



Mittie Wynn
FLAVORS
High's Guide
Restaurants

Fit for a King

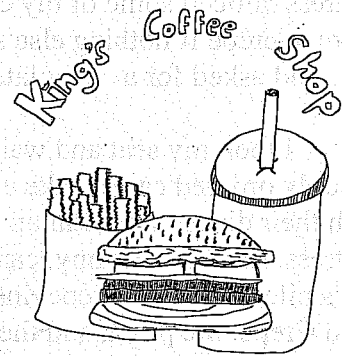
By Anthony Bell

“Hey boy,” is what I hear every time I walk into the doors of King’s Coffee Shop. As I weave my way to the counter, I hear fries sizzling in the deep fryer and smell the pungent aroma of grilled onions. When I arrive at the counter, Mrs. King asks me, “You want a special, grilled onions?” And I say yeah. As I wait for the food, I see Mr. King cook the irresistible patty. I walk around the old-fashioned tables and go to the arcade game. The game I play is a racing game with two steering wheels. I insert my quarter and start to play. In the middle of my game, Mrs. King says with her high-pitched voice, as loud as a book slamming against a table, “Okay boy, your food is ready.”

King’s opened when Mr. and Mrs. King decided to open a place to get breakfast and lunch. When they first opened, their menu contained coffee, pancakes, eggs, bacon, hamburgers, and fries. Over the years, the menu has developed to entrees from mouthwatering BLT sandwiches with crispy bacon, fresh tomatoes and lettuce, and toasted bread to delectable milkshakes with the ice-cream of your choice. King’s cooks all kinds of food, but their specialty is hamburgers.

In the nineteenth century, German immigrants brought a dish called Hamburg Style Beef to the United States. This dish was a raw, chopped piece of beef and is the ancestor of the modern hamburger.

The best thing to get on the menu is a bacon cheeseburger. It contains two pieces of golden toasted bread that are as fluffy as cotton on the inside but as crunchy as Cheetos on the outside. It comes with crispy but juicy pieces of bacon, a succulent beef patty seasoned to perfection, lettuce, tomatoes, and melted cheese. You can also add toppings on to your hamburger like cooked mushrooms or grilled onions. On my visit there, I asked ten people what they planned to order. Nine out of ten people said they were going to get a hamburger. I asked one person, “Why are you going to get a hamburger?”



He replied, “Because King’s has the best hamburgers I have ever tasted!!”

Another thing you could get on the menu are French fries. Mrs. King deep-fries them in oil until they are golden brown. When they are cooking, you can hear them sizzling and popping as loud as explosions. For dessert you can get an irresistible milkshake. It contains ice cream and milk, topped with whipped cream. You can get flavors like vanilla, cookies and cream, and chocolate.

All kinds of people eat at King’s Coffee Shop, from the young kids at the elementary school down the street to the adults from the church nearby. It isn’t separated by race either. This is because of the delicious taste of the food they make and the friendly service of Mr. and Mrs. King. You still want a reason to eat at King’s? Try coming up with a reason not to eat there!

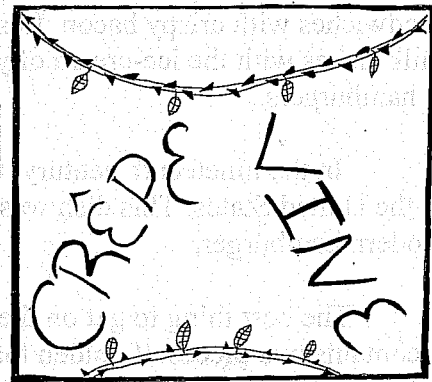
King’s Coffee Shop
3000 38th Ave., Oakland

You Heard it through the Crepevine

By Livy Perez

Walking up the perfectly paved street, I saw that the restaurant gave an eerie yet homely glow. It reminded me of a Paris café, with its dozens of vine-like metal chairs and tables. Crêpevine majestically stood at the center of two intersecting streets. At both ends of the restaurant, in the place of walls, leaned massive windows. Stepping in, floods of coffee and baking bread scents rushed into my nose. The lights, angel bright, blended in with the misty ivory of the walls. Trumpets, saxophones, and a feminine whisper ruled the background. The gossip and debating filled corners of the rooms, but most people sat alone, lost in the worlds of their books. From the point where I sat, I could hear the clatter of pots and sizzling of vegetables. Looking at the colorful plates of neighboring customers made me eager to try one of the dishes.

Looking at the menu, everything seemed odd. What caught my eye was the word crêpe. Crêpe made its appearance throughout the menu. I was shocked to learn there existed Greek Crêpe, Tuscany Crêpe, and Kyoto Crêpe, each stuffed with its own mixtures of vegetables and cheese. But what was it stuffed in? I wasn't sure, but I was going to find out. I looked to the left and saw that desserts reigned the entire menu. The waitress noticed some of my confusion and told me I could create my own crêpe if nothing else seemed appealing. I took her on her offer and asked for a chocolate crêpe.



I took my seat and waited for my dish. My friend Crystal's food was already there, since she only ordered carrot cake and pasta. My sister, Andrea, had a deep brown chocolate cake. Both their dishes were Italian and Greek food, so what linked the two together? When the waitress, short and skinny, came with my icy cool Coke, I asked her about the odd mixes of food. She smiled and said Crêpevine is a Mediterranean based restaurant, which explained the French word Crêpe, the pasta, and the chocolate cake. I pointed at some of the other stuff on the menu that didn't sound European. She smiled and said that was all new, that the head chef added his specialty to the menu, New Orleans food. When our short chat was over, my dish came. The place seemed almost too good to be true, sweet aromas drifting in the air, friendly workers, and fast service.

I stared in bewilderment. I had never seen such an unusual dish. Their crêpe reminded me of a tortilla, folded so it had a triangular shape. The crêpe glistened from the oil, plump with chocolate that oozed out of the edges. I believed it would taste bad, like corn covered in chocolate because of the tortilla and chocolate mix, but I was wrong. The bottom, which held most of the chocolate, shined a milky, delicate aura. The top tasted stale and crunchy, like month-old corn flakes. I banished that taste with frosty, vanilla ice cream. It had the pride of a mountain, hard and dark at the bottom, yet pure and soft at the top. The crêpe left a trail of almost hidden scents, like icy vanilla and brewed chocolate. I never tasted such an alien but mouth pleasing dish.

"I didn't think you would finish the whole thing," the waitress teasingly told me. I gave a sheepish smile and turned the conversation to the history of Crêpevine. It turned out that this glorious, five-year old restaurant belonged to a chain of five more. I was a little stumped. It's kind of like finding a four-leaf clover and you think yourself really lucky, but then you read from *Ripley's Believe It or Not* that some guy has 7,000 of them. But don't let that discourage you from trying Crêpevine out. Crêpevine is an international ride, without the expenses.

Crêpevine
5600 College Ave., Oakland
510-658-2026

Who Loves Philly Cheese Steaks?

By Dominique Davis

Philly cheese steaks originated from south Philadelphia during the 1930s. A man named Pat Oliveri who sold hot dogs on the street for a living decided to make his lunch on one of the grills. For lunch he brought a slab of steak that he grilled, and for taste he added some onions. The aromas of the sandwich were so strong that a cab driver passing by decided that he would have one of those overwhelming, delicious smelling sandwiches for lunch. From then on, Pat sold these sandwiches instead of his plain hot dogs, and his recipe became famous all over Philadelphia and beyond.

When ambling into the Cheese Steak Shop on Lakeshore Avenue, all you hear are folks socializing and food on the grill sizzling. After wandering through the door, to the right of you are about ten tables, medium in size, with a total of two or three chairs around each table. To the left of you is a soda machine with a fair variety of sodas. Straight ahead is a yellow and white counter with a cash register and cashier waiting to take your order. Also, behind this stands a cream-filled Twinkie-like counter, where all the magic happens. Yes, it's the kitchen. In this kitchen of theirs is a great big grill that looks like a silver skating rink with its smooth surface. From this magical place, luscious mouthwatering meats are grilled, which are placed onto these wonderful sandwiches.

My eyes open as wide as the Pacific Ocean when the tightly wrapped cheese steak arrives in my hands. My mouth begins to water more and more as the aroma of sweet peppers, chunks of steak, and swirls and swirls of American cheese rush towards my nostrils. My sides of curly fries look like slinkies lying on the side of a toy box all tangled up. And just to make my cheese steak meal complete, I have to have a medium strawberry soda that has the taste of freshly bought strawberries but is also as sweet as sugary syrup.

Well, this cheese steak sandwich place has many things on their menu, but I love their sandwiches. They stuff their sandwiches with a variety of meats including steak, chicken, ground beef, and pastrami, just to name a few. They also have a fair variety of delicious non-greasy, non-salty, just right golden fries. You can have potato fries, curly fries, and chili fries that are seasoned just right to satisfy your tummy.

Now that you know that cheese steaks are the best, it's your job to stop by the Cheese Steak Shop and continue eating until you pop. If you want to be full and satisfied when you eat, pick a Cheese Steak sandwich. It's more than just a treat.

Cheese Steak Shop
3308 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland
510-832-6717

The Sisha Place

by Evelyn Herrera

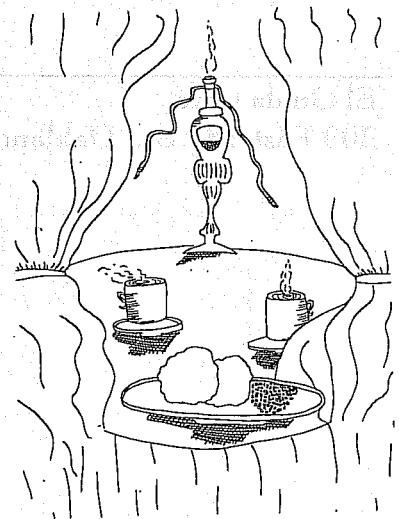
El Omda Café is a wonderful place to relax and chat with your friends. It was opened a year ago by an Egyptian family. To me, the “grand opening” seems to be everyday. The place is always packed with a lot of people! The customers include everyone from Russians to Mexicans to Middle Easterners to Asians to Africans, like the United States and its variety of cultures. Everybody is really friendly and welcoming.

The Café is located by Merritt Bakery on 203 East 18th Street in front of Walgreens. You really have to look for the place because it's hidden like a turtle's head. Be very careful to know where to look because it doesn't look like a café. One way you can spot the Café is by looking for this tent type of place. It looks like a tent, very Middle Eastern, like those from the Aladdin movie. The exterior has lights that help to identify it.

As I entered El Omda, I felt secure. It was like entering a holy place because the people seem very friendly and generous. Customers and workers smile at you as if they have known you for a long time. There are square and round tables. It is like a geometry book with all those shapes. The wooden chairs are wrinkled like my grandma's hands. The tables are decorated with intricate Egyptian cloth that feels very soft in your hands, like silk. The tenderness is more like a vision. For a moment I felt as if I was in Egypt having a meal.

What is interesting about the place is that the tent part is only cloth! Only two parts have an actual wall, the kitchen and the bathroom. If you are very picky, I would recommend that you not go inside. It's kind of messy, very much like a school's office. However, there are things that make the inside interesting, such as Egyptian figures that make it look a bit more vivid. El Omda is glistening and multihued.

I'm still amazed about the way in which I was welcomed. Everyone, including the customers, made me feel like I was part of them. I was no stranger among them or just one more customer on their list! They greeted me as if I was some famous person! My heart was warm, most of all, and very comfortable because of how I was being treated. I guess that to treat people that nicely is part of Egyptian culture.



