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Lanikai Grill Menu Analysis

The Lanikai Grill is my favorite place to eat when I am craving Hawaiian food. Since I know from experience that their food is good, I wanted to see if I would have thought that just by looking at their menu. Because the menu in the restaurant hangs above the counter, I chose to analyze the miniature menus available to take home.

The mini menu used a different layout than the one over the counter, but seemed up to date on the items offered. The menu is about one and a half by three inches, with four fold-out panels. The compact size makes the menu convenient to carry around, but it also makes the layout more cramped. Each panel has both text and pictures, with bolded text to designate section breaks. The four inside panels had food items listed by different sections: salads were in the far left pane, rice bowls, sides and frybread in the middle left pane, Lanikai Delights and combination plates middle right, and musubi, kids’ meals and drinks listed in the far right pane.

Although meant to be used as a quick menu, I was still a little disappointed in the descriptions of the food. The only section that had any explanation was the salads, and even then it was just a list of ingredients. If I could change the text in the menu, I would include short, suggestive descriptions of the food, such as “Freshly grilled BBQ chicken over crisp romaine lettuce with your choice of creamy mango dressing or poppy seed vinaigrette.” The only additional information the menu included was two brief paragraphs about catering and entertainment found on the inside fold.

The use of space was not very effective. They took up too much space with unnecessary pictures like the plumeria flowers, lettuce and lei. The space taken up by these items could have been better used to describe the food or have larger text to more easily read the menu. The spacing was inconsistent; some of the margins were too small, and some sections were more cramped than others. As a whole, space needed to be better utilized with such a small area.

I think the overall eye appeal could also be improved. I like the light yellow used on the outside because it fits the Hawaiian theme, but they needed darker text or a lighter background inside. I liked that the header for each section was bolded; however, the individual food items blended in with everything, making it difficult to read. Also, there was an overabundance of flowers on the menu. It is a Hawaiian menu, but there are more subtle ways to pull in the theme. For this reason I like the faded Hawaiian Islands in the background. If some of the flowers had been taken out and the islands been placed more prominently, it would have been more appealing.

Overall, the menu does a good job of presenting a casual dining experience with a unique Hawaiian taste. It functions successfully as a quick reference for returning customers, but simple changes could improve a first time impression. By reducing the clutter of unnecessary pictures, more attention could be placed on the actual food items. The text needs to be reformatted so it is easier to read, with better spacing or a different font. Once customers can actually read the menu, putting short descriptions of the food may remind them what they have eaten or entice them into trying something new. I think Lanikai’s menu was average. It is what I would expect from a casual place to eat, but an improved format could help them stand out.