

Order up Some Barbecue

Wood Ranch BBQ & Grill serves dishes with smoky flavor and plenty of other dishes, too

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CORONA - Let's face it, barbecue is America's food. No matter where you go in this country, there will be barbecue. It kind of ranks up there with Mom, apple pie and, well, you know the rest.

While purists may single out those mom-and-pop-run operations for highest praise, there's still something to be said for those solid, chain restaurants that solidly contribute to the world of 'cue.

Here in the Southland, a barbecue chain that's been around for 15 years is Wood Ranch BBQ & Grill. There is one Inland location in Corona, which opened last June in The Promenade Shops at Dos Lagos, and one set to open in Chino Hills this summer.



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Wood Ranch BBQ & Grill kitchen manager Carlos Magana, left, and managing partner Brandy VanDerbeck, with dishes from the Corona restaurant, which is open and airy, with lots of wood, stone and glass in its decor.

The restaurant has the usual starters, including potato skins, chicken tenders and Buffalo wings. We tried the shredded onions, \$6.50, a mound of thinly sliced fried onions that came with ranch dressing. They were good but slightly greasy.

Wood Ranch offers a variety of salads (tri tip, BBQ chopped, Greek and Caesar among them), more than I anticipated in a BBQ joint. Some are a few dollars cheaper at lunchtime; others are available as half orders.

Lunch-sized entrees, \$9.95- \$13.95, are smaller and less expensive than their dinner counterparts and feature several of the house specialties (like barbecue chicken, tri tip, beef ribs and babyback ribs).

There's also a variety of burgers and sandwiches, at regular menu prices of \$9.95-\$12.95, and include a barbecue tri tip sandwich, roasted chicken salad sandwich and a portobello mushroom burger.



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Dinner entrees include Wood Ranch's signature barbecue meats and ribs, all slow-roasted for up to 18 hours and grilled to order over a mesquite wood fire. They include the tri tip, \$17.95; full platter of babyback ribs, \$21.95; and several combo platters. Entrees come with two side dishes.

I ordered the tri tip lunch special, \$13.95. The meat was tender and lean, with that signature smoky, mesquite flavor. The sauce was complementary to the meat, not overpowering.

The 11-ounce baseball cut top sirloin, \$19.95, was excellent, my son said. He ordered it medium rare and it arrived perfectly cooked, he said, juicy and tender.

Wood Ranch has 14 side dishes. We sampled the potato salad, peanut coleslaw, and mac and cheese. The potato salad was kind of bland and unexciting, but the peanut coleslaw was excellent. The mac and cheese was creamy and cheesy.

Service was very good during our lunchtime visit. The restaurant was not very crowded when we dined. Our waitress was quick, efficient and friendly.

I immediately liked the interior of Wood Ranch. There's lots of wood, stone and glass, it reminded me of a comfortable and relaxed ranch house. It's light, open and airy, with roomy booths, a bar with a huge mirrored wall, and a bank of windows that look out on the patio.