People go to El Omda to hang out and relax, but mostly because that's a place where they sell the “Sisha.” The dominant smell in the Café is the Sisha. I can sense the smell of apple, peach, and other fruits I can't distinguish. It's as if you were at Bath and Body Works with all the different mixtures of fruit odor. Sisha is a really big pipe made out of copper and similar materials. What I can think of when I see the Sisha is a lantern but with a hole in the middle; that hole is to put in carbon and dried fruit. Dried fruit is what you smoke. It is said that smoking the dried fruit helps you to relax and release your worries. Everybody can smoke Sisha because it's a natural substance. Sisha doesn't harm your lungs or anything like that. It is not like cigarettes or marijuana.

The Café opens up daily. On Friday nights, though, it gets very crowded. You'll feel like fish in a tank. If you don't want to be standing, then you might want to arrive there early. Otherwise it will be hard to get a table and be seated. But Friday nights are the best! It is like going to a nightclub. I saw everybody dancing and clapping as the Arabic music melted my ears and touched my soul. The jiggling bells and drums made my heart beat so fast that my shoulders just started to move by themselves. If you are lucky, you might get to encounter a party. A lot of Middle Easterners and other cultures celebrate parties there. All the parties are very fun, and most of the time they have a belly dancer to entertain. You get to see an actual belly dancer, and you are not charged for it!

Although El Omda is a nice place to relax and hang out, there isn't much of a variety in food. There are only two dishes you can choose from. There is no menu, so you have to ask the waiter to tell you. The meal I had was an appealing dish of a yellowish sauce. The sauce is poured onto meatballs. Their fiery taste is good in the mouth. It's like thunder that just hit a tree! It's served with green beans. There is a very generous amount of food. Its fresh sizzling smell makes my mouth watery. It comes with a bread more like a tortilla. The delicate texture in my fingers is smooth like the sound of jazz. Its succulent savory taste is like taking a warm shower after coming home from work.

El Omda Café is a nice place to be at. If you are looking forward to having some fun, then make sure that you check out El Omda. Also, if you like dancing and you are up for a good belly dance show, this is the place that you want to be at! It's not an expensive place and you'll enjoy it. Even if it were expensive, you wouldn't regret it. My visit to El Omda Café was fascinating.

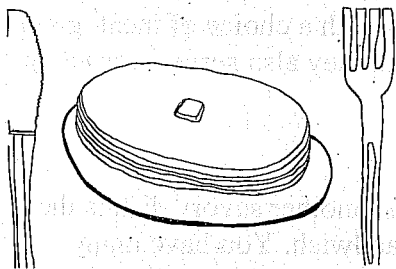
El Omda Cafe
203 East 18th St., Oakland

Full House Café

By Gerardo Montano

Oakland wakes up hungry every morning. To me there's nothing better than a huge plate of mouthwatering pancakes. The irresistible thought of eating a stack of fluffy, golden pancakes makes me savage.

FULL
HOUSE CAFE



The name of the restaurant is Full House Café. It has three glass rectangular shaped windows in the entrance. Inside there is a row of bar style chairs at the counter. There are many tables all crowded up so that lots of people fit inside. The aroma of grease from the hash browns and bacon flow through the air like invisible fog. Inside you can hear a lot of people talking like children in a preschool class.

All pancakes are served with real maple syrup. Three buttermilk or cornmeal pancakes cost \$4.75. A short stack of two costs \$3.75. A single cake only costs \$2.50. They not only serve pancakes, but they also have toast and omelets.

The question that people never ask is, "How long have pancakes been around?" Pancakes have been around for over twelve thousand years. There are several types of pancakes, which include the American, British, Egyptian, and the German pancake. They are made out of ground grain and nuts, water and milk. Some pancakes are served with sides such as bacon, eggs, and sausage. But some are served by themselves but with syrup and butter.

The aromatic and succulent scent of buttermilk pancakes makes my mouth water. Their irresistible and sweet savory taste makes people beg for more. The butter on top of the pancake is yellow like the moon. As the block of butter melts, it makes the cake moist like a wet sponge. They get soggy when you pour syrup on them. The amber color of the syrup does not change the color of the cake. It only makes it more delicious than it already is by itself, of course with the butter added. The syrup and butter make the golden dollar-coin looking pancakes delightful.

Some people don't eat anything in the morning, but of all meals, breakfast is the most important to keep your body running. Of all restaurants, Full House Café is the best place to get carbohydrates into your system.

Full House Café
3719 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland
510-482-2200

Pambazos Take Over!

By Karla Martinez

As we entered La Torta Loca, I traveled back to my home country and recognized the steamy aroma that floated back and forth inside this miniature Mexico City like bees chasing away a nosy child. The booming sound of the TV attacked my ears right away with all the news being stated from “Univision” channel 14. Photographs of monuments and exotic buildings in Mexico City cluttered the walls of the restaurant. You could have a great look of the Aztec pyramids of Teotihuacán even from a large distance. As you stood closer, there appeared a brief description below each photograph. The photograph of the monument to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 also took its place on one of their pale peach walls. As you turned to a 90-degree angle, the photograph of the immense Olympic Stadium caught your attention in an instant.

As I scanned the menu, I realized that they specialize in *antojitos* from Mexico City. Their *huarache*, which is a long thick Mexican corn tortilla, comes with a choice of meat, green or red salsa, shredded cheese, and onions. Don't worry, vegetarians, they also serve *huaraches* with either eggs or cactus.



Besides the *huaraches*, another savory dish is the *tortas*, which is a Mexican sandwich. You have many options to choose from including beef, breaded steak, baked pork ham, chicken, head cheese, ham, linguica, pastrami, pork sausage, egg, sardines, tuna, polish sausage, or bacon. Can you believe all of the combinations you could include in order to get a succulent taste for each? The toasty and crispy *torta* is stacked with fresh-cut lettuce, tomatoes, avocado, jalapeños, onions, cheese and mayonnaise.

All of the dishes looked very appealing. I could not believe how mouthwatering they all were, but the *pambazos* struck me and I could not resist getting one. As I sat waiting for my *pambazo*, my nostrils filled with the steamy, spicy, and delicate aroma released by the ingredients being cooked. The crispy sound when they cracked open the bread let me know that I was going to enjoy a toasty and crunchy meal.

When it arrived at my table, I was staggered at its golden and fluffy bread that had just been dipped in red salsa. It was as though it were an injured patient smeared with blood because of a tragic car accident. The minced potatoes together with the sliced lettuce were disintegrating onto the plate because it had a vast amount of ingredients that the bread could not keep it united. It was like a belly being stuffed with a lot of food that it even ripped open a person's shirt buttons. Its damp texture made my fingers slippery each time I tried to take a bite of my circular *pambazo*. But when I took my first bite, I knew it needed something to complement it, something “picante,” so I went up and asked for extra chili. As it covered the walls of my *pambazo*, it just felt great to keep on munching it.

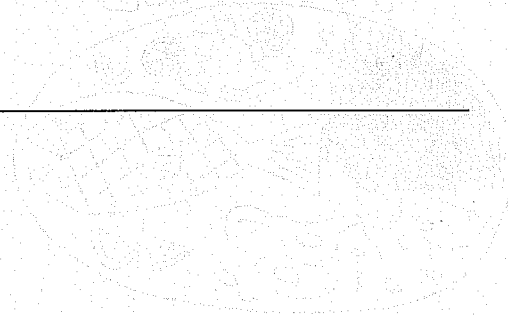
Little did I know that the word *pambazo* derived from the phrase “pan bazo,” which means brown bread. Did you know that at one time, Pan bazo was actually considered the crudest, most inferior bread? It’s amazing to acknowledge that *pambazos* have been around for about 50 years. *Pambazos* are made differently throughout different places in Mexico, but they originated from Puebla, a city near Mexico City, and have flourished throughout the eastern states of Mexico.

And like the owner Delida Torres said, “People believe that *tortas* or *pambazos* have the same taste throughout the whole country of Mexico, but what they don’t know is that each state has its own style and uses various ingredients when cooking their specialties.”

We are lucky to have a restaurant where they serve delectable dishes from our home country. This restaurant has been around since 1996 and has been serving people for eight years already. I was surprised by the fact that they had started out in a smaller location on International Boulevard. That location was basically a take-out place because they didn’t have any tables or chairs for people to sit in. That’s why they decided to search out and buy a bigger location that provided more space for their needs, and of course to give people a better food alternative.

I chose to spotlight the *pambazo* because not a lot of people know about it, and I believe that they are missing out on a mouthwatering dish. I would definitely recommend that people go and try out its unforgettable and molten flavor. You will want to get more, just like I did. Though the food is great, the service always seemed to be rushed and the staff is not very communicative. They hardly stopped to ask us about the food or how we were doing at least. But don’t let this intimidate you. Go and get your *pambazo*, so that you can know what I’m talking about. See for yourself. La Torta Loca: the crazy place for adventurers who like to try out new wonders.

La Torta Loca
3016 International Blvd., Oakland
510-533-8472



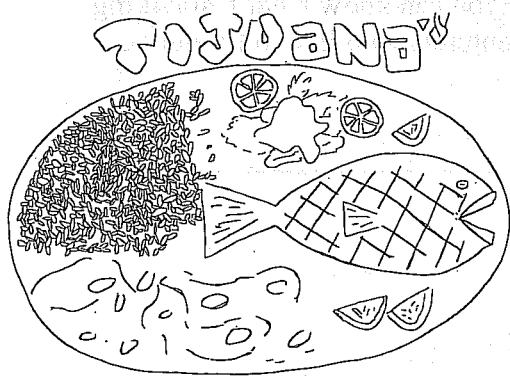
Tantalizing Tijuana's

By Oscar Vega

When we got to 13th Street, I couldn't remember where the restaurant was, but we finally got to Tijuana's. As you go inside, you feel the swoosh of the door just blowing your ear. When I was walking through the old Mexican brick arches, I saw Mexicans eating with their families.

The exterior gives you the Aztec flow. In the interior, the building has wide arches. It is not too clean and not too dirty. When inside, you can feel the gentle shrimp smell going through your nostrils and injecting the scorching juice of seafood in your brain. When you walk past the jukebox, you hear the music marching word by word into your eardrum. Mostly all of the people who go to Tijuana's restaurant are Mexicans. When you go on Sunday mornings, you can catch the passion of the Mexicans. People usually go on Sunday mornings because of their soccer teams. They put on the soccer games on a huge TV.

The menu has a lot of interesting food to choose from. On the menu there is seafood, soups, Mexican dishes, and appetizers. For people who like to drink, there are twelve different kinds of beer. Most of the beers are imported from Mexico. They have Dos Equis, Tecate, Modelo, Corona, and they also have all kinds of different beers. They also have concentrated juices. The best one is the orange juice. You can feel the pulp sliding down your throat. For those who like shrimp, there are "cocteles." It is a large cup with clamato, shrimp, cucumber, avocado, cilantro, onion and other stuff. It is really good once you add spiciness by adding Tapatio's hot sauce.



The deep fried fish comes on a very humungous plate. It comes accompanied by a cold salad of crunchy lettuce and red vivid tomatoes, topped with sweet dressing and, of course, your sizzling sunlight rice. You can't have a good car without a good motor, so the authentic crispy fish comes with scorching, succulent, moist beans. For a special bonus, you get a homemade spongy corn tortilla, in this case, a restaurant-made tortilla. The mouthwatering, breathtaking fish smells so delectable that the fish's soul goes all the way through your nostrils and to your heart. You use that as your energy in devouring the food.

The restaurant has been in our community since 1989. It is 16 years old. The restaurant was started by a family from Tijuana, Mexico, so they decided to put "Tijuana's" as their restaurant's name. "El Pato" (The Duck) is the chef. He is the owner of the restaurant. El Pato has known my family since I was in diapers. Whenever I go he always tells me jokes. He is very humorous and likes to treat his customers with respect.

