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eat

NEWS FOR FOOD LOVERS



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★★★
Crisp

1961 E. 7th St.; 704-333-9515;
crispfoods.com.

A cool, green, leafy option.

FOOD: ★★★ **Setting:** ★★★ **Service:** ★★★

HITS: F.C.N. salad, a slew of make-your-own options, and interesting dressings.

MISSES: Those tired little toasts – wan, cold – on the side of the salads.

PRICES: \$6.50 to \$8.50.

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, with dinner slated to begin in the next few weeks.

SEATS: 40 plus about 20 outside.

VEGETARIANS: Plenty to choose among.

SMOKING: Smoke-free.

CHILDREN? Welcome.

★★★★ = excellent; ★★★ = good;
★★ = fair; ★ = poor

SALADS ARE US: Crisp proves an oasis for lovers of the green.

At Crisp, it's the salads that matter

Helen Schwab

Review

After a month largely devoted to junk food – from what you'll stuff down while watching college basketball (I'm talking to you, wing nuts) to green beer on St. Paddy's to all that Easter candy – you need an oasis. Crisp is it.

This bright little contemporary spot at the corner of Seventh and Pecan focuses on salads, with some sandwiches and soups thrown in – but it's the salads that matter.

Walk in and you immediately face decisions, in the form of an attended salad bar. Hang back a little, if you're the indecisive sort – or, even better, just opt for one of the signature salads on your first visit.

My favorite to date is the F.C.N.: fruit, cheese and nuts, combining thinly sliced apple and pear, chunks of blue cheese, Craisins (dried sweetened cranberries), toasted walnuts and a citrus vinaigrette over mixed greens.

The attending salad-maker puts the ingredients – bite-sized! – in a big bowl, seasons them with salt and pepper (after checking with you) and really tosses it.

I also loved the Steakhouse salad: romaine topped by chunks of well-seasoned, grilled-to-order flat-iron steak, with blue cheese bits, red onion, mushrooms and balsamic vinaigrette.

Sandwiches make use of some salad combos, like the Steakhouse and Roma (prosciutto, salami, mozzarella), and adds other creations,

such as house-roasted turkey with brie and cranberry relish. White and wheat bread, sliced into long lads, encase them, and you get a little salad on the side. Order at the counter and you get your food handed to you on black plates or in large shallow bowls. Then find a seat: You'll see sleek bright green and black chairs, granite tables in front of a banquette, even a few seats at the tiny bar.

Owner **Jerry McCarthy** is from Long Island, where he had a little Italian bistro and a California-style place before that. He decided the fresh/healthy concept was what Charlotte needed. He plans to add dinner soon, with wine bar offerings and tapas. Expect pastas and pizzas to join chef **David McLuckie's** lineup then.