

Still the best and oldest of all of Las Vegas' many dinner theater offerings is "The Tournament of Kings" at the appropriately named Excalibur Hotel. The buildings and grounds of the resort are gaudily designed to resemble a Medieval castle, so where else can you have dinner brought to you by bosomy serving wenches while you wait for the jousting to begin? If you ask the maitre de for a "round table", he'll smile politely at the joke he's heard a million times before.



Incidentally, this dinner show is about the only one in Vegas where you can actually take kids, because most of the others are strictly for adults, with all the sinful Sin City implications. The meal is served in metal bowls and, to the joy of kids of all ages, guests are encouraged to tear up the chicken breasts and turkey legs with bare hands, just like Arthur, Lancelot, Galahad and all the other armor-clad guys did back in 850 A.D.

The actual jousting exhibitions are a bit tame, resembling some of the fake TV wrestling shows. However, all of the kids in the audience when we were there seemed to think the battles were real, and jumped and cheered for joy. The Medieval-style music, including some live dancing by the serving maids, is pleasant and unobtrusive. Phone 702-597 7600, or email www.excalibur.com

"The Soprano's Last Supper" is at the Greek Isles Theater, and in addition to a lot of crazy fun, it includes an Italian-style meal. The part-musical, part-murder-mystery production gets even crazier when actors drag audience members up on stage to participate, to get inducted into the mythical Mafia family and/or to join in on the plot to "off" the bothersome mother-in-law.

Quite obviously, the whole magillah (is that Italian?) echoes the popular TV series. The format also has its roots from the long-running New York to Vegas comedy, "Tony and Tina's Wedding", complete with all the insane characters and interactive invasions by audience members.

A highlight when we attended was Dee Dee Diamond belting out hits like "Dancing Queen" and "We are Family." She also showed great comedic talent by shamelessly coming on to the Don himself. Not incidentally, the language and story lines are strictly adult, or quite offensive for anyone who doesn't appreciate four-letter words tossed out a dozen to a sentence.

The ancestor (godfather?) of the Soprano's show is "Tony and Tinas Wedding", now at the Rio. We first saw it in New York's Little Italy more than 20 years ago. It was then held in a building that once was a church, and for dinner, the audience had to schlep (not Italian either) across the street to an Italian restaurant.

The current Vegas edition also features a very good Italian buffet, designed as an interactive wedding dinner, complete with a big cake and champagne. The theme now, as then, is an exaggerated version of a traditional Italian-American wedding, featuring a cast of nutty characters with bad attitudes and worse relationships that make for a hilarious evening.

I must also mention a dinner show we attended once at the Imperial Palace. I believe it is still running several nights a week when the weather allows. It's called the Imperial Hawaiian Luau, and is presented poolside. While musicians and hula dancers perform on a raised platform, attendees grab plates and wander around the big pool's walkways picking up Hawaiian favorites as they go. The food was OK, but by the time we circled the pool and got our plates back to our tables on the far side of the big pool, the hot food was cold. All in all, it was a lot of fun. For information and reservations, call 888-777-7664.

I had to put this one in, although in its present location, it's not really a dinner theater production. However, you can get sandwiches, Cokes, beer and booze before and during performances. We recently had the pleasure of seeing at the Riviera Hotel, "The Concert That Never Was".

When a local pal offered us free tickets to the concert featuring clones of two of our favorite performers of all time, Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, at first we turned up our noses at the disrespectful fakery. But since a close relative was doing stand-up on stage in another venue of the Riviera, and being in the neighborhood, so what the heck.

The Sinatra-Streisand clone show is "never was" because the real stars never performed on stage live together. However, they did a song on a 1993 Sinatra "Duets" album. When the impersonators came out on stage for this concert, they dueted that same tune, "I've Got a Crush

on You."

With authentic-looking costuming and clever lighting, the program was very enjoyable, and the mood took us spiritually back 20, 30 or more years. We fell into the mood of the music because we could enjoy the gentle and understandable lyrics. That kind of happy experience has been virtually blotted out from show business into the ear-splitting, discordant, hateful, profane so-called music of today.

Other old favorites included "Witchcraft", "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered", "You Don't Bring Me Flowers Anymore", and a rousing, foot-stomping rendition of a Sinatra masterpiece, "New York, New York." Everyone in the audience jumped up and gave it a standing ovation! You can take small kids to this non-cursing show, but they'd probably not be interested in hearing such quiet, old-fashioned music.

Sharon Owens is excellent as Streisand in both style, looks and singing quality. Sebastian Anzaldo sports Sinatra's hat, tux, familiar strong singing style, attitude and all. The program has come and gone in various Vegas sites, and now plays nightly at the Riviera's Le Bistro Theatre. For reservations and more information about "The Concert That Never Was", call 877-892-7469 or email www.rivierahotel.com.

On the dinner theater programs I've listed, and there are many more throughout Vegas, you may not have to pay the published prices, which are from about \$50 to \$100 a person. Seek out two-fers at various Vegas locations where tickets for that day's performances are sold at reduced prices. Also check your hotel room magazines for dollars-off coupons. If you're a frequent guest or heavy gambler, you may get them free from your hotel concierge.