

# Southern-style food at Mama's Oven has Houston soul

By J.C. REID

In a city of Tex-Mex, barbecue and burgers, soul food often is overlooked.

I've decided that it's time to explore the numerous soul food res-

taurants in Houston. My first stop is a little joint on South Main near Reliant Stadium that I've driven by many times: Mama's Oven. Billed as "Southern Style Cookin,'" Mama's Oven has been serving up soul food from this tiny storefront since 1994. I visited for lunch on a recent weekday afternoon.

You order at the counter. There's a written menu and a board with some specials, as well as a steam table where you can check out some of the sides and main dishes. Nothing on the regular menu, lunch or dinner, is more than \$10.

I ordered a plate of oxtails with

rice and 2 sides (mustard greens and macaroni and cheese) for the tidy sum of \$9.50, corn bread included. My lunch partner got the smothered pork chop with mashed potatoes and green beans for \$7.50.

The dining room on this day was mostly full, with several people waiting for to-go orders. After ordering, you seat yourself and your food is delivered to you when it's ready. The food arrived steaming hot in large portions. The oxtails were tender and flavorful in a brown gravy. The mustard greens were some of the best I've had in Houston — cooked just enough to get rid of the natural bitterness but still firm and not too soft, with a light flavor of vinegar. The

mac and cheese was a decadent, unapologetic pile of ultra-creamy cheese and macaroni.

We were tempted to get dessert, but my dining companion had never been to Hank's, the legendary Houston ice cream parlor that's next door, so we paid our bill and went there for a couple of scoops. Next time, I'll definitely try the peach cobbler at Mama's.

Overall, this was a delicious plate of food in large portions, cooked with love and soul, at an incredibly reasonable price.

**DETAILS** *Mama's Oven: 9295 Main; 713-661-3656*

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