Sometimes I think that if Tijuana's were my grandma, I would be the happiest grandson on earth. I would probably move into my grandma's house. You don't need to be Mexican to be able to eat a "coctel." Just go and visit. You don't need to thank me at all when you finish your enchiladas or the authentic deep fried fish with the moist beans and the sizzling sunlight rice.

Tijuana's Bar
1308 E. 14th St., Oakland
510-532-5575

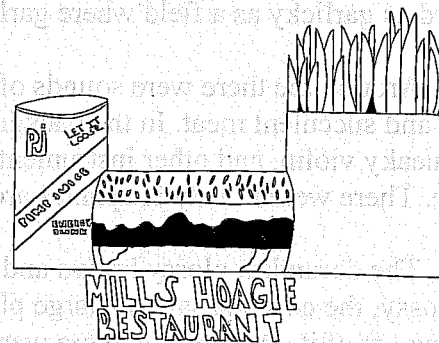
Best Hoagies in the Bay Area

by Malcolm Kirkendoll

The Hoagie sandwich came from Philadelphia, Hog Island to be exact. Italian immigrants invented the hoagie sandwich. The original name of the hoagies was “*Hoggies*.” During World War II in Philadelphia, when people from the city came to purchase them, instead of hoggies, the people called them hoagies.

The Mills Hoagie Shop has a simple look to it. The restaurant itself is about the size of a classroom; you can fit two math classes in there. I think it used to be a liquor store. When you first stroll into the restaurant, you will see a Ms. Pac-Man arcade game covered with stickers promoting local rap artists’ albums. Next to it sits a massive refrigerator. The slick, shiny, and spotless tables and floors make Mills Hoagie a good spot to eat. When you’re at Mills Hoagie, give attention to the loud music and the sizzling of the fries. Gaze over to the left towards the corner of the restaurant, and you will see a guy selling bootleg CDs and DVDs. While you are there, take a whiff of the delicious fries and luscious ground beef. The people who eat here are mostly people who live in that area, students from the local schools, and hungry people.

The first time I went to Mills Hoagie, I got the “*Hamburger Hoagie*.” I love this sandwich. The juicy ground beef, crunchy lettuce, and a slightly tart mayonnaise come together like the Dwayne Wade and Shaq attack. The hamburger hoagie tastes like a savory, peppery, and tangy heap of goodness; it’s sort of like anything you ever wanted put in between two buns and bagged with fries and a soda. The hamburger hoagie is made fresh to perfection.



The different dishes that the restaurant serves are steak hoagie, pastrami hoagie, and the chicken hoagie. At Mills Hoagie they side their meals with their famous crispy, scorching, and mouthwatering fries. Other than the fries, you can get a bag of chips to go with your sandwich. I’ve been going to Mills Hoagies for a while now; most of the time when I go, they give me a present.

Other than the hoagies, the fries are another good dish on the menu. I know McDonald’s holds the Heavyweight title for the best fries, but Mills Hoagie is rapidly becoming the number one contender for its knockout good taste. As I wrote my restaurant review, I asked a few people in the area, “Who has the best fries?” Six out of 10 people said McDonald’s, but four people said Mills Hoagie. You never know when people will change their minds.

Mills Hoagie Shop
5930 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland
510-635-5238

The Corundas of Michoacan: Viva Mexico

By Angelica Maciel

A tamale-like delicious food is corundas, shaped like a triangle with meat or cheese inside of it. Where did corundas begin? The Purepecha people of Michoacan, Mexico started corundas. They started the corundas like making tamales, and instead of making them long and wet, they were shorter and just moist. The taste of the corundas was as succulent as the silky handmade tortillas.

The restaurant was called Viva Mexico since it was started in Mexico and the owners grew up smelling the sizzling garlic and creamy soups. This restaurant began in a small city in Michoacan called Morelia. At first, it started as a home business, but after all the good foods like corundas and aporriadillo, more and more people became fascinated by the delectable foods.

Papel picado of all colors and sizes hung from the short ceiling of the restaurant Viva Mexico with the faces of people like Emiliano Zapata, Cesar Chavez, and Pancho Villa. There were huge colorful paintings of Emiliano Zapata, Aztec warriors, and other Mexican idols. It smelled as garlicky as a field where garlic was grown and sounded as quiet as an endless sleep.

Around me there were sounds of people whispering, eating crispy foods, and the sizzling, frying and succulent meat. In the background, you could hear the loud sound of mariachi music, the squeaky violin, and other instruments playing. Most of the people eating there were elderly people. There were mostly Hispanics around there eating.

The corundas, glossy brown and tender, tasted salty like the sea but sweet as sugar. Fluffy and glossy, the corunda sat on a large plate with succulent spicy salsa and creamy cheese dripping off of it. On the side, there were glimmering pieces of carrots with glistening onion and pepper cut into pieces. The food smelled as buttery as the bread coming out of the oven in a bakery. As you walked in, you could smell the frying golden onions and steamy meats.

The restaurant Viva Mexico doesn't only have good service but they have great food. "Don't disappoint out Purepecha people; show them you liked our food," said the owner to the people. The smell of the corundas and the sight of the melted cheese and dripping salsa won't let you walk away.

Viva Mexico
15100 Hesperian Blvd., San Leandro
510-317-2042

Back in Mexico: An Experience at Acapulco

By Melissa Lime

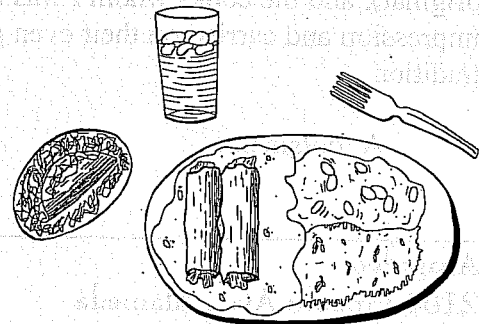
As soon as you step in the restaurant, you have the immediate feeling of being welcomed home. The scent alone smells like a feast set for a family of ten. The hugely crafted, carved, dark brown wooden doors invite you in sweetly. Behind the mahogany colored counter, their staff is always anxious to seat you.

The honorable, hand painted portrait of a man and woman, whom I would come to know as Mister and Misses Quintero (the founders), hangs high above everyone like a god. They clearly have Latino blood, which is intensely accented through their strong, bold features. As you are being seated, you notice the cream-colored walls are splashed with similarly styled portraits of their seven lovely children. The mariachi music harmonizes softly behind the babies' crying, the clanking dishes, and the sizzling food from the open doors of the kitchen.

After 51 years of serving the finest Mexican food that I've ever tasted, the Quintero family still continues to carry on their successful family business. The two founders, Modesto and Rose Quintero, came to the U.S. from Mexico in 1953 to follow their dreams in America. The Acapulco Restaurant, on the corner of Lincoln and Willow, as amazingly huge as it is now, surprisingly, only started out as a tiny local take-out stand. It was known around town for its authentic, delectable style of Mexican cooking.

Over the years, the restaurant grew, and so did their family. Modesto and Rose continued on to have seven children, of whom many have portraits hung about the "house." To this day, the children, grandchildren, and close family friends of Rose and Modesto still go on to serve the neighborhood's needs.

There were no pictures on the unoriginal green and white menus that had a splash of red signifying their homeland. A picture of the aged restaurant sat boldly on the front page, hovering over the paragraph describing their history. You could see the dirty brown water reused to clean the splatters of food nearly caked on. It reeked of old, unwashed dishes, but the advertisements of the well-cooked food made it all okay.



The words alone made my mouth water. I couldn't decide from the spicy enchiladas drenched in creamy, molten, homemade red sauce; the authentically juicy, crispy, or soft tacos; the fried, chewy, and scorching hot chili relleno; the tostadas made with a huge crunchy chip with crispy chopped lettuce, shredded chicken or beef, oversized diced tomatoes, and topped with white shredded cheese; or the plump burritos packed with stove-heated beans, peppered Spanish rice, crunchy strips of green lettuce, homemade salsa, thick sour cream, guacamole, and your choice of tender meat.

The number two combination plate is what our waitress, Rose, insisted that I try. It came on a flaming hot plate that held two enchiladas, a taco, rice, and beans. The enchiladas (which simply means "in chili" in Spanish) sat side by side on the left of my overly large, oval-shaped plate. Inside the enchilada, the cooks packed in tender shredded chicken, wrapped in a silky corn tortilla, and smothered in their famously spicy homemade red sauce. This idea came from the Aztecs, but then became commonly known in the U.S. as enchiladas. The chicken was *very* tender, and the melted cheese added an extra kick. The sauce was definitely spicy, but as far as taste goes it's floatin' in a whole other boat. It got dry and cakey like Elmer's glue waiting to dry, which got unappetizing pretty fast.

My taco was tickled with sprinkled white cheese, a tremendous amount of fresh green lettuce, and rich red sauce mixed with the delightful, juicy chicken. It eventually became soaked through and soggy from the undrained chicken like it had been sitting out in the rain. It was messy and difficult to eat.

On the other hand, my beans were small portioned and only appetizing when mixed in with the rice. The beans were a light brown unhealthy color, like a pile of manure. The rice, however, was sprinkled with peppers and smelled full of unknown spices. The rice actually brought the meal together. The delightful mix disappointingly turned out to be one huge plate of fiery mush that I had to wait to let cool for me to eat.

The whole restaurant in general was a wonderful place to eat. The mariachi music in the background made me feel like I was in Mexico. The delicious enchiladas alone will pull me back again sometime soon. By learning the history behind the restaurant, it added more meaning to the restaurant's décor and design.

The service was amazing thanks to our waitress, Rose Quintero (named after the original), and the cooks whom I was unfortunate not to thank. The manager made a lasting impression and carried on their even grander tradition of delighting me with an American tradition.

A tootsie pop.

Acapulco
2104 Lincoln Ave., Alameda
510-523-4935

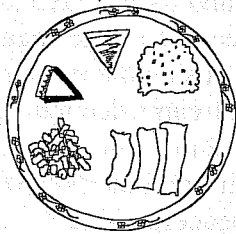
Legendary Barbecue

By Danielle Rodgers

A lot of sizzling restaurants line San Pablo Avenue, such as Chef Edwards and Flint's. But the most well-known, fiery barbecue restaurant in East Oakland is Everett & Jones. Located at 2676 Fruitvale Ave, this southern ethnic restaurant offers a variety of food to choose from, including barbecue ribs, macaroni & cheese, chicken, and even homemade sweet potato pie.

If you ask anybody who lives in Oakland why Everett & Jones barbecue is so good, they would say, "The meat is tender and that's how I like my food." Everett and Jones got its name from the owner, Dorothy Everett. In 1973, Dorothy, a divorced mother of nine children, only made \$2.00 an hour as a cook. With the help of her friend and \$700, she opened her first restaurant on East 14th and 92nd Street.

In the Northeast, grilling anything is considered barbecue, and in the South, barbecue is dominated by chopped or shredded pork. As soon as you open the door to Everett & Jones, you are instantly hit with a smell so tantalizing and steamy that you just want to eat right there and then. When you get your food, your teeth hit the peppery juicy rib. It is so tender and spicy that the meat comes right off like a leaf. And the food is so pungent, it's like you are in a dream. My favorite thing to get is the combination.



The combinations that I get are the ribs and links, with the side order of potato salad and beans. As soon as I bite into the link, the fiery juice explodes in my mouth like fireworks. The potato salad is so scrumptious that they put the right spices in it, just like my mom. On the menu, they offer combinations for your taste. The menu is yellow with black bold letters like the ones that sit high on the buildings in downtown Oakland. However, their pictures are only in black and white, which makes it hard to tell if the food looks good or not.

