

of thick, rich vegetable stew enriched with ground meat and topped with a big scoop of chunky mashed potatoes. As we drew positive parallels to the Chunky-brand vegetable beef soup we remembered from childhood, I began to wish that it was winter and that I was 8 years old again. The pie came with two slices of Irish soda bread, which was flavorful, dense, and much more moist than I expected it to be when I put it in my mouth. I slathered some butter on the next bite, and became even more aware of the fact that Irish food was meant to fuel a hardworking person through a full day's activity.

Then I swore to myself I'd run some laps or get a job as a farmer.

Desserts are made in-house, and our "strawberry cream with chocolate chip" pie was an interesting departure from the rest of the meal. I ordered it out of sheer curiosity, and while the flavors are compatible, hard chocolate chips in chilled cream pie filling was a little odd.

Madra Rua also offers live Irish music, a "food and beverage" night for folks who work in the business, and a jazz brunch on their back patio on Sundays. I hope it's still running in the fall when the weather cools off, both the outdoors and the food will be perfect. **CP**