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Old Dominion University  
English 211/ CRN 11948  
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November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Monday/Wednesday- 7:10-8:25  
BAL 1005/1013C

### An Evaluation of Zöes Kitchen

Located on Eden Way North, Zöes Kitchen should be at the top of the list for affordable Mediterranean eateries in the area. No reservations needed, this kid friendly restaurant provides high quality, fresh meals that are sure to keep you coming back for more. A list of three to five criteria form the foundation for a pleasant experience at any business and Zöes Kitchen excels in each category. Such criteria include atmosphere, service and amenities, and most importantly quality and/or quantity in relation to price. Lacking in one or more of these crucial aspects has the potential to ruin a customer's dining experience and ensure that the individual will not return to the business. It all starts when the customer pulls up the building.

A private parking lot awaits with areas reserved in the front for pick-up orders. Entering the building, a partially walled off section of the room stands just in front of the door, leading the customer to the cashiers whom always seem to greet their guests with a smile and welcoming "hello". To the left of the wall is an open area complete with intimate two seated tables, one large party sized table, and various sized booths or tables to accommodate any number of people. Providing antique seating ensures enough room for any number of guests- from a small family to a larger gathering of friends. If the weather is favorable, covered seating is available outside as well. The walls are painted with vibrant, warm tones of oranges, yellows, reds, and greens which exude a casual, trendy ambiance. Exposed beams in the ceiling offer an interesting industrial touch to the space while windows scale two main walls, allowing plenty of natural light to shine

through. Yelp elite user, Chelsea M., provided a five-star review on the restaurant, claiming that “the place [is] very clean” and that it has “great atmosphere” (M., pg. 1). Every personal visit to this location has ended in satisfaction with the cleanliness and overall appearance of the restaurant. The tables rarely have debris left behind from other guests, the floors always seem to be spotless, and the bathrooms- though only single person use- are always well maintained. Cleanliness is crucial in the service industry- restaurants being one of the most important businesses to keep clean. A zero or one rating in cleanliness, given to a restaurant by an official health inspector, would ensure that the restaurant is closed until proper actions are taken to guarantee the cleanliness of the business; in most cases thousands of dollars in fines are in place for the violations as well (Coleman, par. 10). Customers want to ensure the safety of themselves and others in attendance when deciding on a restaurant. Zöes Kitchen’s clean dining area and the overall atmosphere of the business can put anyone’s mind at ease while customer service and amenities provided enhance the consumer’s experience.

Dealing with rude employees is difficult and tends to ruin an otherwise phenomenal experience. At Zöes Kitchen, however, employees are helpful and kind. Recommendations are always given upon request and food is served just as fast as any other sit-down fast food restaurant. Complications have the potential to arise in any business and Yelp user, Eva B., made her disdain for the restaurant perfectly clear with her one-star review that reads, “Very disappointed. I order my food online hours in advance. This is the second time its [sic] not ready. I have to come here and wait 10 extra mins for them to do there [sic] job...,” however, it is important to understand that a few isolated incidences should not sway a customer to any extreme side of like or dislike (B., pg. 1). Many factors play into the timely completion of meal prep- including, but not limited to multitasking, the complication or customization of the order,

the order in which the customer's food demands were received, and whether the meal itself simply needs more time to prepare. That does not excuse every incidence in which food was not ready on time. As anyone who has worked retail, or some form of customer service will agree, it is completely understandable that there are many different things that need to get done and on occasion things will not get done right or quickly. Patience and understanding go a long way and that is exactly what the staff at Zöes Kitchen have given to their customers. As a vegetarian, with food allergies, ordering food in any restaurant may become difficult. Employees take the time to explain the ingredients of a dish as well as how the symbols on the menu represent certain diet safe meals. What Zöes Kitchen does that goes above and beyond other mid-priced fast food restaurants such as Chipotle, is that their menus provide a breakdown of which items are vegan, vegetarian, and gluten free. These facts are depicted through symbols that are accompanied by a key which keeps the menu easy to read. Having these symbols as a part of their menu shows how much they care about accommodating a wider range of people who follow various diets. Unlike Chipotle, Zöes Kitchen also has an area at checkout that houses their classic snacks or appetizers in to-go packaging, such as hummus and veggies, or salads and wraps. Each snack is made fresh every day and labeled with the date to ensure that customers are aware of its expiration. Providing pre-made snacks also saves time for the customer and allows the employees to serve other customers faster which is a positive attribute to the business. While atmosphere and amenities are important to have, the food is truly what brings costumers back. At the end of the day, if the food isn't worth the money, the time, or the effort, customers will not be willing to return.

There are expensive restaurants that serve small, appetizer sized entries with plenty of flavor for hundreds of dollars. There are cheap restaurants that serve large portioned mediocre

meals for no more than five dollars. Then there are reasonably priced restaurants, like Zoës Kitchen that provide a full plate of food for anywhere from seven to eleven dollars. Eleven dollars can get a full sub from Subways, where they claim to swerve fresh food, but always seem to use ingredients that have been left out all day, or eleven dollars can get a made-from-scratch, hot meal. As noted on the website, Zoës Kitchen claims that “serving fresh, delicious food will always be at the heart of what [they] do” and the passion behind the meals served is noticeable (About Us, par. 1). Each dish received is beautifully plated and portions always seem to satisfy the customer. For the budget friendly price and fresh, flavorful food, Zoës Kitchen is the perfect place to grab a meal. Jasmin M., a Yelp critic frequenter, explains in her modest three-star review that the restaurant is “low budget fancy” which she adds is “an upgrade from fast food and worth a try” (B., pg. 1). She makes a very good point in that this restaurant truly is several levels higher from your everyday fast food chain such as Taco Bell or McDonalds which offer pre-made menu items that are slapped together and kept hot under heat lamps. Consumers are often looking to make the most out of their money and Zoës Kitchen is just what they’re looking for with high quality, low to mid-priced meals that are made quick and fresh with every order.

While a plethora of other Mediterranean eateries have still gone undiscovered, Zoës Kitchen holds a high ranking on the list of well-priced, high quality Mediterranean restaurants to visit. Not only is the interior design beautiful in a trendy, quirky way, but the team members do a fantastic job in making sure that the customer has a pleasant experience- whether that is through helpful meal recommendations or a simple warm and welcoming attitude. Plenty of parking, various table settings, and useful dietary symbols on the menus makes enjoying meals faster and easier. When all is said and done, it is the reasonable portion sizes, quality made-from-scratch meals, and low prices that keep this customer coming back for more.

## Work Cited

“About Us.” *About Us - Zoës Kitchen*, [zoeskitchen.com/about](http://zoeskitchen.com/about).

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