Whether or not you love barbecue, the legendary Everett & Jones is and will always be the most seductive restaurant—from their peppery ribs that water your mouth to their sweet potato salad and pecan pie that bring back memories of mom shimmering in the kitchen. Everett & Jones' luscious and spicy barbecue is the best, and if you don't believe me, then go try it. I dare you.

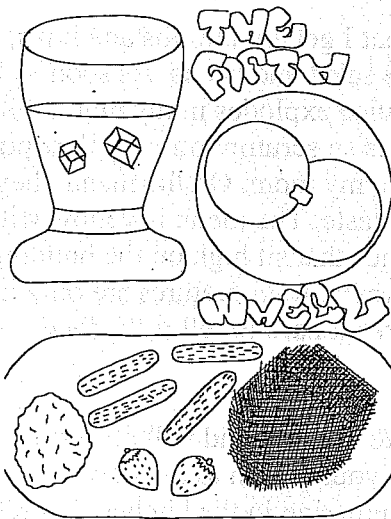
Everett & Jones
2676 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland
510-533-0900

Magical Morning Breakfast

By Shaira Gonzalez

Sometimes you wake up in the morning with the desire of eating a well-prepared breakfast. The Fifth Wheel Restaurant meets those requirements. This place is a small peaceful spot that feels like home. The first time I visited this place with my family, I found myself in a very bad mood. My mom asked me what I wanted to eat. I told her that I didn't care, whatever. She looked at me very angrily and told me to quit the bad attitude. We waited for the food to get cooked. While we waited, I could smell the buttery pancakes and honey floating in the air. Finally, our food arrived. My face and my mood changed. The food looked moist and tender, very mouthwatering. We started eating, and I realized why my family had said that it was worth the wait for a table to become available.

The Fifth Wheel Restaurant has been around since 1946. In 1978 the restaurant changed owners, and an Asian family that enjoyed cooking took over the business. The Fifth Wheel got its name because in 1946, all the San Leandro area was surrounded by farms. Back then you could not find any cars, only wagons, and the wagons from back then had five wheels instead of four.



Whenever I pass by the Fifth Wheel Restaurant, I catch a sense of a small peaceful home. Last week, as soon as I reached the doorknob and opened the door, the smell of honey, buttery toast, and eggs reached my nostrils. I was lucky enough to find a table available and didn't have to wait in line for a place to become unoccupied. Once again, I caught the divine feeling of harmony inside the restaurant. Hand-painted landscapes of gorgeous streams decorate the walls around the small place as if I were in a miniature gallery. The small red and white curtains and the pots with artificial flowers make the place feel peaceful. The restaurant has four tables and several stools in front for people who want to see the chefs perform their culinary magic. Families, elders, and couples of all ages and sizes attempt to start their morning with a calm conversation at a peaceful place in the companionship of a delicious breakfast. A Mexican sombrero hanging on the wall welcomes their number one clients.

Have you ever wondered where breakfast comes from? Historians confirm that eggs, sausage, and pancake type food have been enjoyed since Ancient Rome and Greece. Pancakes became popular when Catholics started fasting for Lent. To eat pancakes, they came up with a holiday known as Shrove Tuesday or Pancakes Day. On this day they held feasts of pancakes to use up the supplies of fat, butter, and eggs, foods that were forbidden during the sacrifice days of Lent. Different cultures including British, American, Egyptian, and German make pancakes

with different shapes and texture. In the United States, pancakes are served with ham, eggs, hash browns, sausage, bacon, and orange juice.

The Fifth Wheel doesn't only make magic with breakfast, but also with different plates. They have different categories for you to choose from. Traditional Breakfasts are served with two eggs, choice of hash-brown, grits, white steamed rice or French fries, and two slices of toast with a choice of meat. They also serve pancakes, French toast, omelets, hamburgers and sandwiches.

As I scanned through the menu, I decided to order two pancakes, two scrambled eggs, three link sausages, a hash brown, and a cranberry juice. As my food was getting cooked, I could sense the butter and grease attacking my nostrils. When my food arrived, my pancakes laid on a separate plate. They looked fluffy and irresistible like some sexy, plump and kissable lips. They appeared perfectly round like the school clock, and their color looked like a Mexican baby mixed with African American. On the other plate, my eggs looked bubbly and glossy, also with a mixed color of yellow and white creating a light yellow color. The link sausages appeared shaped like a finger, and they looked oily. The hash brown was minced into pieces, and it had a beautiful golden, crispy color. I started enjoying my meal, and the food appeared at a scorching temperature. The delicious eggs tasted buttery, bubbly, and eggy, while the irresistible hash brown tasted oily and crispy and sounded crunchy in my mouth. The links tasted greasy and soggy. The pancakes tasted buttery like freshly popped popcorn, felt fluffy and spongy like my bed. I could taste the honey being absorbed by the insides of the pancake, they appeared so savory. I had a delectable and enjoyable meal.

The best mornings of my life are the ones when I attempt to start my day with a great breakfast. Honestly, no one would leave the Fifth Wheel Restaurant without a smiling stomach. Nowadays you don't find many places that satisfy your stomach, but at the Fifth Wheel, not only your stomach gets satisfied but also your need for good service. Everyone that works at and visits this magical place makes you feel welcome any time, any day, no matter the weather. Don't think about it too much. Run and discover the wonders of this magical place.

The Fifth Wheel Restaurant
898 San Leandro Blvd., San Leandro
510-635-7538

The California Italian Wonder: Linguini's

By Glen Scott

As my foot hit the door, I felt the homey warmth from the soft Italian classical music playing in the background. In the restaurant, barrels of wine sat on the floors, and bottles lined shelves like little soldiers. The dirty red brick walls were covered by pictures of people doing daily chores in Italy. This was amazing how the restaurant was such a retro, beautiful, brick, colonial-style restaurant.

Just looking at the window made my mouth water. Linguini's has a strong Italian menu, which consists of pastas from many different regions in Italy. On the menu they have succulent dishes like pollo con marinara, chicken alfredo, and even spaghetti. This was one of the most delectable menus I've seen in awhile.

This leads me to telling just how this Italian wonder escaped Italy to California. In 1988 a man and his wife owned the building, and it was a café. During the renovation they decided to turn the building into an Italian restaurant. They named it Linguini's after the owner's favorite dish.

Pollo con marinara, the sound of it makes my mouth water like a tropical spring. When the dish arrived, it had a silky smooth texture. Marinara sauce and chunks of chicken covered the long and thick noodles. The dish was then topped with a bright red marinara sauce. The first bite felt like heaven in my mouth. As I held and savored the strong garlicky taste, all the herbs felt like they had rooted in my mouth. The tart bay leaf, the spicy pepper, and the tangy tomato were all apparently there.

The meal left me fully satisfied with a strong aftertaste of garlic. Linguini's was just like a home away from home. I leave you with a thought: what is better than a good dream? Linguini's!

Linguini's
1508 Park St., Alameda
510-521-2141

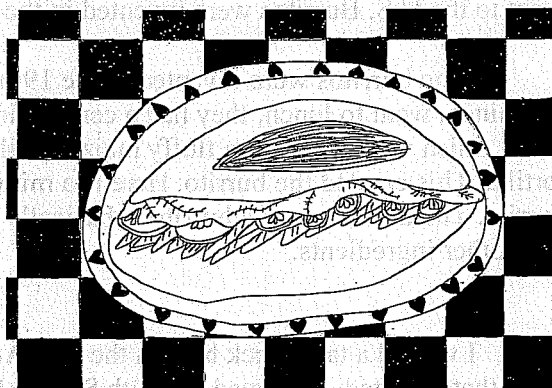
A Little Taste of El Salvador

By Mayra Hernandez

The fresh smell of pupusas, the smell of fresh loroco and cheese, rushes at you as soon as you enter the restaurant. The food smells so good you could taste the spongy Salvadorian cheese in your mouth. The fresh splashing horchata is poured into red see-through cups, ready to be served. Lifelike paintings hang on the walls to decorate the restaurant. The women in the painting make pupusas, which represents what's going on in the kitchen because the cooks are doing the same thing.

Like the restaurant itself, the menu had a real Salvadorian feeling to it. It consisted of delectable pupusas, which is the first thing on the menu; juicy caldo de pollo o res, which is chicken or beef soup; pescado frito, sizzling fried fish Salvadorian style; huevos rancheros Salvadorian style, scrumptious eggs with a special sauce which can be mildly hot but nothing too out there; and panes rellenos, which was what I ate.

What I chose to eat was delectable panes rellenos. They are like Salvadorian Subway sandwiches, which are to die for, but to me, they're 20 times better. Like a Subway sandwich, it is a roll of bread split into two with its golden brown outside and fluffy inside and stuffed with all types of goodies. You can order panes rellenos with different kinds of meat. They can either be tender chicken, beef, or vegetarian, which has no meat at all. I ate the tender chicken pan relleno, which had mayonnaise, chicken, crunchy lettuce, crisp tomatoes, salsa de tomate, which is a special tomato sauce, and curtido—cabbage, carrots, and onions soaked in vinegar, which smells like pickles. It looked all crammed together with the sauce oozing out of the ends of the bread. This dish is definitely one to use more than one napkin with.



Panes rellenos are considered a delicacy in El Salvador. These delicious panes rellenos come from the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador, which is where all the restaurants are located. It is said that panes rellenos started when a local Salvadorian restaurant owner had lots of rolls of bread and didn't know what to do with them. So she stuffed them with curtido, and from there she saw that they tasted good and added them to the menu. Ever since then, panes rellenos have been a great tasting Salvadorian dish.

Los Cocos restaurant has been around for 18 years and has been owned by Elvia. They make great pupusas and great tasting horchata, with the homestyle soups and desserts. Los Cocos gives you a little taste of El Salvador in a few bites. Los Cocos is a great restaurant to get a taste of El Salvador for a few dollars. It guarantees the best tasting pupusas in Oakland and other Salvadorian specialties. The restaurant itself has a great feel to it that you experience as soon as you walk through the doors. I really recommend anyone who is tired of burgers and fries to go try something different and tasty. I promise you won't regret it.

Los Cocos Salvadorian Restaurant
1449 Fruitvale Ave., Oakland
510-536-3079

Mexican Traditional Food

by Hector Montano

Burritos, burritos, burritos. Burritos drive me nuts. They are mouthwatering. Burritos have been around for several years. Burritos are very popular in Oakland, and there are burritos everywhere. Burritos in Oakland are like an addiction, like a cigarette and Red Bull. Burritos are my favorite food of all time because they are so delectable. Burritos to me are like playing soccer. I really enjoy eating a minced steak burrito, especially the first moist bite. I can't really describe the first bite, but to me it's like ohh! The feeling is like when you want something for so long and once you get it, it's a big great relief.

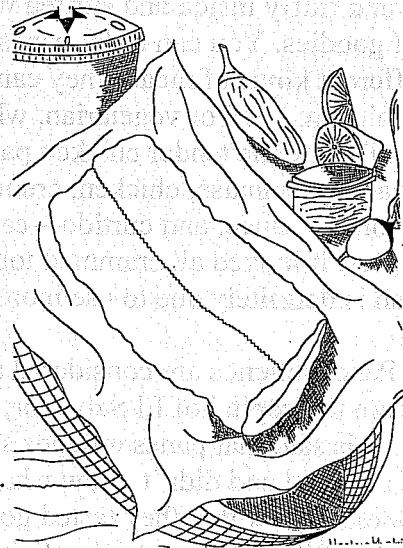
Burritos are very mysterious. Nobody really knows where burritos were invented, but I have the solution. Burritos were invented in the Mexican state of Sonora. People say that burritos were a popular food in Sonora, and it started spreading up north, that basically it went to the U.S. Burritos were invented in the north region of Mexico.

