

NEW LISTING CASUAL

Salata

Good salads are not easy to come by. The sad bins of tired-looking ingredients typifying self-serve salad bars around Dallas testify to that fact. Salata, a Houston import tucked between Pei Wei and Sonic in Preston Center, is an oasis from the lettuce doldrums. It features a cafeteria-style setup, much like Eatzi's or Chipotle, in which employees behind the counter deposit customers' selected salad components into a bowl, toss the mix, unload it into a plastic to-go container, and then hand over the goods. If you'd rather have your customized medley bundled in a tortilla, request the wrap option. Regardless of your vessel of consumption, salad lovers will appreciate Salata's offerings of traditional and nouveau ingredients such as roasted potatoes, Granny Smith apples, bowtie pasta, cilantro, black beans, and pepitas. As for proteins, instead of sticking strictly to marinated chicken breasts and



baked salmon fillets, Salata spices things up with Asian barbecue, pesto, or chipotle chicken options, as well as shrimp, crab, and mixed seafood choices. The dressings are all-natural, proprietary blends including buttermilk ranch, ginger lime, honey mustard, fat-free mango, and classic Caesar (Salata also sells bottles of its dressings for at-home use). We tried the fat-free sun-dried tomato vinaigrette, which tasted fresh and piquant without the chemical bite of some fat-free versions. The restaurant's smallish seating area was filled mainly with business casual-outfitted professionals and stay-at-home mom types. Most were content with salads or wraps, but Salata also offers soups; pesto, cheddar-jalapeno, and wheat breads; and plastic baggies containing two mini-muffin-sized brownies. The cashier called them "magic brownies." After a couple of bites, we couldn't help but agree. 8307 Westchester Dr. 214-363-6991. \$ —STACEY YERVASI

