

DINING: CHEAP & CHIC

LEAFING OUT *Greenz's daring salad-only concept hits Uptown* BY HARRY BOWMAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUG HOPFER

Greenz, with its trendy spelling and tightly-focused concept, opened several months ago in the wilds of Uptown. Located in the middle of one of McKinney Avenue's busiest blocks, it comes almost as a surprise. It seems too cool, too cozy and too laid-back for its location. It is the sort of urban oasis you'd expect to find in New York's SoHo or TriBeCa. The place is small but nicely turned out in decor that is both pristine and pastel. Soft lavender walls, sea-foam green chairs and light hardwood flooring offer a muted look broken only by a trio of brightly colored modern art. The outdoor seating area, larger than the one indoors, is a beautifully bricked patio. The space is tree-shaded and seems to be far enough removed from the street so that conversation won't be an idle effort.

Greenz describes the fare as "salads for Z'adventurous" (there's that mutant Z again) and it manages to live up to that claim. It offers a dozen salads and three soups. The menu, painted on a board at the front counter, has a dual personality. On one side are selections geared to the vegetarian, on the other are offerings for the determined carnivore. But the menu is not as limited as it may first appear. Meat can be added to almost any of the veggie items, and nearly any salad can be made into a wrap. Just place your order and take a seat. Your food is brought to your table.

We took advantage of the wrap option with the chipotle chicken (\$7.95) and were glad we did. The oversized creation was literally bursting with greens, tomatoes, jack cheese, toasted pecans and what had to be a quarter-pound of smoked chicken; it was accompanied by crisp tortilla chips.

A slathering of peppery chipotle cream provided subtle heat. Even better was the pairing of pears and goat cheese (\$7.95). Diced and spiced pears contrasted nicely with chunks of creamy white, lushly tart chevre. These were combined with mixed greens and sliced strawberries and bathed in a wonderfully semi-sweet vinaigrette. The ubiquitous Caesar offering (\$6.95) was pumped-up by the addition of sun-dried tomatoes, herbed croutons and a large, lacy parmesan wafer. That steakhouse staple, the Wedge (\$6.95) was... well, impressive. A quarter head

of iceberg lettuce was topped with crumbled bacon, large bits of gorgonzola and tomatoes then doused in Roquefort dressing. To make it a little heartier, I had cubes of steak added to mine. It was worth the \$2.50 extra. Unfortunately, both the Caesar and Wedge salads were so overdressed that it was impossible to get beyond it to taste anything other than what had, I suspect, been poured from a bottle.

Of the three soups—asparagus, tortilla and pesto (\$2.50 cup, \$3.75 bowl)—the only one tried was the tortilla and was very pleasing. It was spicy and thick with plump wedges of avocado to curb the ancho chile heat. Available but not tried were salads (or wraps) with classic greens, tofu, shrimp, apple and walnuts, tuna and something called BBQ Texas slaw, which sounds interesting. It would be nice if Greenz would devise a sampler plate containing mini-versions of two or three of its entrée salads. It would certainly be welcomed by the terminally indecisive. And it would give us merely curious folks an opportunity to taste without buying the whole enchilada, as they say.

Greenz does a thriving take-out business. Service was helpful and the personnel takes time to explain the routine to first-time diners. After our order was placed, the food arrived quickly. If you're rushed at lunch, Greenz would be a good choice; it's an easy in-and-out in under 45 minutes. The downside to all this, as is the case in most of Uptown, is the parking. The situation was described to me by the cashier as "challenging." He could not have been more succinct. Finding a place on the street can be daunting, especially at lunch time and in the evening. There are a few places nearby underground, but most of these belong to apartment tenants in the eight-story building that looms over the block. Park with care there. But Uptown regulars are used to inconveniences of this kind. Greenz is worth exploring. ☐

Greenz, 2808 McKinney Ave., 214.720.7788, Mon.-Sat.11AM-9PM