The burritos were invented in the 19th century by miners with common sense. When the miners went to lunch, they had a certain time limit. Once their time was over, those who didn't finish would get a big fluffy maize tortilla and wrap all of their leftover food in the tortilla. This created the burrito. Here is a mini lesson for those who don't know what is a burrito. The definition of a burrito is basically a tortilla of harina rolled with food like meat with other ingredients.

I visited a taco truck here in the Bay Area. The taco truck that I visited, is located at 100th St. and East 14th. It is in front of a Catholic Church and AutoZone. I chose this restaurant because it's close to my house and they serve good food. I really like their burritos because they are very juicy. Once you take a bite, the sauce starts dripping like a waterfall. I like them because they are very distinct from other trucks. Other taco trucks serve some dry burritos, and to top it off, they are very expensive. I would rather eat food that I know I'm going to enjoy eating.

The restaurant was started by a guy named Jose Torres. He came here on the 23rd of November of the year 1989 as an immigrant. He came here working as a mechanic and then became a construction worker. He wanted to open his own business as a salesman. The burrito truck got its name from the owner Jose. He decided to put down his hometown name "Chavinda." I think it is kind of cheesy, but he's representing his country. Chavinda is a city in Mexico, and it is located in Michoacan, down in the south of Mexico. Well, if you're a person that loves Latin food, you should go to "Chavinda Taqueria" for a good plate of traditional Mexican food.

The taco truck itself isn't really much to talk about. The taco truck has a bench with a "sombria" to shelter you from the steaming heat from the sun. It appears organized, and I like it because I feel welcomed. Their signs are funny because they have little smiles on them. Another thing that I appreciate is that they have two garbage cans and a bottle opener. Some



trucks are ghetto and don't care about their customers.

The scent of the taco truck smelled delectable. All of the vapor was heading towards my way, and my big nostrils loved it. It was very distracting. The truck's surroundings were very loud. I heard a lot of motors running and some of them roaring. I heard a radio station coming from the taco truck, buses, fire truck sirens going off, and the irritating sound of construction. They were fixing the potholes. I also heard the steering sounds of people riding by with their bikes and the engine of a Harley Davidson.

The restaurant receives all types of people. All kinds of generations go there, especially the pigeons. When I was there I saw a lot of Mexicans and blacks; for example, there was a black male sitting behind me enjoying his tacos. I think this taco truck attracts a lot of people after work because all types of construction workers stop by. This taco truck does not seem like a family restaurant. For example, six guys pulled over with two heavy-duty trucks.

On the menu of the Chavinda Taqueria, all tacos are \$1.25. There are many different meats. The menu contains beef head, tongue, brains, grilled steak, spicy pork, intestines, and sausage. If you really want extra toppings like extra cheese or sour cream, it is going to cost you 50 cents more.

When I received my burrito, it looked like a big hard Pepsi can. It also looked like a silver, platinum pipe. It is joined with a little plastic cup of sizzling sauce with sliced radish and a molten jalapeno. My burrito smelled fresh and toasty, especially when I leaned down to smell all of the steam and the succulent aroma of the vapor. I identified the smell of the shredded meat and the radish that came with it and the fat jalapeno. It really wasn't elaborate.

My food tasted great and chewy, especially my moist fluffy tortilla de "harina." My food tasted like steak with a mixture of rice and beans. It also had onions and cilantro. The best part about it: it had a great amount of sour cream. I loved the first bite of my burrito because the sizzling sauce just dripped down my mouth. It tasted like thick sour cream with steak meat. It was so mouthwatering. The eggy taste was so good because it was like a combination of peanut butter and jelly. The texture was ok. It was long with a lot of bumps and wrinkles. The tingling spices were very good. It was a combination between homemade sauce and jalapenos. The onions and cilantro really came out with a savory flavor. The temperature was great because it wasn't molten or frosty. It was fiery because of the fresh shredded meat that had just been taken out of the pot.

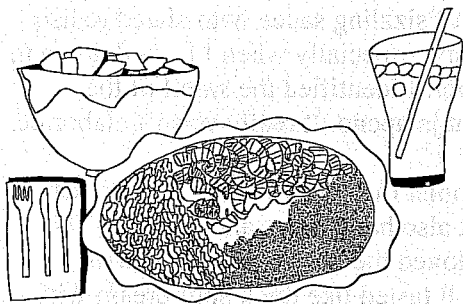
Chavinda Taqueria
100th St. & East 14th St., Oakland

Mexicali Rose Restaurant

By Liliana Fregoso

Mexicali Rose Restaurant, home of mouthwatering Mexican food. This restaurant looks old and green like an old crusty frog. It really doesn't look that big from the outside. When you look at this restaurant, you'll probably think that this is not a good family restaurant to eat at, but not this restaurant!

Once you open those front doors, the only thing you'll hear is the loud music that they will be playing like the mariachi or the loud music of the DJ. Once you go in the restaurant, you'll see lots of lights with lots of plants. This restaurant makes you think that you're in the jungle searching for food. They also have paintings of a waterfall with lots of beautiful flowers around it. The restaurant smells like arroz y frijoles, just like my grandmother's house every morning. Hanging from the ceiling there are pinatas all around the room. It almost seems like they are having a surprise party only for you.



Once I got there, the waitress scooted us to our table. She gave us our menus, and we scanned the menu. Once we had our order ready, the lady took our order and rushed to the kitchen. My order was camarones a la diablo. I really don't know the history of my food, but all I know is that they are fresh shrimps with this sauce; the ingredients are ketchup mixed with hot sauce. The food only took about five minutes to be prepared.

The waitress laid my plate in front of my table, and all the moisture went up to my face. I grabbed my fork and grabbed a piece of shrimp. I got my shrimp and started to peel the skin off. Once it was all peeled, I dipped it in my sweet n' spicy sauce. I put the red-looking shrimp in my mouth. Once I got the taste, the sauce dissolved in my mouth, and you could still taste the sweetness of the ketchup in it. The taste was so delectable because it left my mouth with a satisfying taste.

Ever since I tasted camarones a la diablo, I have loved shrimp. They just made me want to stuff my face into the shrimps and eat them all at once. So if you want to have dinner and you feel like eating delectable fresh shrimps, just come on down to Mexicali Rose Restaurant, home of mouthwatering Mexican food.

Mexicali Rose
701 Clay Street, Oakland
510-451-2450

More Than Pizza

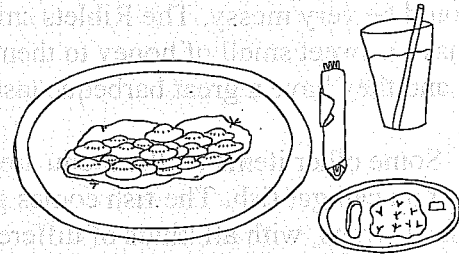
By Berenice Landeros

Have you ever wondered if pizza really came from Italy or if it was just another American creation like the burrito? Well, I have. My curiosity finally came to an end when I found out it really did come from Italy. The Italian pizza came from the poor regions of central Italy. It was made by Italian and Greek peasants. The bread was really thin, and the toppings were any ingredients available. The first pizzeria to open was *Antica Pizzeria Port' Alba'* in 1830. You can still find it in business today in Naples, Italy. It took a few years for it to arrive in the U.S. The first pizzeria in the U.S. opened in 1895 in New York.

Some friends and I wanted to discover something new in Italian cuisine, so we went to Pasta Pomodoro. It is an Italian restaurant located in Emeryville. It was founded ten years ago in 1994 by Adriano Paguini. That was right after he arrived in the United States. Paguini, who is also a chef, brought with him traditional recipes from Northern Italy, while others of his recipes are more modern.

The restaurant is located on the second floor of a shopping center. It is very simple. Outside the door lies a black chalkboard where with bright chalk they write the specialty of the day. As you enter, you can see the small tables for four spread around like chess pieces when you are about to start the game. As you go in deeper, you can see garlic cloves hanging from the middle of the ceiling, giving out a mild scent of garlic. And if you pay attention you can hear the soft music in the background.

PASTA
POMODORO



As soon as we got a table, the waitress came over to hand us a menu. She explained to us the special and then asked for what we would like to drink. I asked for a raspberry iced tea. The menu was divided into nine sections, which are Leggero (on the light side), Sandwiches, Secondi (protein), Contorni (siders), Specialita (house specialties), Tradizionale (old world), and Dolci (desserts).

I wanted to try something different from what I've always had before, so I ordered Ravioli Di Zucca. That is butternut squash ravioli, browned butter, crisp sage leaves and parmesan. While we waited for the food to arrive, they brought us slices of toasted crunchy bread with silky, creamy butter and an oily garlic and spinach dip. We finished them all just in time for when the food arrived. It was certainly different from what I had seen before, but I gave it a try. The ravioli was round like a frying pan, fluffy like a warm couch cushion, and orange like our bright sun. All together it looked like a straw hat. They were covered in a brownish sauce like dripping honey. As I took a bite, a pungent, sweet taste invaded my mouth as aliens would if trying to take over the world. I ended up realizing that Ravioli Di Zucca was too sweet for me; it would have been better as an appetizer.

So if you want to try something new from Italian cuisine, Pasta Pomodoro is your place. Order what sounds exciting or the best, and let your taste buds decide whether or not it is a good place to eat.

Pasta Pomodoro
5614 Shellmound St., Emeryville
510-923-1173

A Riblet a Day

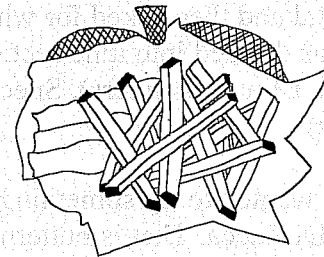
By Jolene Emerson

When you first stroll through the doors of Applebee's, the Maitre'd approaches you and asks where you would like to sit. You can choose from a booth, a table, or the bar in the middle of the restaurant. The walls are lavished with photos of famous people, pictures of sports teams, and posters of old movies. Bright red stop signs, golden trophies, and fancy signed autographs of local sports players also adorn the walls. Lamps with figures of fruit dangle above the tables and booths in the restaurant, reminding me of an antique shop.

Applebee's Riblets come with your choice of Applebee's barbeque sauce or Applebee's honey barbeque sauce. When the waiter or waitress brings you your order of Applebee's Riblets, it comes in an apple-shaped basket. Inside the basket is wax paper with Applebee's logo. The wax paper keeps the food from spilling over into the tiny diamond shaped holes. Covered halfway by the pile of French fries, the Riblets seem tantalizing, as if they were calling me. Fried to a golden color, the fries look so crisp and tempting. When you bite into a fry, they are so crispy on the outside and moist on the inside. The Riblets look wet and sticky. They look like they could be very messy. The Riblets smell so smoky like they were cooked on a barbeque grill. They have a sweet smell of honey to them. The Riblets are chewy but tender, smoky, messy, sweet, and they have a great barbeque taste. The food is mouthwatering, finger-licking good.

Some other items on the menu are your choice of Cesar salad and some other types of salads. You can get fish. The fish comes grilled, fried, or smoked. They have a lot of seafood. They have wraps, with all kinds of different fillings. You can get steaks, chicken, or soups. The most intriguing dish is the house sirloin. It comes with a baked potato and some vegetables. They have a great amount of desserts. They have pies, cheesecakes, brownies, sundaes, cakes, and ice cream. Every dessert is good.

