

Ignore, please, the tasteless illustration on the menu (along with the less-than-classy name). Garden of Eatin' — yes, that's really what it's called — is in every other way a classy establishment.

Like a delicate tea rose stuck in a briar patch of prefab monuments to light industry, the Garden is a true haven for hungry diners. Even such connoisseurs of good vittles as Coddling attorney Bill Smith have been spied there, impeccably three-piece-suited. (Surely not because his boss is the landlord.)

A mere four months old, the Garden has already become one of the county's best breakfast and lunch spots, even on weekends when the end of Piner Road is probably the most deserted section of Santa Rosa. But, where else can you get eggs Benedict with the sauce originated at the Cordon Bleu? At \$5.50 it's the steepest-priced item on the long menu, but the delicate egg yolk and butter sauce and the perfectly poached eggs make it more than worthwhile.

Most of the Garden's provender is so reasonably priced, in fact, that lunch here is a definite relief to the wallet (if expanding to the waistline). Two people can have an incredibly good and graciously served lunch for as little as \$6.00, or "splurge" for up to \$10 or \$12.

It's rumored that the *News-Herald's* Diane Rich has been looking for the "perfect ham-burger." Well, she can stop looking. Made with freshly ground pure beef, the Garden's is cooked absolutely as requested, but rare or well-done, it keeps the full flavor of quality meat. Served with fresh lettuce and tomato, *dill* pickle slices, onion, and nearly the best French fries (hand-cut and fresh) this writer has ever had, it's more than most people can finish.

Then there are the 15 formidable-looking omelets with sour cream, fresh-baked muffins and cottage fries, requiring a three-day fast before tackling. And the Belgian waffles, French toast, huge sandwiches and terrific homemade soups. One of the most enjoyable offerings is a mug of clam chowder

The Garden of Eatin'



(an extremely thick New England sturdy South American blend that is also available by the bean. Intrepid lunchers can proceed to the fine desserts (which vary daily). One day there was homemade apple pie, a very popular brand of ice cream, chocolate cake and a chocolate mousse torte that Diane would have to call "sinfully delicious."

The atmosphere is hardly innovative, but ranks among the very best versions of Henry Africa modern. (Owner Tom Patterson, in fact, an eight-year veteran of the restaurant business, was once a bartender at H.A.'s.) But, the pleasant combination of expansive windows, white walls, dark beams and hanging plants owes its special identity, says Patterson, to designer-carpenter Chad Hooker, who gracefully transformed the famous Coddling basic-white shell. Filled with antiques and near-antiques collected by Patterson through years of garage sale and flea market hunting, it is as interesting to view as to dine in. And, almost best of all, the sparkling kitchen, backed by gorgeous Italian tiles, is in full view behind the long wooden counter. (It's a comforting feeling.)

Of course, noise from the kitchen

is a mite distracting during peak hours, but the wise Gardener lunches before or after the noon-hour rush. Most tables seat only two to four customers, but one magnificent antique unleaves to accommodate 12 or 13, and another will soon be added. Usually, you can count on having a relaxed lunch or breakfast and be out in an hour, with enough "seconds" on coffee to make you slish a bit. Large groups, however, do pose a time problem, and group reservations are definitely advisable.

As inflation tightens that expense account, places like the Garden are bound to attract more and more businesspeople (unfortunately, few live up to the standards of the Garden.) And business breakfasts are often the answer to a hectic schedule.

The Garden is open from 6:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Sundays. (Breakfast is served all day.)

The restaurant is also available evenings for private parties and meetings, and offers catering to your own location. Accepting MasterCharge and BankAmericard, the Garden at 1770 Piner Road is truly a rose in a briar patch.

— V.M.