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The Amazing Pizza Machine in Millard has buffet-style dining. In addition to a pizza bar, it offers a salad bar, taco bar, pasta bar and dessert bar.



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Karrie Seibel of Omaha, left, putts at the Amazing Pizza Machine's miniature "glow" golf. She and her husband, Eric, and son, Drake, 4, visited the restaurant this week.



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The eatery has 140 games.

Amazing Pizza Machine has kid-pleasing buffet

BY JOHN KEENAN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Amazing Pizza Machine is designed to be fun.

The restaurant mixes a large buffet, four dining areas, and a huge game complex to satisfy both parents and kids. The six-week-old operation is so smooth and so big that it seems like a chain restaurant. It's not.

The buffet features four dining areas. Johnny Sprocket's is a 1950s-themed diner with sparkly red vinyl booths and chairs. The Car Toonery, with a big screen playing cartoons and a few booths shaped like the trunks of classic cars, is decorated with posters from children's films.

The Fan Factory has a sports theme, with Husker pennants, stadium posters and TVs tuned to ESPN. Finally, there's Luigi's, an Italian-themed area with streetscape posters and a big-screen projector turned to Turner Classic Movies.

In total, the buffet areas seat about 600 people, with room for about 100 more in birthday party rooms.

A group of Nebraska businessmen launched the Amazing Pizza Machine and will explore taking the concept to other cities. Based on one visit, it's hard to see what could stop them.

It's also the latest restaurant-game complex to open in the area within the last year, joining inPlay and Dave & Buster's. Another concept, America's Incredible Pizza Company, has announced plans for Lincoln and Omaha restaurants as well.

The Amazing Pizza Machine buffet is built for variety, including a salad bar, taco bar, pasta bar, pizza bar and dessert bar.

The salad bar contains about 30 items, with a large bowl of fresh, crispy iceberg lettuce and add-ons such as raisins, peas, shredded cheese and croutons.

Soups are offered: On a recent weekend, the salad area featured potato soup and chili.

The chili, with beef and beans, was soupy and mildly spiced with chili powder and green pepper. It's foolish to expect truly spicy chili on a buffet line, but the Machine's version could have been a bit thicker.

The potato soup was creamy and thick, with lots of celery and potato chunks. The broth was buttery with a tiny hint of black pepper.

The taco bar features warm tortilla shells. The meat is lightly seasoned with taco seasoning — chili powder, etc. — but still mild. Melted nacho cheese, featuring a small touch

of white pepper, and cool, chunky red salsa are nearby for topping off the taco.

For now, this is where you'll find the foil-wrapped baked potatoes. The potatoes are oiled and salted before baking, and then steam-warmed, for a pleasantly loose consistency and a nice flavor, even without butter.

The pasta bar features a baked penne pasta, served caserole-style, covered in tomato sauce and gooey melted mozzarella cheese.

The pasta bar also has four different types of noodles — spaghetti, penne, radiatori and rotini — with an Alfredo sauce, marinara sauce and meat sauce.

The creamy Alfredo sauce is heavy but smooth, again with no really bold flavors. (If this restaurant has a flaw, this is it — but the food is all designed for young children as well as adults, so it's hard to fault the logic.) The marinara sauce has a sugary tomato flavor.

The pizza bar features 14 pies, including cheese pizza, taco pizza, Bayou chicken, and cheeseburger pizza, which mixes cheddar and mozzarella. The spinach Alfredo thin-crust is popular.

The cheeseburger pizza really tastes like a burger.

Amazing Pizza Machine pies have a chewy, doughier crust

that makes them filling, especially the specialty pies with a lot of toppings. The slices are small and the pizza sauce is sharper and tangier — more pepper in it — than the marinara sauce.

Finally, there's the dessert bar, which features warm peach crisp, brownies, chocolate-chip cookie bars and soft-serve, self-serve chocolate and vanilla ice cream.

The ice cream, also available low-fat, can be garnished with sugary rainbow sprinkles, chocolate chips and Oreo cookie crumbles, as well as chocolate sauce or warm caramel sauce.

The kids in the restaurant loved the slushy machine, which dispensed cherry and blue raspberry slushes. The line for the machine was long during a recent visit.

Even when lines are long at the Amazing Pizza Machine, they move fairly quickly. On a recent Saturday afternoon, which should be one of the restaurant's busier times, the lines were almost no problem. The slushy line took maybe an extra couple of seconds.

My family of four got out of the Amazing Pizza Machine for \$29.92 before tax and considerable game-playing money. After a first trip, your kids will be begging for more visits.

The Amazing Pizza Machine

Where: 139th Street and S Plaza

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays

Prices: Adults, buffet \$7.99 (\$5.99 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Fridays), drink \$1.49; children ages 3 to 7, buffet \$3.99 and 99 cents drink; children ages 8 to 12, \$4.99 and 99 cents drink

Alcohol: No

Payment: Credit cards, checks

Wheelchair accessible: Yes

Smoking section: No

Information: 829-1777