



mark matson/for aas-

lunch
eats

Conan's Pizza

2606 guadalupe st.
476-1981
★★½

Conan's Pizza

has strong foundation

Entering the doors of Conan's on the Drag is like stepping back in time. The first Conan's Pizza opened in 1976 and this campus location came to life soon after, in 1980.

Lucky for us, it doesn't seem to have changed much, with a distinctly late '70s vibe still intact. Everything is wood or fake wood, green plants dangle from the rafters, old posters from long-gone clubs adorn the walls. The staff is a surprisingly friendly, attentive and concerned group (which, if you've ever worked fast food, you know is a miracle) of students and older, eternal "students of life." They did their best to keep the tables around us cleared, served our pizzas with friendliness and exhibited concern for our well-being. All of this makes Conan's a pleasant spot to eat.

This calm, hippie-like atmosphere translates to the pizza as well, which is fresh-tasting and errs on the side of "healthy." But this doesn't always work when it comes to American pizza, which by nature is at its best served hot, salty, and, yes, a bit greasy

and spicy.

Conan's was none of the above. The whole-wheat crusts (all pizzas on the buffet are made with whole wheat) are a bit sweet, doughy and plain, more bagel-like than pastry-like (not a sin in my book). But the sauce, *mama mia*, is on the bland side. Why? The cheese, lots of it, is a very mild mozzarella.

by deborah j. wolfinsohn

american-statesman
staff

The overall taste is undersalted and underflavored, which I remedied with lots of garlic salt, hot pepper seeds and the bonus free chopped fresh garlic they give out (great touch).

We arrived for the all-you-can-eat pizza lunch, (served 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday for \$3.99) where you receive a plate and approach the counter for slices fresh from the oven. The staff keeps the pies coming, announcing over the loud-speaker what's up.

Large cups of soda in hand, we ordered salads to start with — crisp iceberg lettuce with a few olives and a huge handful (more than a cup) of shredded mozzarella cheese on top.

Topped off with sweet, bottled-type dressings (honey mustard and ranch) this salad was more like dessert: a salad sundae, a guilty pleasure a child might take to pass off as a serving of vegetables.

Then we tried the mushroom, vegetarian and vegetarian supreme slices. We tried to get a pepperoni slice, but the kind counter person came to our table to say that her manager wouldn't let her put in another whole pizza for just one slice at this late hour (about 15-20 minutes before the lunch special ended). So we tried the healthier selections.

The vegetarian slice was covered with sliced black olives and mushrooms, green peppers and onions. The vegetarian supreme slice was very different, covered with the above toppings in addition to pineapple, tomato and lots of canned slices of hot jalapeno peppers. The result was hot and sweet, and while I appreciated the wild flavors, I would have rather seen fresh, finely chopped peppers than the canned ones, which reminded me of convenience store nachos.

The mushroom was the best — hot from the oven, a succulent triangle of dough, sauce and cheese. It was filling, a great bargain for the poor and hungry, and pretty as a picture. But it was about as flavorful as a picture, too. If only they would take a chance on spice (basil, garlic, salt, pepper, oregano) and build on their solid but plain foundation!