



QUICK BITE

Galaxy Drive In

A classic St. Louis Park drive-in goes space age

BY DARA MOSKOWITZ GRUMDAHL

Wagner's Drive-In was an odd duck: It was dumpy and run-down, but still generally adored. It sat on a hill in St. Louis Park and reminded passersby of their youth and summers gone by, and it seemed to assure us that the future would hold the same joys as the past. It was kind of like having your childhood dog live forever, albeit in a state of aged creakiness, in a place you could visit forever.

No wonder the whole west metro was aflutter when the place was purchased and remade by Steve Schussler, father of the gimmicky Rainforest Café, which was born at the Mall of America and now has more than 20 locations nationwide. Bye-bye Wagner's. Hello, Galaxy Drive In.

Now vintage-looking pedal cars dangle from the ceilings, and faux '50s road-

sters are affixed to the parking lot's fence. This new Galaxy has a Sputnik-with-space-aliens-meets-Happy-Days theme that's confusing on your first visit: They don't serve milk, they serve "Starburst Milk"—but you soon learn it's just regular milk. Likewise, the "Satellite Sodas" are just Coke products, and the "Cosmic Cones" are simply soft-serve. Once you cut through the thicket of space modifiers you find a fairly simple, likable roadside spot: The burgers are pretty good, nicely charred and fresh-tasting. The soft-serve and the Pronto pups are exactly like soft-serve and Pronto pups have always been and always should be. (The fried chicken, however, is oddly bitter, the cheesesteaks meager, and the Chicago dog not authentic enough.)

My favorite feature of the joint turned out to be their s'mores kit. Fork over \$10 and you'll get a tube containing long pointy wooden dowels, marshmallows, chocolate disks, a package of graham crackers, and a sheet of campfire-song lyrics to use at the large, outdoor, gas-fired fire pit. I'll let you be your own judge as to whether your children can be trusted in public with pointy spears that have the potential to turn into flaming torches, but this critic's take is that since the place is open year-round, it will be a nice option for

handling cabin-feverish kids on warm and sunny winter days. Of course, die-hard Wagner's fans will always object to having the old family dog replaced with a space-theme park, but no one ever said the alien invasion would be easy. **MM**

Galaxy Drive In

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.com

Open Monday–
Sunday 11 a.m.–
11 p.m.