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CineBistro unveils menu before Friday opening and we were there

By Wade Tatangelo, Herald-Tribune / Monday, February 8, 2016



CineBistro at Westfield Southgate is on S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. STAFF PHOTO / NICK ADAMS

CineBistro offers several dining and drinking options including the one featuring Hollywood blockbusters.

Yes, the national cinema chain **opening Friday in Westfield Southgate shopping center** provides dinner and a movie in a single, comfy seat, with nothing required of the patron but mere ordering, noshing, quaffing and watching the giant screen. A swipe of the plastic and it's a simple and highly effective transaction.

The CineBistro experience expands beyond the seven dark auditoriums filled with flickering images and booming sound, though. People are encouraged to hang out at the handsome, spacious bar under the high ceiling and chic stone walls even if they have no intention of seeing a film. Same goes for having a meal at the adjacent 150-seat restaurant, which welcomes all ages. There's outdoor dining (facing the parking lot), too, and a lounge area for drinking and snacking while observing the mall walkway by the entrance to Macy's.



Enjoy the bar at CineBistro even if you're not seeing a movie. STAFF PHOTO / NICK ADAMS

For in-theater dining, moviegoers are required to arrive at least 30 minutes before showtime. Persons younger than 21 years old are welcome to movies beginning before 6 p.m., if accompanied by a parent or guardian. After 6 p.m., though, no one under 21 is allowed, eliminating the Friday night parking lot free-for-all of teenagers that plagues many movie theaters.

Paying homage to the great American cinema snack, the menu opens with a "popcorn" chicken, shrimp or calamari appetizer. Other starters include ahi tuna ceviche, chorizo and shrimp flatbread, and a hummus plate. During a recent media event, we happily sampled Korean-style barbecue chicken wings, wagyu beef sliders and a smoked fish dip. Most of the appetizers cost about \$12.

As for the entrées, filmgoers will have their choice of steaks, lamb, seafood — cod, scallops, salmon — and a pasta dish. I enjoyed the filet and lamb I tried more than the salmon, but I also sampled the pan-seared salmon last, which meant it sat in that cold theater the longest. The seared scallops, served in a cauliflower puree, were impressive, too. The entrees range in price from \$15 (spaghetti) to \$32 (lamb).



The Hanger Steak (\$22) at CineBistro. STAFF PHOTO / NICK ADAMS

For people looking for something to hold onto in the dark, sandwich options include burgers, a salmon BLT and fried chicken. Each sandwich is priced around 15 bucks and includes regular or sweet potato fries. In honor of the parent company, there's the Cobb salad (\$15.75), plus a kale salad (\$11) and Italian chopped salad (\$13.).

Save room for dessert and there are several options, including a killer cheesecake. It's house made cheesecake, with caramelized fresh bananas, pretzel crust and a dulce de leche and cinnamon cream. I'm not even a big fan of bananas but seriously considered going up for a second helping of this treat.

Speaking of treats, if you've got an old school sweet tooth, CineBistro does serve candy classics like Raisinets, Reese's Pieces and Twizzlers. Traditionalists will also take comfort in knowing the cinema still serves popcorn, with complimentary refills for \$8. All your favorite Coca-Cola products are available as well.



A display of the craft cocktails at CineBistro. STAFF PHOTO / NICK ADAMS

For many, though, the biggest draw at CineBistro will be the formidable craft cocktail selection. Blocks of ice made in-house cool innovative concoctions of gin, tequila and Scotch. From martini glasses, patrons can sip equally alluring drinks built around vodka, rum and bourbon. Premium margaritas and mojitos are also on the menu. The wine and beer list might not wow connoisseurs but even snobs should be fine with, say, a Meiomi pinot noir or Sierra Nevada.

Plus, it sure beats a night at the movies spent sneaking sips from tall boys or mini liquor bottles.

CineBistro at Westfield Southgate

3501 S Tamiami Trail, Sarasota; 941-361-2456; cinebistro.com/sarasota

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