

## Per Tutti Ristorante—Lunch with Your Best Friend

By Andrea A. Firth



Pepsi is enjoying her delicious lunch

Photo Andrea A. Firth

I don't go out to lunch much. My days as a freelance writer are spent in large part on the phone and in front of a computer screen. Lunch is a bagel with cream cheese on a good day, with peanut butter on an ok day, and nothing on some days when my son eats the last bagel for breakfast. So when the editor said she needed a writer with a dog to try out the doggie menu at Per Tutti in Lafayette, I jumped at the opportunity.

I invited my friend Tracy and her flat coat retriever, Bryce, to join my dog, Pepsi, and me for a Friday lunch. (And yes, my kids did name the dog.) Upon arriving, I was thrilled to find a parking spot on Mt. Diablo Boulevard directly in front of the restaurant. I filled the parking meter with all the change that I had to cover a leisurely hour-long lunch. I think a dime got me about seven minutes. When Tracey arrived, I learned that she had parked for free in the lot a few steps away. It was becoming obvious that I don't go out to lunch in Lafayette very often.

The morning June gloom had lifted by midday, so Tracey and I chose a table in the sun. We decided to order and eat our lunches first then to treat the hounds to Per Tutti's doggie menu. Both Bryce and Pepsi have dark black coats (although Pepsi's coat has a hint of a brown, like the soda of course), so once the dogs realized that they were not going to get any of our food or even much of our attention, both retreated to lie on the cool brick sidewalk in the shade. The waiter had brought each dog a bowl of water, so they were comfortable.

I had a great caprese sandwich—fresh mozzarella with vine-ripened tomatoes, basil, and avocado on a Kaiser roll with pesto sauce, and Tracey enjoyed a spinach salad with bacon, mushrooms, and red onions. The menu includes a number of other appetizing lunch items that I could describe, but my assignment was to check out the doggie menu, right?

As we finished, I asked the waiter to bring out the doggie menu. Pepsi was disappointed to learn that they were out of the Hot Diggity Dog, an all turkey dog with bacon bits, but he seemed to be appeased by the alternative—the Hen House Chicken, five ounces of boneless chicken breast. Bryce opted for the Quarter Hounder, a doggie burger deluxe. Each of the doggie meals described cost \$3.95. There was a fourth item on the doggie menu—the Good Dog, six ounces of grilled filet for the very special dog. Either our dogs were not sufficiently special, or with the price tag of \$12.95, we were not willing to pay more for our dogs' lunches than our own.

The dogs' lunches were served on paper plates and included a side of rice and grated cheese. Pepsi, the mutt that he is, displayed few table manners. He dove into his food pushing his plate across the sidewalk knocking over his water bowl and spilling rice in the process. Bryce showed his pedigree and lay down gently next to his plate as he ate. Pepsi consumed his entire lunch in less than two minutes, so he moved on to "help" Bryce with the remainder of his. The whole event was reminiscent of lunches with my mothers' playgroup when my twins were toddlers—fast and messy. Trying to take a photo of the dogs to document the lunch was similar to taking a photo of two toddlers as well—I never could get them both facing the camera.

Per Tutti, located at 3576 Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette, serves lunch Monday through Saturday starting at 11:30 and dinner seven days a week. Well-behaved dogs are welcome to dine with their owners at the outside tables at anytime.