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I'm a calorie counter. But not having the option of knowing how many calories are in my turkey burger or side of vinaigrette is a professional hazard when you spend time reviewing restaurants.

So when I opened the menu at the Soma Cafe and found the protein, fat, fiber, carbohydrate and calorie content listed with just about every item, I let out a huge sigh of relief. Finally someone has caught on and is kind enough to tell me, the customer, what I'm about to put into my body.

Although I was happy that the nutritional information was at hand, I assumed that would mean an array of bland dishes. As I sipped my iced tea, I envisioned boring alfalfa sprouts on an even more boring slab of bread. Or something like that. I pictured a slew of salads served with corn and low-fat ranch dressing.

But the tasteless menu I anticipated was far from the reality. Instead, I found whole-wheat flat bread "pizas," sandwiches, burgers and wraps. There were banana pancakes, turkey-bacon and egg breakfast wraps, and green salads such as the edamame pasta salad and seared ahi tuna salad. And for dinner, there was pork tenderloin in ginger plum sauce, lean caramelized beef tenderloin or New York prime strip.

The restaurant is a new addition to the Newport Coast shopping center just off the San Joaquin Hills (73) Toll Road in Newport Coast, and is the second Soma Cafe in the country. The first was opened more than two years ago near Phoenix, and the third will open later this year in Laguna Beach. Soma's innovative menu, created by a team of doctors, nutritionists and professional trainers, might be made for athletes, but at Soma, everyone, from the person who takes brisk daily walks to an Olympian, is considered an athlete.

Along with the full-menu restaurant, there is a coffee and smoothie bar. If you're not craving a meal, you can choose from healthy-minded pastries or bowls full of fresh berries and/or melon.

The children's menu at Soma, dubbed "Future Athletes," proves that children aren't an afterthought here. It includes chicken strips and pancakes, but the chicken strips are baked, not fried, and the pancakes are made with whole-wheat flour. The cheese "pizza" is made with whole-wheat flat bread and the grilled cheese sandwich is made with whole-grain bread and cheddar cheese.

After carefully scanning the menu, and adding and dividing the calories in menu items, I finally settled on the lettuce wraps appetizer, and the grilled salmon sandwich for my entree. (Together, the dishes totaled 517 calories and about 12 grams of fat).

The wraps were some of the best I've had. Tender slices of chicken were mixed with dainty snow peas, toasted almonds, cucumber slices, red onions and shredded carrots. The mixture was served inside a delicate piece of iceberg lettuce and topped with a tangy, kick-to-it vinaigrette, made with ginger and rice vinegar.

The grilled salmon sandwich was served in the whole-wheat flat bread, which is made from scratch daily at Soma. A thick strip of fresh salmon came with arugula, tomato and red onion.

After this meal, I popped into Soma for the next two days. My friends and I tried the grilled pineapple "pizza," which comes on that hearty whole-wheat flat bread and is topped with a tangy tomato sauce, low-fat mozzarella, grilled chicken, pineapple and red onions. (For six decent-size slices, you're looking at about 600 calories and 7 grams of fat.)

We also tried the soy balsamic portobello chicken pasta (which was a little heavy on the marinade but good nonetheless). The whole-wheat pasta comes with generous portions of marinated portobello mushrooms, artichoke hearts and roasted bell peppers. The pasta was mixed with fresh basil and olive oil. The entire serving is just over 700 calories, and is so generous, it could feed three people.

My next visit to Soma was for breakfast. My regular latte was joined by a turkey bacon, egg and cheese breakfast wrap (once again, wrapped in a fresh, warm whole-wheat roll). My only complaint: It was good but slightly dry, and I needed much, much more of their fresh salsa.

My only regret in visiting Soma Cafe is that it spoiled me terribly. Whenever I eat at another restaurant, I crave knowing how many grams of fat and carbohydrates will be in the dish I order.

But maybe Soma's way is a sign of good things to come. Maybe eateries everywhere will start to change their menus to include nutritional information, and restaurant patrons will no longer have to eat in blissful ignorance. Until that day comes, Soma has you tastefully covered.

① TELLS A PERSONAL ANECDOTE TO INTRODUCE THE REVIEW

② GIVES AN OVERVIEW OF THE MENU

③ SHARES THE RESTAURANT'S HISTORY

④ DISCUSSES THE CHILDREN'S MENU

⑤ DESCRIBES IN DETAIL A SPECIFIC MEAL SHE ATE

⑥ DETAILS OTHER VISITS AND THE DIFFERENT DISHES SHE TRIED ON THESE VISITS

⑦ DISCUSSES A REGRET

⑧ CONCLUDES WITH A POSITIVE THESIS STATEMENT

Figure 4.1 Chunked restaurant review