Even though everyone has eaten a French fry, not everyone knows where fries originated. It's uncertain who first fried potatoes, but the Belgians claim to have invented "French fries." French fries were prepared as early as the 1700s and were simply known as fried potatoes. It's said that Thomas Jefferson first tried them in Paris and brought the recipe back home with him. In 1802 the dish appeared on a White House menu as "Potatoes served in French manner." A couple of



American soldiers were stationed in northern France and Belgium during World War I and were hungry and bought the fried potatoes. Because French people sold the potatoes to the American soldiers, the soldiers referred to the treats as "French fries," and people have called them "French fries" ever since.

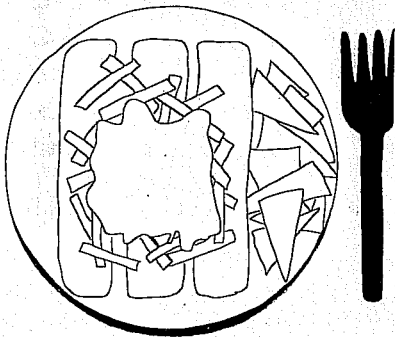
If you like great Americanized food like steak and hamburgers, Applebee's is the place to go. If you like hanging out and watching sports while having a delectable meal, this is the place to go. Applebee's has a great variety of foods, from seafood to salad. Applebee's is an affordable place. You can take your friends and family and have a great time to eat an Applebee's Riblet a day.

Otaéz

By Jose Guzman

A customer can trace the aroma of the food as they stroll near Otaéz restaurant. You can smell those steamy frying onions with the oily chopped steak from feet away. Besides the delicious smell, you can hear the grilling, sizzling steak waving the sound waves of the boiling oil through your ears. The restaurant is located at 3872 International Blvd. As you wander closer to the restaurant, you glance at the brown-brick arches that lie on the walls of the restaurant. Between the arcs, there lie murals of indigenous woman staring outward into the paradise of their home. As you walk closer to the restaurant, you see Mexican-only territory, and the walls hold an orange brown color that illuminates the room with a warm sensation, as if being on Mars and floating around in its atmosphere. When you are in the room, the first thing that catches your sight is the small stove-stand that sits right next to the door, which grills the tender onions with the chewy steak that sparks a watery sensation in your mouth.

OTAEZ



The intricate architecture of the restaurant is amazingly constructed into two sections, and in the middle of the rectangular restaurant, there stands an arched tunnel for people to order at either side. But before you choose to go there, you must decide to either order tacos, which are economically good for you, or to buy some sopes or enchiladas or some other type of food. There is a stove-stand right at the entrance where you can order your tacos in a quick way, or you can wait patiently in the other section of the restaurant where you can order your lunch for the day.

There are many economically good prices for you and your family, but I decided to go for the low prices. I ordered four tacos of steak and one taco of tongue. What caught my attention was the tongue taco that I've never tasted in my life. My order was ready, and as I stood up from my seat, I gradually sniffed the aroma of my food, which was like smelling the scent of a hot sizzling cocoa on a cold morning day. I grabbed my paper plate with my five tacos, and I sat at a small table. I could smell the oily fried onions with the soft sizzling steak. The tongue taco had a rich and dark color with chunky pieces of fluffy tongue lying on top of the tiny round tortilla. The textures of the tacos are soft but crunchy when you bite the small pieces of firm square onions. It was like eating your way through a stiff and tender apple. The delectable soft tacos were stuffed with overflowing steak and tongue with chopped cilantro and onions. Although they were small tacos, the temperature of the soft and tender tongue taco and the chewy steak taco were perfect. When I bit a piece of each taco, it sprouted a nice spicy and oily sensation as if biting a moist sponge filled with a buttery taste.

You're probably wondering how this great place came to be. Well the Otaéz restaurant has been in Oakland for more than 20 years and was put on sale by a previous owner who sold it to Jesus and Socorro in the year 1985. You are probably thinking how the restaurant got its name. The reason why the restaurant is called Otaéz is because the previous owner was from a pueblo in Durango, Mexico, so he decided that he would name it after the pueblo where he was from. The current owner, Jesus, who was born in Guadalajara, decided to keep the name Otaéz from the previous owner. He also designed his restaurant with a *hacienda* style with the help of his wife. So the next time you're in the mood for a pleasant meal of tacos, you know where to go.

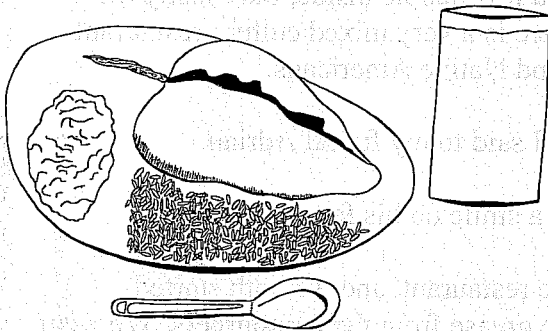
Otaez Restaurant
3872 International Blvd., Oakland
510-536-0909



Stuffed Pepper with Fresh Herb Salsa

By Michael Ruiz

As I approached Gallegos Mexican Food in Berkeley on San Pablo, the sound of cars smashing through San Pablo bothered me. The restaurant was surrounded by a wired fence all around, and in the front, a sliding door let us enter the restaurant. The sign for the restaurant was inside the parking lot. It had a huge pole, and it showed a picture of a short man with a poncho and a sombrero with some leather huaraches. The restaurant was barely noticeable, like a house in the city. It was the only restaurant in the area. The restaurant had chairs, tables, and huge umbrellas in the back and on the sides. The restaurant could be seen from the intersection. There were a lot of parking spots, and there was no drive-through to order the munchies. Their neighbors were mechanics; their shop was on the left side of the restaurant, but on the right side, there was a liquor store.



The dish was made with chili relleno with a slight single cut in the middle of it. Inside of it, they put chopped up cheese. If you like, you could put some meat. They cooked the chili; then, they mixed the egg in until it got foamy. Then, they poured some egg on top of the chili and fried it. They put a special sauce to give some flavor to the egg. As they put some beans and rice on my plate, it looked like rocks in the sun. The smell of egg grabbed my attention as the

melted cheese came sizzling out of the chili. I grasped a tortilla around the silky chili and ate it. As I ate it, I got a steamy taste that was created as they were cooking it. The chili was very sweaty. As I opened it, it looked very juicy like spilled juice. The sound of the soup boiling and the birds singing made a very cool beat. The agua de horchata was freshly made; it was sweaty like when my fat brother goes to the vapor room. Drops of water fell from the cup.

Inside the restaurant there were four boards. Some orders were quesadillas, plates with beans and rice, burritos, tacos, enchiladas, sopos, posole, menudo, and different kinds of plates with different foods. The drinks they had were Jaritos, sodas, juice, and milk.

Gallegos Mexican Food has the best juice. The aguas de horchata, jamaica and tamarindo were all very sweet. You can't fight the taste of the juice. The food is very tasty like the chile relleno covered with egg that comes out of the fryer steaming, made just for you. I have to go, but I'll be back for more.

Gallegos Mexican Food
2309 San Pablo, Berkeley
510-841-9710

Ahn's Burgers

By Elaine Davis

At the corner of Bellevue and Grand Ave sits Ahn's Burgers. This restaurant offers one of the juiciest, most delicious, hot quarter-pound burgers I have ever had. Also this place is in a pleasant area; it is located by Lake Merritt. Not only is it in an attractive area, but the streets are also busy. Since the streets are busy with people, the business at Ahn's Burgers should be bustling. Get ready for your stomach to growl.

In a plain ordinary environment, the walls around you, the tables, and even the chairs are brown. You can imagine yourself surrounded by bark. There are tables on one side of the restaurant that hold up to two to four people. On the other side there are seats where you can sit as if you were sitting at a bar. Picture frames and an ancient clock with a trapezoid shape decorate the walls.

The outside of the restaurant has a miniature parking lot. Also, there is a window on the outside wall where you can order and pick up. I call it a walk-thru; it's like a drive-thru but you have to walk. When I went in the restaurant, there were a few people inside, but mostly the people were ordering from the outside window. This place is a very mixed culture restaurant with Whites, African Americans, Filipinos, Mexicans, and Native Americans.

"I can't wait until I get in there. I'm so hungry," I said to my friend Adrian.

"I know. My stomach is growling," he said with a smile on his face.

I looked at him as we strolled to the corner of the restaurant, and we both started giggling. We got to the door and could already smell the grease from the hamburgers. We went in and sat at the bar-looking tables with people gobbling their food to the left and sizzling hamburgers flipping to the right.

This restaurant has the most exotic burger you can ever eat, instead of those wannabe burgers at McDonalds. Now don't get me wrong. McDonalds is good but not as good as Ahn's Burgers. You want to know why? I'll tell you why—because Ahn's makes their burgers fresh, not with machinery. Plus this restaurant has been around for thirty years. Thirty years. Come on now. This food has to be good. I'm telling you! I really don't know how this restaurant got started, but the name came from the owner's last name. That's not the point. The point is the food, the real juicy burgers. That's what I call it, the "Juicy Burgers."

Now, this restaurant does not only serve burgers. They also offer breakfast for those people who are too lazy to cook breakfast or who don't know how to cook. But you know that is o.k. Ahn's has your back. They also offer sandwiches, hot dogs, milkshakes, and beverages. Their sandwiches, oh my god, are the steak sandwiches. So check that out. They have the original milkshakes such as strawberry, vanilla, and chocolate, but the one that is unusual that I have never tasted is the butterscotch milkshake. And for those of you who are beverage people or, in other words, soda people, you can get any soda you want; number one is Pepsi.

As we sat at the tables, we looked at the menu that was posted on the wall. They didn't have any individual menu for each customer, which is one thing that is different from any other restaurant. "So what are you going to order?" I asked Adrian with my eyebrows high to the sky.

“Hmmm, I’m going to get the Double Cheeseburger,” he said with a serious look.

“A Double Cheeseburger; yeah, that’s good,” I said.

“What are you getting?” he asked me.

“Hmmm...mm. I think I’m getting the Bacon Cheeseburger,” I responded.

There were so many scrumptious foods to choose from. I thought maybe I would get something different, but I didn’t. I couldn’t turn down any bacon, so I got a Bacon Cheeseburger. My friend Adrian ordered a Double Cheeseburger.

As the waiter was walking towards us, I looked at Adrian and said, “Our food is coming.” The waiter sat our plates on the table. I looked at Adrian, then back to my food.

Adrian said, “Hmmm. Yummy.” We both started laughing.

My burger was so delicious I can’t even describe it. My burger had a quarter pound of meat, of course, pickles, mayonnaise, mustard, lettuce, melted cheese, and salty crispy bacon, which is the best with burgers. You can mostly smell the hickory bacon and mustard that is made with a lot of vinegar. As my juicy burger sat on the warm white plate just a few minutes, it looked like books three and a half inches high stacked on top of each other. As I was eating my “Juicy Burger,” I could taste the sour pickles, sweet ketchup, juicy hamburger, and very sour mustard. When I chewed the bacon, it was crunchy. The edge of the bun was also crunchy, and the Pepsi that I had was bubbly, fizzy, sweet, and as icy as a glacier.

The burgers were so delicious; we were so full and stuffed.

“That was good...man,” said Adrian.

“I know. I’m full,” I responded.

So I would like to know; is your stomach growling yet? I know my stomach is growling. If it is, I think you should follow your instincts by already heading down to Ahn’s Burger’s. After your first visit, you wouldn’t resist this restaurant from any other restaurant in the world. Oh just one favor. When you go, order the Butterscotch milkshake and tell me how you enjoyed the shake and the restaurant. Come and join us at Ahn’s ¼ Burger Breakfast on the corner of Bellevue and Grand Ave.

