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Lunch break: Scion in Dupont Circle



Scion boasts a warm, casual dining room and a comfortable bar area. There's also a patio for dining. (Photos By James M. Thresher)



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By Justin Rude
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Lunch is a meal of habits: We wear paths to and from the same places, rarely straying to explore. It's an understandable behavior: With only so much break time, why risk an unexpectedly long meal or disappointed clients?

But the thing is, most neighborhoods have a few places that are good bets for lunch - and don't cost too much more than that same old Cosi salad.

In Dupont Circle, Scion is such a place. It boasts a warm, casual dining room and comfortable bar area, and its lunch menu presents homey American cuisine with a few Asian accents. Turkey meatloaf shares a page with curry rockfish and a panini Caprese. During the summer, a patio and atrium dining area offers al fresco eating along P Street.

On the menu: Scion is a good choice for lunchers interested in sharing small plates. The starters list is home to a number of the menu's brightest spots. Anything fried is a safe bet: Vegetable spring rolls, rock shrimp tempura, fried pickles and herb garlic fries all satisfy. One option drapes sweet potato chips with bacon and a blue cheese and Buffalo sauce dressing. I could have handled more heat, but what spice there was paired well with the natural sweetness of the chips. Initial skepticism due to the slightly gray color of the edamame hummus melted away when the marriage of boiled soy beans and chickpeas turned out to be a smooth and mild success. Scion's burger, topped with smoked mozzarella, sauteed onions, fried pickles and homemade ketchup, stands as one of

the best in the neighborhood and could aspire to greater accolades if it had a more worthy bun. A lobster Reuben sandwich sounds interesting, but the sweet lobster meat gets a bit lost under the sauerkraut and Thousand Island dressing. Lobster fares better in the LBJ mac and cheese, which isn't a tribute to a former president but a list of ingredients: lobster, bacon and jalapenos.

At your service: Though we were seated in prompt order, service at a recent lunch was more friendly than fast. It wasn't quite inattentive, but I was glad I didn't have to worry about rushing back to my desk that day.

The scene: Quiet earlier in the week, the lunch crowd at Scion picks up as the weekend gets closer. The casual dining room and friendly staff make it a good spot for meeting friends or having a rather informal working lunch. If your day allows, the drink list will be a hit for beer lovers in your party. Vegetarians will have better luck picking from the starters list than from the relatively meat-heavy entrees.

After lunch: From 4 to 7 p.m., Scion offers its burger or a panini with any happy-hour beer, wine or rail drink selection for \$10.

Bottom line: The burger leads the menu, but there are plenty of other bright spots, making Scion a good lunch option for those who work nearby.

If You Go

Scion 2100 P St. NW. 202-833-8899.

Hours: Monday-Thursday 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m.-midnight; Saturday 10 a.m.-midnight; Sunday 10 a.m.-midnight.

Prices: Starters \$3.95-\$8.50. Entrees \$8.95-\$19.95.

Takeout: Yes.

Wheelchair access: Yes.