

# EYES ON THE PIES

BY MICHAEL CERVIN, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

March 4, 2011 7:23 AM

*Michael Cervin serves as a judge in food and wine competitions throughout California. His writing also appears in Decanter, Wine Enthusiast and Santa Barbara Magazine.*

## Simply Pies

5392 Hollister Ave.  
845-2200  
simplypiessb.com

Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday

Ever since man has searched for food, one fundamental question has plagued him: How do we fill our pie hole?

**Answer: Go to Simply Pies.**

Located inside a converted residence for the last year, Simply Pies has expanded from its original formula of pies and cheesecake to offer lunch and other savory items, though pies still reign supreme. Most customers get their pot pies, quiches, fruit pies and cheesecakes to go, but there are six indoor tables if you want to eat on location.

The bakers use organic ingredients and can accommodate gluten- and sugar-free options as well.

Though the five iterations of quiche can be sold by the slice, considering the price breakdown, you may as well opt for the six-inch pie for a few dollars more. The Vegetable Medley (\$5/slice, \$8.99 6-inch) is loaded with carrots, broccoli and zucchini, within a soft and plush egg mixture, accented by mild pepper and basil notes. The veggies are nicely cooked, and their flavors are excellent.

The Organic Chicken Pot Pie (\$6.99) has chunks of chicken, peas and carrots, seasoned with thyme and parsley in a creamy sauce, which allows the ingredients to each stand out. By their nature, pot pies are not complex creations, but a balance between the crust and freshness of the ingredients is key, and Simply Pies succeeds on both fronts.

The Bacon & Leek Quiche (\$8.99) has both a strong pepper, bacon and leek component, all set in a smooth egg mix, giving it a creamy texture. The key element to these foods is the crust, which Simply Pies has painstakingly created in gluten-free versions, and which the common diner probably wouldn't be able to detect.

The Candied Pecan & Goat Cheese Salad (\$6.50) is a simple salad of mixed greens, topped with dried and sweetened cranberries, candied pecans and cheese. It came with Gruyere, as they ran out of goat cheese on this particular day. All this is mixed with balsamic vinaigrette and fresh-infused basil. This is a basic but flavorful salad, though the goat cheese would have added another textural dimension.

Moving into the sweet realm, the Mixed Berry Pie (\$4/slice) uses locally grown blackberries and blueberries, which retain a potent but slightly sweet taste, and also that wild briary flavor that comes from berries grown organically. The crust certainly has a noticeable presence, but it's mainly a vehicle to feature the fruit.

The Pumpkin Cheesecake (\$7.99) is a treat, a creamy pumpkin slice on a graham cracker crust that is decadently moist and soft. Even if pumpkin is not your thing, the spices here are mild enough to make it palatable for everyone. The contrast with the crisp crust and the plush cheesecake is illuminating.

Simply Pies bakes up its own muffins, as well, like the Blueberry (\$2.25) and Lemon Poppy Seed (\$2.25), to go with organic tea or coffee. The blueberry is made with buttermilk to create a slightly thicker cake, and the topping is not sprinkled with any sugar; it's sweet enough as is. The lemon and poppy seed notes are both prevalent, and this is a denser muffin than most around the city. The shop offers daily selections



THREE FRUIT PIELETS  
Thomas Kelsey Photos



MIXED BERRY PIE



CANDIED PECAN & GOAT CHEESE SALAD

of gluten-free pies and quiches, and has frozen pie shells of all kinds, each with specific baking instructions. Frozen take-and-bake pot pies and fruit pies are available here as well.

**High Points**

Perfectly executed and flavorful food in pie form, Simply Pies is baking simply wonderful creations. Its cheesecakes, pot pies and fruit pies are standouts.

**Low Points**

Though you can't fault them for quality control, a custom-ordered cheesecake takes 48 hours, so if you're in a rush, you might consider something else.

**FOOD:** \*\*\*\*

**SERVICE:** \*\*\* ½ (Table)

**TOTAL RATING:** \*\*\*\*, \$

**RESTAURANT REVIEW PARAMETERS**

Michael Cervin dines at each restaurant at least two times before writing his reviews. Factors considered in the "Food" rating can include flavor, freshness and presentation. Factors in the "Service" rating can include attentiveness, cleanliness and accessibility.

Ratings: \*\*\*\*\* Excellent; \*\*\*\* Very good; \*\*\* Good; \*\* Fair; \* Poor

Cost: \$\$\$\$ = Expensive (more than \$29 per dinner entrée)

\$\$\$ = Moderate (\$20 to \$28)

\$\$ = Inexpensive (\$13 to \$19)

\$ = Cheap (less than \$12)