Ahn’s Burger
439 Grand Ave., Oakland
510-763-4328

Are You Lucky?

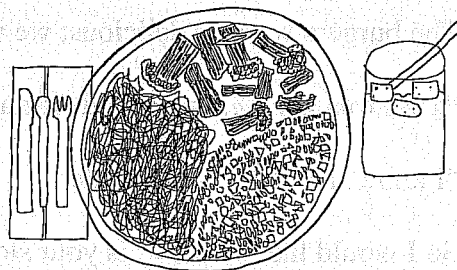
By Byron Escobar

As soon as you open the doors of the Buffet Fortuna, you can sniff all those aromatic spices and sweets like eating some hot nachos with a lot of jalapeños. You can hear people mumbling over the soft classical music that they play. As you stroll in, you can see the schedule hours and also the prices for the times. When you stroll towards the counter, you notice behind the cashier a freezer that is full of beer for those who enjoy a frosty beer with their meal, and for those fiery salsa lovers, they sell a variety of molten hot sauces. While you amble to your seat, you can see three rows of succulent, juicy, savory food; one row of greenish, healthy salads; and the last row of sweet desserts. Then you have two huge rooms to sit in. One is for regular dining, and the other, where parties or meetings are held, is for enormous families.

The restaurant Buffet Fortuna has been open for about eight years now. The name of it, Buffet Fortuna, is believed to mean lucky. It was open because there were not that many Chinese buffets in the city of San Leandro. Chinese food is a great choice for people who don't just want to eat regular food they eat everyday but can enjoy a good and healthy meal.

The word Chinese food, as we know, comes from China; it is a wonderful and creative style of cooking. Chinese people started to migrate to America in the late 1800s to the 1900s. Once Chinese people lived here and started to cook here, a lot of them opened their own Chinese food restaurants. Chinese food is known to be one of the healthiest foods on earth. Why you say? Well, because it is cooked with less oil and fat, and it is mostly seafood. It is believed that seafood is healthy and not fattening.

One of the best dishes Buffet Fortuna has is the chicken chowmein and fried rice, and to finish it off, some savory beef and broccoli. You can sniff the aromatic smell of the moist, greenish and fluffy broccoli, and you can taste the delicate, sweet and juicy chicken chowmein. It's like eating an orange that just fell out of the tree early in the morning. If you really want to make this dish even more wonderful, I suggest you add some of the fiery hot sauce; it would make it so much better like eating some molten Thai curry straight out of the pan.



The great thing about Buffet Fortuna is all the 200 different types of dishes you can eat. Some of them are sweet chicken, steamed rice, mashed potatoes, beef and broccoli, chowmein, oysters, fish, shrimp, popcorn shrimp, ham, roasted chicken, fried rice and many, many more. They even have five different types of jellios and many different types of desserts from ice cream to fruits to cookies, and you can't have a good meal without a salad or soup. All these dishes are available at whatever time during the day.

Going to the Buffet Fortuna is like going to buffet heaven. This restaurant really brings out the name Buffet Fortuna because of the savory food. This place is so good that you should not just take my recommendation. Go or you're not human. How much can you eat? All that you want and just for a rock bottom price!

Buffet Fortuna
1330 Washington Ave., San Leandro
510-614-8768

Homemade Food

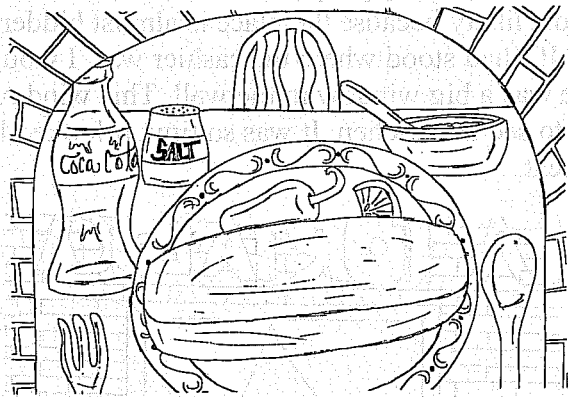
By Julio Ramirez

In the tradition of the Mexican taco truck in the United States, every taco truck has great pictures and the name of the truck. Las Rancheritas, I think, is one of the most decorated trucks in Oakland. On the outside, it has a big picture of a woman hand making tortillas. On the side of the window when you go to order, they have a small plant that matches with the chairs and with the table. The green chairs and table and the flowers make the taqueria more natural. The smell is another thing that attracted me to go and eat there. I remember the first day that I went to eat. I remember that was the best smell of any taqueria that I had visited before. It was like carne asada made with oil. I think they put in tomatoes and onions so the meat would get a succulent flavor.

The inside decoration is beautiful. They have everything in order, the food, the tortillas, etc. On the door, they have a Virgen de Guadalupe and a horseshoe. In the Mexican tradition, the horseshoe is for good luck.

The menu is not so interesting because it's painted on the truck. They have different types of food and drinks, and they also sell snacks. On the menu, they have burritos, tacos, tortas, and nachos. To drink, they have sodas like Coca Colas, Jaritos, and different water flavors.

When I came to eat here, I decided to get a burrito, but before I ordered, a lady got some nachos. They looked delicious with the creamy cheese and with the guacamole that they put on it. The nachos had a really good smell. The taste was succulent, and the jalapenos made them really, really delicious.



The “rancheritas” refers to girls of a little county in Mexico. This restaurant is nine years old. I think they have really good experience doing the best food in the world. They decided to sell food because they knew that the taco trucks were one of the best businesses in Oakland.

I heard that the burrito started in the fields when the Mexican people had to work picking fruit. When the bosses ate dishes with carne asada, beans, rice, and guacamole and didn't finish all their food, they put it on the table. One of the girls came and picked up the plate, and they put all of the things in a big tortilla.

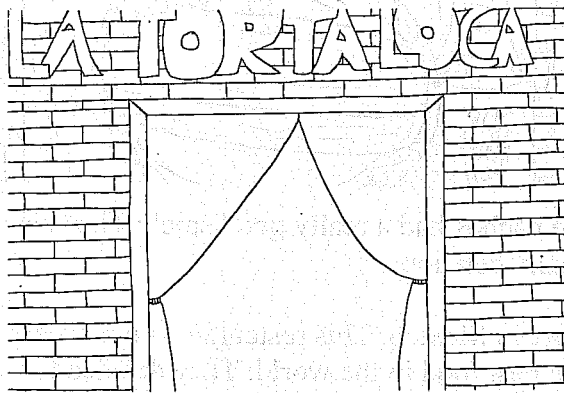
Here in Oakland, we have many taco trucks, but the cleanest one is at East 14th and 85th Avenue. You need to know where the best food is. Here you have the advice of a friend, not only because I'm Mexican. It's because you can eat as if you were in a restaurant but with less price.

Las Rancheritas Taco Truck
East 14th and 85th Ave., Oakland

La Torta Loca

By Arely Zubiri

When I first entered La Torta Loca, I was hit by the aroma of the refried beans and different types of salsa. It was as if I was back in Mexico with all of my family in my grandma's kitchen. The decorations weren't very extravagant. There were some pictures of the famous actor Cantinflas. Cantinflas was very famous in Mexico for making many funny movies. You wouldn't have to be familiar with this character to know that he is a comedian because his clothes were ripped in a way that lets you know that this was done purposely. The restaurant had a TV that was on novelas when I got there. (Novelas are soap operas in Spanish). If you didn't want to watch this, you could ask the lady at the register to change it to whatever channel you wanted. There were about five very small tables that can sit two people each. While I was there, a family of four came in, and they had to put two tables together to be able to sit together. There weren't very many people in the restaurant, but don't think that it is because their food is bad. It is most likely because the place is almost hidden in the jungle of restaurants that exist on East 14th. If I had stood where the cashier was, I would have been able to see outside. This is because there was a big window in the wall. This window is covered with see-through curtains. I was able to see the kitchen. It was so tiny. It looked like the people that work there suffocated from the heat.



The dish that I ordered was called chilaquiles. Chilaquiles are hard tortillas that are covered with salsa. This makes them soft but not soggy. They also have sour cream and queso fresco. When they come to your table, you will know it because you can smell the tangy and fiery salsa. It is better to eat chilaquiles when they are first prepared because if they are left out too long, they start to dry out and the flavor changes. To drink, I ordered an agua de horchata. This drink is made of rice, vanilla, water, and sugar. The water was so good that I ordered two cups of it. It tasted like ice cream. The chilaquiles were kind of spicy but not too much that you feel like you can't eat it. But if you are the kind that likes to eat spicy food, then you can order a different type of salsa that is spicier.

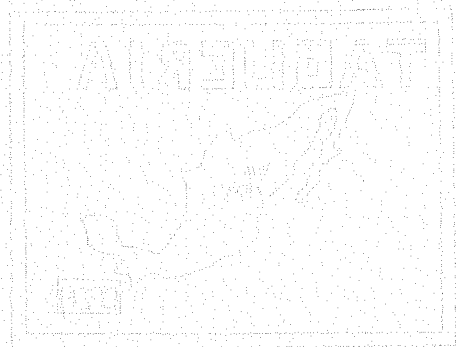
Chilaquiles have been around for a very long time. They go all the way back to when the empire of the Aztecs was still standing. Like many other Mexican recipes, chilaquiles differ from region to region.

La Torta Loca has many other Mexican foods like pambasos, huaraches, flautas, quesadillas, and tortas. Most of the food that they serve here are typical foods in Mexico City.

Before I left, I had the chance to talk to the owner of the restaurant, Delia. She told me that she and her brother started the business nine years ago. They were working well together, but her brother wanted to have his own business. This other restaurant is also called La Torta Loca.

If you want to feel like you are back in Mexico with your family and friends or you just like authentic Mexican food, you will love La Torta Loca. With every bite that you take, you will feel like you are in Mexico listening to mariachi.

La Torta Loca
3016 International Blvd., Oakland
510-533-8472

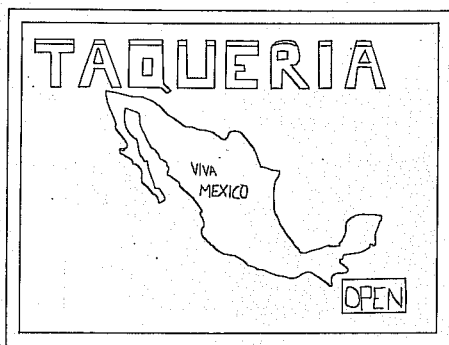


Breaded Shrimps, the Best at Las Canastas

By Ivan Mejia

When I got in the parking lot of Las Canastas, it seemed kind of old. Outside were big posters of maps of Mexico and beer. Then near the door was a big old sign that said Taqueria. When I entered, people who worked in there were Mexican and very nice people. The smell of different types of foods like burritos, beans, rice and tortillas were all over the place. Those smells make me feel like I'm at home.

Ten years before it was Las Canastas, it was a very small place where people didn't want to go. It didn't look like a restaurant. After some months, the owners decided to buy a bigger room, so it became a better restaurant. The name Las Canastas, which means "basket," came from a vote among 20 different names, and Las Canastas had the most votes. Now it is a successful restaurant, and a lot of people come to eat here almost every weekend.



All the items on the menu are Mexican, food like burritos, quesadillas, tortas, enchiladas, seafood and especially tacos. Chimichangas are an unusual dish for me because at first I didn't know what it was. Later I asked, and it was like a quesadilla. It is difficult to choose food from the menu because there are a lot of tasty foods.

