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Canyon Road Steak House

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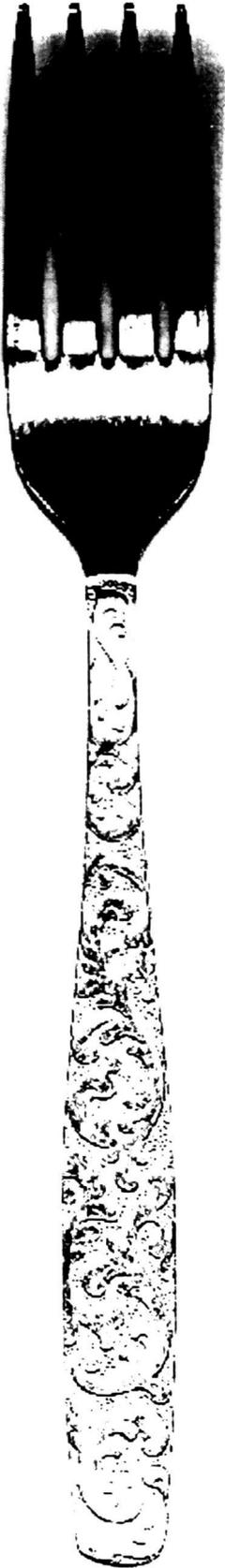
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REVIEWS...

Canyon Road Steak House

BY VIKIA. PETTJOHN

It was a late winter evening, early evening, when my friends and I arrived at Canyon Road Steak House in Hydro. One member of the party almost lost a good shoe in the muddy slush in the parking area; snow still lay on the margins of the lot, and the waitresses were bemoaning the fact that the Christmas lights outside would not come on. No one wanted to do battle with the lights because of the possibility of shock. I could not help thinking of the difference in the appearance of the steak house at that moment compared to the lazy late spring and early summer evenings when wildflowers border the lot and rabbits frolic around the edges of the canyon itself. In the summer hummingbirds come to the jewel-like nectar in the feeders on the porch, and one can hear all manner of birdsong. It is precisely the restaurant's location out from town, perched on the edge of the canyon, that gives the place its distinctive flavor, and draws local regulars along with curious travelers in a constant stream.

We were promptly seated downstairs that evening where we could see the vestiges of snow on the grassy area outside the window; the trees were dense even in their bareness just beyond a fence on the rim of the canyon. Inside the diners are always surrounded with homey, country decor—a deer head, pelts, a black iron stove, an old saw with a design painted on it, a chuck wagon ladle, old crocks, and a coal oil lamp. A huge saddle hangs suspended over one part of the dining area downstairs; silver belt buckles won at playdays and other similar events, paintings of windmills, colorful bits of rug—perhaps Indian—and cow skulls remind the traveler that this is, indeed, *Western* Oklahoma.

The management also adds seasonal embellishments, such as the Christmas lights, and that Friday evening saw an unusual fusion of Christmas poinsettias, angel hair, and red ribbons with the Valentine's touch of red vases containing satin hearts at each table. This reviewer had a similar reluctance to relinquish the remaining signs of a well-loved festive season, and a real joy at anticipating the next holiday, so the mix

was pleasing to my eye. Besides, all the red went well with the red bandana napkins!

Fortunately, the service at Canyon Road is attentive but not stifling. The members of our group ordered broiled quail, steak, chicken fajitas, and grilled pork chops. The steak was pronounced tender, as were the pork chops, the latter being a bit bland, however, for one customer. The chicken fajitas had an interesting savory seasoning, and the quail was positively succulent. In fact, I would go frequently to the restaurant strictly for the quail. All members of the party said that the baked potatoes were large, firm, and appropriately mealy—an improvement over a previous experience with a less than satisfactory potato. One misses the twice-baked potato of the past as another potato alternative, but the fries are fine for non-baked potato lovers. We did not try the chicken-fried steak, but reports suggest a more than respectable entry from Canyon Road in the race for the ultimate chicken fry.

Our meal was unhurried, relaxing, and filling. We had coffee and watched night falling about us. I remembered a previous outing when I had watched squirrels coming at dusk to the feeders, but I knew nothing along that line would happen on such a cold, slushy night. We paid the bill, got into the car, and drove up the dirt track which leads back to the paved road. In the gloom I suddenly noticed movement along the edges of the trail. Three little brown rabbits had come out to play after all. The sight of them was better than dessert, and it reminded me that you always get a bonus at Canyon Road Steak House. ■

Hold The Pickles

BY MELISSA BRUNER

It is June. Saturday afternoon sounds—lawnmowers buzzing, basketballs thumping, children laughing and splashing in a neighborhood pool—drift into your backyard with the occasional cool breeze. And from your backyard drifts that smell, the ultimate smell of summer: the grilling of hamburgers. And as that smell reaches your next door neighbor, she speculates and wonders, hoping to guess your secret. Is it the marinade? Seasoning salt? Special charcoal? And throughout the summer, as smells of distant burgers drift into your own backyard, you will try to guess the secrets of your neighbor. Is it the grind of the meat? The brand of the grill? For, as all creators and consumers of burgers know, there is always a secret involved in the production of a truly good burger.

Busy lifestyles, vacations, and change of season often force the quest for the perfect burger from the backyard to the restaurant. A fast-food, chain store burger may eliminate physical hunger, but presents no pleasant challenge to the consumer. We may wonder about the ingredients of such a burger, but will probably be happier if we don't know. A good burger, a burger worth traveling for, leaves the consumer trying to guess the creators secrets. Two Oklahoma restaurants that have achieved burger excellence are Murphy's in Bartlesville, and the Meers Store in Meers.

As you pull into the parking lot at Murphy's, you see nothing that brags of great burgers or great prices. There is nothing flashy about Murphy's. The building is plain and old, with only one tall sign to announce its presence. When you walk into the building, you usually have to take a seat in the small, crowded waiting area; if it's after 6:00 on any night of the week, especially Saturday, you will have to stand. If you are alone, or if you are with a friend, you'll probably get a seat at the counter fairly quickly. If you have a large group, you'll have to wait for one of the big corner booths. There is no hostess to put your name on a list or to guide you to your seat: waiting customers keep track of who's next, and the person closest to the doorway usually announces vacant booths or seats at the counter.