead in a mood-lit, martini-lounge type of atmosphere, a decor that hints at Rat Pack insouciance with a touch more elegance.

When we were seated, our dining area was flanked with red curtains and dominated by a colorful painting of an Italian farmers market.

We arrived early on a weekday, when the restaurant wasn't exactly swinging. That gave us a leisurely amount of time to peruse the menu, dipping warm Italian bread into an olive oil-cheese mix that the waitress prepared for us after she handed us menus.

The menu takes a bit of perusing — as does the wine list, which has more than 100 wines.

Entree sections on Johnny's menu include pasta; "favorites," which primarily are Italian entrees; steaks, chops and seafood; specialties, and a 15-item sandwich list.

It's a lot to look over, and while we were deciding, we split an appetizer: an order of sausage bread (\$5.99), which is a loaf of bread stuffed with Italian sausage, onion, mozzarella and Colby cheese. With a side of mild marinara sauce for dipping, the filling appe-

See Dining: Page 2

Johnny's Italian Steakhouse

Where: 305 N. 170th St.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays

Prices: Appetizers \$5.49 to \$8.99; entrees \$8.99 to \$25.99

Alcohol: Full bar, extensive wine list

Payment: Credit cards

Wheelchair accessible: Yes

Smoking section: In the bar

Information: 289-9210

Dining: Steakhouse's nice, small touches add up

Continued from Page 1

zer was a nice way to start a meal, and would make a tasty te-night snack or lunch entree.

The salad was served family-style, which was the most notable thing about it. It was a pretty standard garden salad, but not exceptional.

Ceding the "steak" portion of the menu to my salivating sidekick, I ordered veal parmigiano (\$16.99), which was served with a side of pasta. The veal was tender and was smothered in mozzarella cheese, but the marinara sauce,

mild with the appetizer, seemed overwhelmed a bit by the meat and cheese. A good dish, and certainly filling, but perhaps a touch more sauce would have improved it.

After hearing about my friend's meatless months, the waitress took an active interest in his dinner selection, steering him toward an entree she said was popular with customers and that she personally liked.

My friend made the most of the filet medallion trio (\$21.99), three filets charbroiled and topped with different crusts: horse-

radish, Maytag blue cheese and Parmesan cheese.

The three filets were a good choice for my friend, who couldn't finish the portion. Of the three, he liked the blue cheese topping best, saying the warm cheese melted on his tongue. The side of garlic mashed potatoes, served with many of the entrees, also drew a thumbs-up.

For dessert, I had a molten chocolate cake (\$5) with vanilla ice cream, while my friend had creme brulee.

After three months of soft food, you'd think he'd have gone

for something with some heft, but he found the creme brulee very satisfying. Beneath the torched and caramelized topping, the dish was room temperature, not chilled, traditionally the correct way to serve the dessert.

The total for the meal, before tip, was \$68.40.

When the waitress wrapped up my friend's last two beef medallions, she added a little note: "Thank you. Congratulations on your first steak post-surgery."

It was the final nice, small touch in an evening with many.