

Casino ups its culinary game with Lucky Mi Noodle House

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I recently had occasion to spend an evening at the Seminole Casino in Immokalee. The last time I was there — at least 15 years ago — it resembled a tired bingo parlor and what little food there was wasn't worth eating.

Things have changed dramatically in the intervening years. The casino has been enlarged and enhanced, there's an adjoining hotel and it now boasts four dining options: the 24/7 Ee-to-Leet-Ke Grill, 1st St. Deli, Cappuccino's and Lucky Mi Noodle House.

It seems odd, though intriguing, that this bastion of slots, craps and poker holds a kosher-style deli that serves potato pancakes, matzoh ball soup and corned beef sandwiches, among other classics.

That there's an Asian establishment offering nicely executed food seems even odder to me. Nonetheless, it's true. Even if you aren't a gambler, I'd wager you'd enjoy a meal at this little spot tucked into the side of the gaming rooms.

The pad Thai at Lucky Mi is both tasty and plentiful. KAREN FELDMAN/FLORIDA WEEKLY

A smiling Buddha statue greets Lucky Mi diners as they walk from the sprawling, smoky gaming floor filled with slot machines. In this serene space, the décor is spare, modern and tasteful, with bright red lights dangling from the ceiling and an open kitchen, where the chefs conjure up dishes representing Japan, Thailand, China, Vietnam and Korea.

Customers either sit at the counter or at long wooden tables, which makes it likely that you will end up chatting with strangers sometime during your meal.

Spring and summer rolls, noodle and rice dishes, even Hong Kong duck and Korean bulgogi can be had here, with no dish priced higher than \$20 and most closer to \$15.



Service is warm and welcoming and somewhat speedy — no doubt intentional so that gamers can get back to the activities that brought them there in the first place.

A cheerful Buddha greets diners at Lucky Mi Noodle House in the Seminole Casino Immokalee.

For starters, we tried spring and summer rolls. The teriyaki chicken summer rolls (\$8) contained avocado, tropical fruit, vegetables and rice noodles served with hoisin-sweet chili sauce. The ingredients blended well inside the tender wrapping, but the rolls had clearly been made earlier and refrigerated. They arrived at the table chilled, which muted the flavors and made them a little tough.

The vegetable spring rolls (\$8), on the other hand, were piping hot and flavorful, the crisp wrapping containing glass noodles, carrots and mushrooms accompanied by a tangy sweet chili sauce.

The entrees were uniformly tasty, starting with spicy vegetables and rice ribbon noodles (\$12), which began with a bowl full of warm noodles topped with chilled sweet peppers, green papaya and herbs in a spicy sauce. This dish looked lovely with its rainbow of colors and contained plenty of flavor and diverse textures that worked well together.

A bowl of spicy vegetables and noodles offers a taste of Korean fare.

Pad Thai (\$16) also started with noodles into which were woven chicken and shrimp, vegetables, egg, cashews, cilantro and a touch of tamarind, giving it that intoxicating blend of sweet and tangy, crisp and soft that makes pad Thai such a popular dish.

The bulgogi (\$20) was good as well, with well-marinated, tender beef accompanied by spicy kimchee, lettuce leaves and an assortment of other side dishes that complemented the savory meat well.

Desserts are limited to ice cream or sorbet, which we skipped, as the dishes were good sized and we were full.

In no time at all, we were properly full, re-energized and ready to face the slot machines again. The outcome of your time on the gaming floor might be uncertain, but it's a sure bet you will feel fortunate for having dined at Lucky Mi. |



Spring rolls are crisp and flavorful, containing vegetables and glass noodles.

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in the know

Lucky Mi Noodle House
Seminole Casino Immokalee, 506 First St., Immokalee; (800) 218-0007

Ratings:
Food: ★ ★ ★ ★
Service: ★ ★ ★ ★
Atmosphere: ★ ★ ★ ½

>> **Hours:** Noon to 10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, noon to midnight Friday-Saturday
>> **Reservations:** No
>> **Credit cards:** Accepted
>> **Price range:** Appetizers, \$6-\$10; entrees, \$12-\$20
>> **Beverages:** Beer and sake served (full bar available in casino)
>> **Seating:** At the counter, at long tables in the dining room
>> **Specialties of the house:** Pan-Asian cuisine
>> **Volume:** Low to moderate
>> **Parking:** Free in casino parking lot

★★★★ Superb
★★★ Noteworthy
★★ Good
★ Fair
★ Poor