

Carrabba's Consistently Good, Appetizer Through Entree

If you grew up in an Italian house like mine, where every Wednesday night — and many others — were Prince Spaghetti nights, then you'll want to spend some of your dining-out dollars at Carrabba's Italian Grill in Winter Haven and Lakeland.

But even if pasta, lasagna and veal parmigiana don't suit your taste buds, don't worry. Those who don't like the texture of pasta can choose from any number of other items, like steak and chicken.

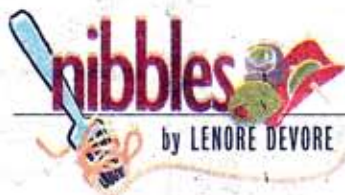
Start with an Antipasti Platter appetizer (\$10.99) of calamari, cheese sticks and bruschette. The calamari is some of the best in Polk County.

A crab cake appetizer (\$9.99) offers two hefty cakes on a large plate covered with a zippy sauce that added just the right kick.

Several entrees stand out:

The Italian Classic veal marsala (\$16.49) was tender and moist — no shoe leather here. Mushrooms were plump and plentiful, something to really savor for those who like the fungi. A cup of soup or a salad comes with this entree.

■ A pasta specialty on the menu that's worth trying is the lobster ravioli (\$15.99). Loads of Maine lobster are stuffed into a ravioli, then covered with a white wine cream sauce and diced to-



matoes. It's a new twist on an old favorite, one that's sure to please the seafood lover.

■ From the grill, chicken Bryan is by far one of the best-selling items, according to servers. Covered with goat cheese, basil,

sun-dried tomatoes and sauce, this meal melts your senses and your soul. On a recent night, this scrumptious poultry dish was served with zucchini covered in onions, garlic, tomatoes, herbs and shredded cheese. The combo was filling and fabulous.

If you're not very hungry after eating an appetizer or two and the restaurant's fresh homemade bread, try one of Carrabba's wood-fired pizzas (\$9.95). A mixture of Romano and mozzarella cheeses, along with cooking

the pizzas in a 600-degree brick oven, provides a zesty new taste for an old favorite.

We tried meals at both Polk County locations, and the differences between them were negligible. We did notice more of the wood flavor in the Lakeland

pizza, but the quality and quantity was the same.

When last reviewed in 2003, Carrabba's in Winter Haven received three stars; this year it gets three and a half, the same as the Lakeland Carrabba's received when last reviewed in 2005.



CARRABBA'S ITALIAN GRILL

700 Third St. S.W., Winter Haven; 863-293-6635

4829 S. Florida Ave., Lakeland; 863-646-2518

4 to 10:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 4 to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; noon to 9 p.m. Sundays.

■ **PRICE RANGE:**

Entrees, \$8.99 to \$20.99

■ **CREDIT CARDS:**

All

■ **APPROPRIATE FOR KIDS:**

Yes. The children's menu includes chicken fingers, ravioli, pizza, grilled chicken breast, all with drinks, \$4.95 and up. High chairs and booster seats are available.

■ **RESERVATIONS:**

No, but you can call ahead. On the weekends, they recommend calling at least an hour in advance.

■ **DON'T:**

Go unless you're REALLY hungry, and definitely don't fill up on just the bread — even though it's tempting.

■ **MUST TRY:**

Crab cakes appetizer, lentil soup, Veal Marsala and Chicken Bryan.

■ **WEB SITE:**

www.Carrabbas.com