

MORE ENTERTAINMENT



MARCH 6
AIR SUPPLY

MARCH 8
NAHKO & MEDICINE FOR
THE PEOPLE & TWIDDLE

MARCH 14
PUDDLE OF MUDD

MARCH 17
THE YOUNG DUBLINERS

MARCH 20
GRACE POTTER

MARCH 30 & 31
BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL

APRIL 11
FRANK
CALIENDO

APRIL 18
TODD SNIDER WITH DAVID LINDLEY

APRIL 20
TECH N9NE

APRIL 21
CYPRESS HILL

MORE FUN. MORE VALUE. MORE VARIETY.
Visit www.montbleuresort.com or call 1-800-BE-LUCKY for event details.
Must be 21 or older to attend and gamble. Montbleu reserves all rights.



MONTBLEU
RESORT CASINO & SPA
LAKE TAHOE

FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Nik-n-Willie's the Lowe Down is a take on Hawaiian pizza with mandarin oranges.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Top it off

Nik-n-Willie's Pizza and Deli is the epitome of a neighborhood, family-operated establishment. The interior is no frills. The staff is friendly and efficient, and they've been serving up pizza, calzones, chicken wings, hot and cold sandwiches, salads and a daily rotation of soups since 1992.

Pizzas and slabs of garlic bread are offered either cooked in-house or as take-and-bake, with zero sales tax and a discounted price. A couple of picnic tables on the patio are bordered with a banner stating "Dining Room." A placard on each napkin dispenser reads, "Friends don't let friends eat franchise pizza. A pizza a week is all we ask."

We took advantage of the Sunday "large pizza for the price of a medium" special, beginning with a Big Nik-N-Wild Willie's combo (regularly \$22.50, \$18.25 special). The red sauce was solid, with discernible herbs and garlic. The pie included Italian sausage, ham, salami, pepperoni, mushroom, black olive, bell pepper, onion, tomato and mozzarella, with the noted option of anchovies. Yes, please. The heady power of anchovy made its presence known amid the cavalcade of toppings. The flavors were great, but the thin crust wasn't baked long enough to hold up under its burden. Chewy rather than crispy, it required careful, two-handed maneuvering to lessen topping loss. I mused it could have used a bit more oven time, a notion borne out when I reheated leftovers the next day.

The Lowe Down (regularly \$19.50, \$15.70 special) was red sauce and mozzarella with smoked deli ham, pineapple and Mandarin oranges. Though not a fan of sweet stuff on pizza, a bite including both fruits was surprisingly satisfying. Something about bringing citrus to the pineapple party elevated the experience.

Topping distribution could have been better, with the center of the pie getting most of the action.

Garlic Chicken Dijon sounded good, but we opted for Garlic Chicken Extreme (regularly \$22.50, \$18.25 special). It's the same pie, with a cream cheese white sauce (almost Alfredo) in place of mustard. It featured diced, not-too-dry chicken breast, red onion, garlic, basil, tomato and Parmesan, though it suffered from the same toppings placement as the Lowe Down. The garlic was very present in one of the better white pizza sauces I've tasted. A Mediterranean (regularly \$22.50, \$18.25 special) came with fresh spinach laid atop red sauce, covered by three cheeses, garlic, green olive, pepperoncini, feta cheese, tomato and oregano. The ingredients were great together, and the pie tied for "best of meal" with the anchovy combo.

A dozen oven-baked chicken wings (\$12.50) were said to be available in "medium, or mild" with a choice of ranch or bleu cheese dressings. There were no celery or carrot sticks—but, for baked wings, these were about as good as you're going to get. Not terribly crispy, but not outright rubbery. Their "medium" was seriously mild to me, but I like my wings hot.

One of our dining crew has a meatball sub fixation (\$6.99), and this one was pretty good. It came with zesty, plentiful spheres of ground meat, chunky sauce and browned mozzarella on a soft French roll. I was tempted to order a Philly cheese steak calzone, but that'll have to wait. On a future visit, I'd definitely go with take-and-bake to render that chewy crust properly crispy. □

Nik-n-Willie's Pizza and Deli

1485 Geiger Grade Road, 851-4400

Nik-n-Willie's is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Learn more at pizzanik.com.