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This cup measures up

Midtown space has housed many diners, all of them memorable

After riding out some ups and downs over the past couple of years, the cup appears to be at least more than half full again at the Full Cup.

Many midtown diners know that the Full Cup is a cousin to Ruby's, which operated in the space for many years. Some even might remember that Ruby's was a direct descendant of Kay's, which opened almost 52 years ago just west of the Full Cup location.

Full Cup owner Kim Watkins bought the restaurant from Ruby Weathers (not the original Ruby) in 2006 but last year had to take a break from the eatery to have a baby.

"Some things happened while I was gone that really hurt a lot of customers," Watkins said. "But I'm back now, and Ruby has agreed to come back for a while too, to help set things right again."

Based on a recent, packed, all-ages post-church crowd, they must be doing something right.

One of us wanted breakfast and the other was ready for lunch, so we went both directions with the breakfast special of the day, pecan Belgian waffle (\$6.29), and a pot roast dinner (\$8.49)

The waffle was excellent, firm but not overcooked, and the two eggs that came with it were cooked to a perfect over-medium — whites cooked through with a slightly runny yolk. It also came with a tasty sausage patty, which our friendly server Mary told us was Jimmy Dean.

The slow-cooked, shredded roast beef was fork tender, and a mound of mashed potatoes and showed pieces of red skin. The beef and potatoes



The Big Country breakfast is a feast of chicken-fried steak, two eggs, hash browns and biscuits and gravy at Full Cup restaurant. JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World

FULL CUP

4634 E. 31st St.
745-2233

Food: American

Price: entrees, \$7.99 (chicken-fried steak) to \$14.95 (14-ounce sirloin steak); breakfasts, \$2.09 to \$8.29

Credit cards: MasterCard, Visa, Discover

Hours: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday-Monday, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday-Friday

Food: ★★★

Atmosphere: ★★

Service: ★★★

(One is fair, two good, three very good and four excellent.)

were covered in a brown gravy that had just enough salt to give it flavor. A side of fried okra was fine.

A big dinner roll was incredibly light and fluffy, but it also had a disturbing off-taste. The roll didn't seem at all greasy, but it had a flavor of something like old grease. I have a feeling that, for whatever reason, this was an aberration.

Full Cup has a full array of old-style diner dishes, from chicken-fried steak and liver and onions to country-style pork chops and a Monte Cristo sandwich.

The restructuring of the kitchen operation included bringing in Louise Shewmaker as pie maker. For many years she operated the now-closed Family Diner, known as the "Home of the

Heavenly Pies."

We had a piece of sugar-free pineapple and a piece of chocolate meringue (both \$2.49) that was anything but sugar free, and both were terrific. The chocolate was dark and creamy on a flaky crust and was topped with a tall, golden-streaked meringue.

Wall shelves throughout the restaurant hold a collection of antique items. Wall sconces and prints of Paris scenes are centered inside picture-frame moldings. The prints match wallpaper border that runs just above the chair rail; below is headboard painted black. Wall dividers are topped with a granite shelf.

Full Cup has private rooms that seat up to 25 and 50, and the overall capacity is deceptively large at about 200.

"We have a Rotary group and a bunch of class reunion

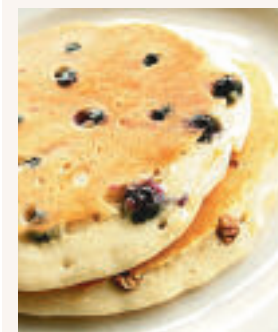
groups that meet regularly in the private rooms," Watkins said.

Within 30 minutes of closing time staffers started sweeping and wiping down all surfaces, so the odor of disinfectants was a bit disconcerting during the last part of our meal. At least we knew the place was clean.

New carpeting has been put down through most of the main dining room, and Watkins said she expects that project to be carried out soon throughout all dining spaces.

Full Cup has served dinner in the past, and Watkins said she will consider it again if the demand is there.

"We just have to see how that goes, but right now we have our hands full with breakfast and lunch," Watkins said. "I'm happy where we are."



Blueberry pancakes from the Full Cup.

JAMES GIBBARD/Tulsa World

It started with Kay's

Historical perspective defined by major events often is a helpful tool, so let's note that in 1958 Nikita Khrushchev and Gen. Charles de Gaulle were commanders of the Soviet Union and France, respectively, Army's Pete Dawkins won the Heisman Trophy, and Tommy Bolt won the U.S. Open golf championship at Tulsa's Southern Hills Country Club.

"Volare" by Domenico Modugno was Song of the Year, but as I recall my favorite tunes of 1958 were "Witch Doctor" and "Purple People Eater," denoting a level of sophistication that would follow me for decades.

That also was the same year and Glen Gibson opened Kay's Restaurant, named after their daughter, out east near 31st Street and Yale Avenue. Ruby was the centerpiece, making the pies, working the cash register, cooking, cleaning and hostessing, and it became a treasured spot for home-style cooking.

They sold the restaurant in 1979 and retired to about five years before opening Ruby's, just east of the old Kay's location. They closed Ruby's in June 2001. Ruby would die in October of that year at the age of 81, and Glen died in 2004 at 86.

Ruby Weathers said she acquired the spot with a former co-owner in 2001, and the name was changed to Full Cup in 2003. Kim Watkins, one of the first Full Cup employees, purchased the restaurant from Weathers in 2006.