

RESTAURANTS

MINI-REVIEW



MICHAEL MULVEY/Staff Photographer

Julie Conerly shows some of Sweet Basil's specialties, including snapper with shrimp.

Seafood shines at Italian spot

DEPENDABLE NEIGHBOR: Sweet Basil is an ideal restaurant for quick or lingering meals. Service is unobtrusive, the dining rooms are quiet enough for conversation but not intimidating to families and the food is consistently excellent. For more than a decade, the restaurant has been an oasis among counter-service, fast-food and chain restaurants in the area.

COMFY, NOT STUFFY: There are two main seating areas, though we've also spied diners in the small bar near the entrance. Both dining rooms are cozy, with warm neutral walls as a backdrop to mirrors, dried flowers, platters and paintings. Look beneath the glass tabletops for fun Italian drawings, pictures and train tickets.

SEAFOOD STARTERS: Seafood dominates the appetizer menu: mussels, clams, shrimp. Calamari (\$5.95) was lightly breaded and fried, served piping hot. A fresh, chunky tomato sauce complemented the tiny rings of chewy squid. Even better were crab claws (\$7.95), though we wished for a larger serving. The meaty claws were drowning in a flawless creamy butter sauce flavored with cit-

SWEET BASIL ★★★½

Food ★★★½

Service ★★★

Atmosphere ★★★

Price: \$\$ (dinner entrees

\$7.95-\$15.95)

Address: 17610 Midway, Dallas

Phone: 972-733-1500

Hours: Lunch Monday-Friday 11

a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Saturday 11

a.m. to 4 p.m. Dinner

Monday-Thursday 5 to 10 p.m.,

Saturday 4 to 10:30 p.m., Sunday 5

to 9 p.m.

Credit cards: AE, DC, MC, V

Wheelchair access: Yes

Smoking section: Bar only

Alcohol: Full bar

rus, garlic, white wine and minced parsley.

SOUP'S ON: Dinners include a cup of soup or house salad. Soups on our visit were minestrone and cream of potato. While too salty, the minestrone was redeemed by a good mix of tomato, zucchini, carrot, onion, celery and pinto beans. Creamy potato soup was worth every calorie: Each spoonful was velvety, flavored with butter, cream and potato.

CHOOSE YOUR PASTA: A dozen pasta dinners include butterfly pasta with basil (\$9.95), lasagna (\$9.95) and fettuccine with Bolognese sauce (\$8.95).

Our spaghetti Bolognese (\$8.95) included a generous serving of the fresh, well-seasoned meat sauce. Ravioli (\$8.95) was more complex. Ricotta and fresh basil overpowered bits of chicken, all enclosed in al dente pasta and topped with a pumpkin-colored creamy tomato sauce.

EVEN HEARTIER OPTIONS:

The menu also includes chicken, beef and seafood entrees served with sides of pasta. In scallopine al limone (\$13.95), one of three veal dinners, three thin veal slices and fresh mushrooms top a bed of fresh wilted spinach, all covered with a tangy lemon butter sauce. A creamy tomato sauce dressed a side mix of shells, rotini and rigatoni. Other dinners include chicken with artichokes and mushrooms (\$11.95) and grilled pork chops (\$13.95).

SPECIAL SNAPPER: On one visit, the special was broiled red snapper (\$15.99). The simply spiced fish was topped with a tasty fried crab cake. Angel hair pasta with butter garlic sauce filled out the plate. Grilled shrimp and grilled salmon (both \$13.95) are always on the menu.

Tyra Damm