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Tropical Smoothie Cafe

On Wednesday, September 19, I was feeling tired and rundown from having class all day. I was especially hungry because I did not have breakfast that morning. Nothing sounded good to me, until I realized there was a Tropical Smoothie Cafe on campus. I visited the Tropical Smoothie on the Old Dominion University campus, located by the intersection of 43rd Street and Monarch Way. Tropical Smoothie Cafe is a small, yet fast growing restaurant chain that serves many different types of foods and smoothies. Although there are many things that Tropical Smoothie does right, it especially excels at having fresh ingredients, great customer service, low prices, and a simple, yet relaxing venue.

One of the most recognizable things about Tropical Smoothie is that it uses fresh ingredients; you can even watch the workers make your smoothie right in front of you. Also, because of all the ingredients they use, they not only have smoothies, but they also have wraps, sandwiches, flatbreads, bowls, and breakfast items. When you walk into a Tropical Smoothie, the first thing you will see is the menu. The menu is well organized, having sections of certain

smoothies (classic, seasonal, supercharged, etc.) and different food items. Not only this, but each menu item comes with the calorie count and a list of ingredients used in it. You can also customize your order such as removing an item that you do not want, specifying your order, or adding ingredients, although this costs extra. For example, if you order the Mocha Madness smoothie (a smoothie that contains coffee, cappuccino, chocolate, and non-fat yogurt) , you can either make it a decaf or a regular and specify what kind of sugar you want it in. If you wanted to, you could also ask the workers more about the ingredients used in something to learn more about it; however, I would not suggest this if there is a long line. Nevertheless, Tropical Smoothie is known for using fresh ingredients in all of their items. Because of this, they are one of the few healthier restaurants. After having Chick-Fil-A so many times on campus, it is refreshing to get anything on the menu since all of it is relatively healthy. This is especially important to many students, especially college students because they are constantly going to class and sometimes having to work or participating in other activities on top of school and as a result, will end up going to many fast food restaurants, hence the term “Freshman 15,” referring to how many freshmen in college gain weight due to only eating out. However, with Tropical Smoothie, this problem is essentially gone, and you do not have to worry about what you are putting into your body and can actually feel good about it.

Every time I have gone to this Tropical Smoothie, I've received great service. Sometimes orders do take some time to make, but it is a small price to pay knowing that everything is made fresh. However, other than that, I have had nothing but good experiences. The workers are always nice and polite to everyone, but especially to students since it is a popular place to hang out and study while eating. I have only gone to this Tropical Smoothie location several times, but after the first time I went, the cashier recognized me as having come in a few days prior. The third time I went, the cashier surprisingly remembered my name and because I ordered the same thing the previous times I visited, he also remembered my order correctly. He also made small talk with me, talking about how he genuinely enjoys his job. This shocked me a bit, as I know many people who work at restaurants on campus do not enjoy it, either because they have to deal with college students all day, or that they are college students themselves and are run-down and tired from school and work. However, it enlightened me to know that he enjoys his job because it shows that he cares and just wants to see people happy. Before I left, he thanked me for continually eating there. It was a small gesture, but the recognition made my day, and it also made me think of how more workers should do small things like that; even a small thank you could bring up a customer's mood and have them coming back.

One of my favorite things about Tropical Smoothie is the prices. Some of the items vary slightly, but the average price of a smoothie is roughly \$5.00, and a food item is about the same.

Not only is it cheap, but the portions you are getting are also relatively big. For example, a regular-sized smoothie at Tropical Smoothie is 24 fluid ounces (there is also a kid menu that has some smoothies at half this size.) In comparison, a \$5.00 grande vanilla bean frappuccino at Starbucks is 16 fluid ounces. This goes to show just how big the smoothies are, and they can easily fill you up for hours. The pricings and portion sizes are important to students because some people may not have the time to work, and thus may not have much money to be spending. Because of this, it can sometimes be hard to find a food establishment that has cheap and good food. However, Tropical Smoothie continues to hit the mark. Not only this, but they also frequently give out coupons. The first time I went to Tropical Smoothie, I received two coupons, each a dollar off of any of three new limited time smoothies (Pumpkin Chai, Chai, and Pumpkin Pie.) They have also established something called Flip Flop Day, where customers can receive a free smoothie if they show up wearing sandals. Not only does Tropical Smoothie have cheap prices, but they also sometimes offer free smoothies and coupons for even cheaper prices.

Another great thing about Tropical Smoothie is the decor. The store resembles a hut of some sort that you would find on a beach on some island, just like the name suggests. There is nothing necessarily eye-popping about the decor, but that is exactly what I personally love about it. The design is so simple, but yet gives off a relaxing atmosphere, just like a Starbucks would have. It is a perfect place to sit down after class and eat while studying or doing homework at the

same time. Also, it usually is not very packed in Tropical Smoothie, so it never feels crowded and is never too loud. Generally, the inside contains a few tables with several chairs and usually a counter area where several people can sit. Some locations are small on the inside, but sometimes there are tables placed outside as well. Whether you want to sit outside with friends and relax in the sun or sit inside the cool, air-conditioned restaurant, Tropical Smoothie gives you the option.

Combining the fresh ingredients, great service, low prices, and relaxing decor, it is no wonder why Tropical Smoothie Cafe surpasses many other restaurants. There are many great choices in terms of what to order, but I would recommend the Mocha Madness as a smoothie and the Chipotle Chicken Club as a food item. The Mocha Madness is great for any coffee lovers, or for if you just need something to wake you up. It's made with coffee, chocolate, cappuccino, and non-fat yogurt. The Chipotle Chicken Club is made with chicken, bacon, tomatoes, pepper jack cheese, and a spicy chipotle mayonnaise. If neither of those sound appealing, there are many different types of flavors Tropical Smoothie offers, from Asian to Caribbean to Italian. Whoever you are, there is something for you at Tropical Smoothie. If you or anyone you know comes across any of its locations, I would strongly recommend checking it out and giving it a try.