

Clemmons Kitchen

Contributed by Mark Winston
Monday, 30 July 2007

Clemmons Kitchen is a place that really seems to pack 'em in. They have a loyal and voluminous crowd just about all the time, probably due to their location and agreeable hours of operation. Unfortunately, neither the service nor the food seem to support this loyal following.

Clemmons Kitchen does one thing right: it's open on Sundays and open for breakfast all day every day, something far too few "diners" seem capable of doing (but which is my pet qualifier for a "diner" usually). This means that there is always a pretty good chance I'll return even if I don't like it very much, if only out of despair at the dearth of available restaurants during the forbidden hours of churchgoing.

But what Clemmons Kitchen gets wrong is just about everything else. For one thing, their agreeable hours means that the only time we've visited has tended toward the crowded hours when it is the diner-of-last-resort for lots of other people as well. This means there is usually a wait, and once seated it's usually fairly loud and the servers are invariably overworked.

Crowd control is a serious problem: upon entering, the sign indicates that Hostess Will Seat You, but the hostess seems to make herself quite scarce. When she does show, there are several parties awaiting seats, but no ideal place to form a line, thus squabbling over first-come ensues. The Hostess asks who signed in on the sheet behind the register, and the answer is no one because there is no indication that a sheet is present to sign in upon.

On to the dining room: once finally queued and ready to be seated, we invariably discover that the generous portion of empty booths are in the smoking section - something any restaurant that cares about cash flow should heed as a sign to revise their smoking force field lines. If we choose a non-smoking booth, the wait is slightly longer but at least we can taste our food and mustn't immediately race home to shower.

It takes quite a while for our order to be taken, and even longer for it to arrive. The meal arrives, slightly late and after our first glass of tea is drained. Refills are also rather tardy. The servers are not entirely to blame: it's fairly obvious that they are inadequately staffed. The standard Greek Diner fare is acceptable, though at this point one clearly wonders whether it beats the initiation one had to endure before one was able to chow down. Breakfast was slightly better than lunch/dinner, though the lack of a pancake combo was quite sad, and said pancakes have yet to be tried.

Vignette: Why is it that so few diners have pancake combos? Meaning an egg or two, a meat, and substituting the Starch Duo (eg Grits, Hash Browns or Gravy and Toast or Biscuit) for a short stack? It's a fairly standard selection on the menus of the successful national breakfast chains. But it seems to be unheard of in Southern Diners - even Waffle House: their egg+waffle combos also throw a couple additional starches at you. Diabetes can't possibly be THAT big a part of the Southern heritage, can it?

After you've eaten, it takes a while to get out. The register area is low-capacity and there is usually a crowd waiting to pay, all whilst warring with the crowd awaiting their seats from the Hostess. Another annoying inconvenience comes up when I'm asked by the cashier if I'd like to leave a tip on the credit card, and "how much?" I find it especially uncomfortable and counterintuitive that one should have to declare to the establishment the degree of one's satisfaction in such a verbal and public manner. It probably succeeds in inflating the tips, but it sure seems underhanded to me.

Clemmons Kitchen is not uniquely odious. It's OK in the food department, and good in the convenience department. I would rather have it as an option than not have it at all, but it sure doesn't go out of its way to make me actually like the place.

Clemmons Kitchen
3609 Clemmons Rd
Clemmons
336.766.4671

Hours:
Monday - Saturday 7.00 AM - 9.00 PM, Sunday 7.00 AM - 2.00 PM

Best Bet:

Breakfast Plate, Around \$5.00

Avoid:
Beef Tips