

Mean Eggs & Ham

The Ranch House isn't fancy, as evidenced by the worn linoleum lunch counter and the vinyl swivel stools, but nobody cares. Customers show up for the food, which is house-made, abundant and delicious.

The Ranch House is crowded, and my husband and I have finished breakfast, but we can't tear ourselves away. At the table

garnell

next to us sits an unsuspecting family of four. The daughter looks about 10. She just ordered the

ham and eggs.

My husband and I look at each other. Should we say something? No. It would be more fun to watch her reaction when the food arrives. The sign on the wall, which warns, "Too much pork for just one fork," doesn't begin to describe it.

We learned long ago to split things here. All of the food is house-made, abundant and delicious, and nothing on the menu is more than \$10.95. That explains why the Ranch House is packed for breakfast and lunch six days a week. Recession or no. Diets be damned.

Nothing about the place is fancy. It opened at the top of Yarnell Hill in the 1940s, and the building shows its age. The linoleum lunch counter is as worn as the vinyl swivel stools, and everything about the place feels old school, down to the green paper checks the waitresses total by hand. Cash only.

Tables are set with checkered oilcloth, plastic flowers poking from rice-filled Coke bottles. The walls and shelves are cluttered with all manner of things — an old-fashioned telephone, tobacco tins, wind chimes fashioned from tableware — but mostly chickens. There are chicken-themed potholders, plates, coffee mugs and salt-and-pepper shakers. There are chicken curtains and chicken magnets. Cloth chickens. Knitted chickens. Ceramic, wood and plasma-cut chickens. Chicken-themed signs read: "No fowl moods," "Have some huevos," and my favorite, "Kitchen closed. This chick's fed up."

"This chick" is Shelley Bergeson, who has owned the place with her husband, Steve, since 1994. He does most of the cooking, and has his own sign. It reads, "Steve's



PAUL MARKOW

Roadkill Café: You kill it, we grill it."

The waitresses carry straws in their back pockets and holler to each other across the floor. No matter how busy it gets, they never seem to drop the ball or lose their composure.

In short order, the family's food arrives, ham steak nearly spilling from the edges of the plate. Conversation stops. Eyes grow

wide as pancakes. My husband and I laugh.

"We learned the hard way, too," we say to the rookies.

They laugh with us, and say they'll know better when they come back.

— KATHY MONTGOMERY

The Ranch House is located at 23225 S. State Route 89 in Yarnell. For more information, call 928-427-6522.