When I entered the restaurant, I observed that the floor was not clean. There were some footsteps of mud around the kitchen. You could smell the fragrant and fresh scent of bleach and another soft perfume on the tables. On the walls there were big pictures of maps of Mexico. On one side, there was a big picture of a woman with an icy beer in one of her hands. The sunlight was entering through the windows. You could see the whole restaurant by the bright light. You felt comfortable because of the Latin music that the radio was playing like banda, romantic and rock. There was a big screen TV in the corner on which you could watch the soccer games while you eat.

Breaded shrimps is the most delectable and delicate food that I have ever eaten at Las Canastas. The breaded shrimps were fresh. You can tell by the delicate and fragrant smell of it like they just jumped out of the ocean. When I first saw them on my plate, it was mouthwatering. It looked elaborate. The shrimps were on the left side. The rice and beans were in the middle. There was some cheese melted in the beans. The light flavor of the breaded shrimps reminded me of how food is prepared in my home. The rice was blended and had a burnt smell. The mild water of horchata was very sweet.

The food is so delectable here like drinking a cup of hot coffee on a cold night. And the service is so excellent that you feel like a king treated well by everyone who works in there.

Las Canastas Restaurant
48 Blossom Way, Hayward
510-582-5383

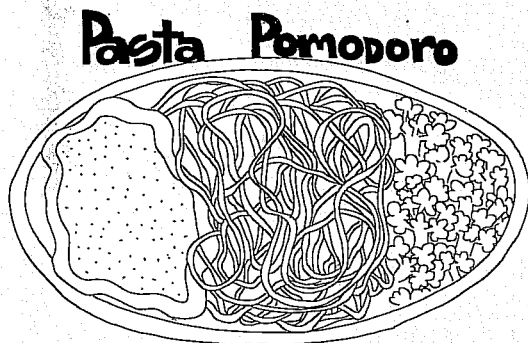
Italian Cuisine

By Ana Sanchez

Pasta Pomodoro. You can see the big red sign on the top of the roof. As you walk in through the long black curtains that hang at the entrance, you feel the warmth of the fireplace that stands at the right side of the restaurant. The mixture of colors of the flames lights up the place and gives it a decorative touch. The black and white pictures hanging on the wall give it an ancient look as if the restaurant had been standing there forever. Yet the rest of the decorations are so modern, they make it seem brand new. All the hundreds of bottles of wine that decorate the kitchen make you wonder if it's an ingredient for the food they cook or if they drink a lot. The garlics hanging from the ceiling make the entire place look interesting.

As we walk inside, a guy wearing all black approaches us and offers us any table besides the ones occupied. We can sit outside, where the light of the sun shines and we feel the cold breeze. We can also sit halfway in, right inside the curtains but not inside the building, where the fireplace stands. We can sit inside the building with the warmth of the heater.

"That one for four," I say, thinking that Jenny would join Berenice, Araceli and me. So we sit at a table inside, right next to a window that allows us to view the first half of the restaurant. Right away comes a waitress with our appetizers.



"Would you like to order now, or you want me to give you guys a minute?" she says. But we aren't ready, so we tell her to come back later. We can't decide what we want. All the names seem so weird and strange to us. Luckily, the description of each plate is underneath the name, right next to the price. Finally, we decide what to order. I order the "Parmagiana." We sit eating our appetizer, which is bread with butter, and the dip is spinach oil. It takes about twenty to thirty

minutes for the food to arrive. When it finally gets there, we are desperate to eat, at least I am. The food has no sudden smell; unless you get really close, the cheesy smell is delicate. It doesn't smell too much, but it looks generous. The Parmagiana is chicken showered in white cheese, with spaghetti, and you have the choice of spinach or broccoli. It is mouthwatering. The chicken is cooked just right, not too soft but not too crispy. It is a plate so good you would eat it even if you were not hungry.

Adriano Paganini grew up in a village in Northern Italy. As a kid he always preferred homemade food instead of canned. When he grew up, he decided to study culinary arts. In 1993 he opened the famous Café Adriano on Fillmore. Since it was only open for dinner, he decided to look the other way and focus on lunch too. He opened Pasta Pomodoro, which stays open day and night. More and more have been opened since then. There are at least ten Pasta Pomodoro

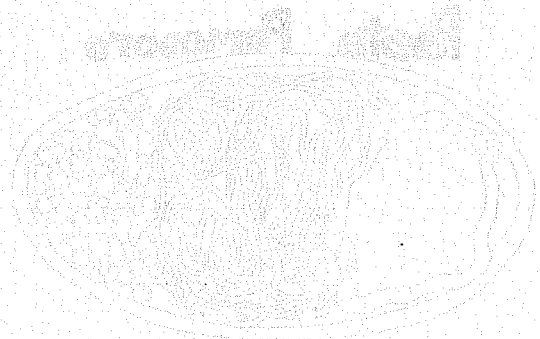
restaurants around. Sometimes, Adriano still goes to the restaurants and checks on the chefs to make sure that the customers get an enjoyable experience.

I take another look, searching around the restaurant; the floor is clean and shiny. The tables are in great shape, the smell is enjoyable, and the peace and quiet of the restaurant is satisfying. I take a closer look at the wine bottles in the kitchen, and they are all arranged with the labels of every single bottle facing forward as if people might read them. The inside of the kitchen can be viewed, and it is clean to the extreme. I guess the quality of the restaurant can't be described to you in words. So go to Pasta Pomodoro, a restaurant with a menu as varied as it is exciting. Try it out, and you won't regret it. The wonderful lunch or dinner experience you will be offered will be unforgettable!

Pasta Pomodoro

5614 Shellmound St., Emeryville

510-923-1173

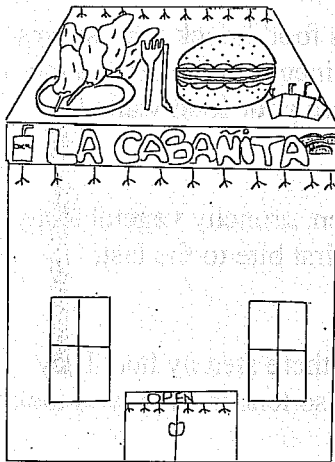


La Cabanita

By Erika Uribe

As I got to the restaurant, I saw the beautiful decorations that La Cabanita had. The first thing that captured my eyes were the posted pictures on the walls. They were pictures of people making different kinds of foods and also pictures of important people that worked in the restaurant ever since it started.

The tables had marvelous decorations, simple but nice. The tables were decorated with lights around them and on top of the walls too. The restaurant had many Mexican items. On the tables, there was a small little hat at the center, and inside the hat there was a whole bunch of candy. And on the edge of the walls, there were beautifully colored dresses designed by girls that worked in the restaurant before.



When I finished looking inside the restaurant, I looked at the menu. They had all these different types of Mexican dishes, and they all looked delicious, especially the tacos with guacamole inside. I could smell the warm aroma passing through my nose. I could smell the salsa picante on top of the tacos with a coca cola drink. There was another dish that really captured my eyes and that I wanted to taste. It was called “bistec empanisado,” meaning fried steak. As I tasted the bistec empanisado, I was delighted. The dish had salad on the side, which was tomatoes and lettuce with ranch dressing on top. It also had Mexican rice, which was very tasty, and on the other side, it had fresh bread.

When I finished eating, I went to look for the owner. His name is Francisco, and he has been working for three years. It started by being a meat market. Then, they sold the meat market to other people, and those people made it into a restaurant. It got its name because it looks like a tiny cabin. The restaurant is open Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

La Cabanita Taqueria
630 Broadway St., Vallejo
707-648-0581

Yummy!

By Armando Hutton

The history of Yummy restaurant from what I know is that it has been up for about six years strong so far. In its little cubicle on the corner, the store looks a little like a tiny tot's playroom. The name "Yummy" was really just a catchy name the people decided to call it.

The restaurant, brownish white, sits very plain on the corner outside. As you walk in, you begin to see little square tables made of particle board with sticky plastic tops laid on them so they can be covered but also remain easy to clean. The bottom part of the tables are screwed into the ground or bolted to stop thieves from stealing them. Florescent posters somewhat draw the attention of the customers with their bold writings. White speckles stand out on the pitch-black stick tiles, which are glued to the floor. When you sit down in the chairs, you begin to relish some of the spectacular statues of Buddha. You then notice there isn't very much talking unless it's the customers giving their orders or the workers conversing with each other.

As you walk some more, you then let all the scents of the marvelous food knock your senses out as if you were in a boxing match. The sour smell of soy sauce and vinegar in the air and the spices make your mouth water. You then stroll towards the counter where your food waits for you to pick it up.

My first dish was the broccoli and beef. The shimmering, apple green, crunchy vegetable lay in the sweet juices of the steamy and chewy dirt brown beef. From the first bite to the last, I began to revere this food. It left me craving more.

My second dish was the fried rice. The fluffy light brown grains sat there steamy hot. They mixed with spicy but soft tiny shrimp that also lay in the rice, making it so tender when you took a bite. The salty but chewy dish was amazing and ravishing.

As the old saying goes, "Don't judge a book by its cover, but judge it by what's inside the book." In other words, give the place a try, and go get your grub on. It's worth the stop. I should know because I went. The service and food are both the best parts about the restaurant. You barely find places with both of these characteristics in the restaurant, and there is no place like Yummy. It will leave you wanting more. If you don't know where to go one day, just let your nose lead the way, and it will lead you to one of the best fast food restaurants in Oakland, Yummy.

Yummy Chinese Restaurant
10264 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito
510-526-5188

Cuisine Divine

By Asha Ransom

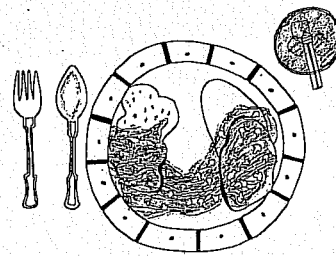
Italian food goes back two thousand years to the time when the Roman Empire fell. Italian food survived through a cookbook in a text called *Apicius*. Although the way food is packaged and shipped has changed, the way Italian food is prepared hasn't. Meats like pork and Tuscan beef, and black truffles come from the north. The south also contributes by harvesting fruits and tomatoes and making cheeses like provolone and mozzarella. When tomatoes came to the "New World," a new dish was made with flat bread, mozzarella, and Promo D'ore or "golden apples." Golden Apples got their names because the first tomatoes were yellow. This dish is what we know today as pizza.

When we first walked into the Olive Garden, it was bland. The waiting room seemed very big with a lot of open space and minimal seating. The restaurant was full that evening, so the waiters were disorganized when seating people. After they would call each party's name two times, within five minutes, they would move on to the next name.

My mom, brother, and I were seated in a booth in an area that was near the middle of the restaurant. The Olive Garden had an Italian feel but reminded me of El Torrito, a Mexican restaurant, because of its dim lighting. Italian ceramics and paintings were placed around the restaurant for decoration. The stucco walls were splashed with a tan paint that made them look aged. The borders were painted a dark green-teal color. You could smell all of the different herbs in the air. It smelled so good, it made you hungry the minute you smelled it.

The atmosphere was calm; you could hear the faint buzz of chatting all around. Unfortunately, we were seated next to a family of four with a toddler screaming at the top of her lungs like a hungry infant. After our food came, I completely forgot about the screaming child. The food's smell was so seductive with all of its herbs, melted parmesan, and sharp spices tingling my senses.

It took me a long time to decide what I wanted to eat. I chose the parmesan stuffed chicken. The food's presentation was unsatisfactory; the garlic mashed potatoes and mushroom-sauce that came with the food looked like throw up.



My mouth was burned by the food because it was served piping hot, so hot you could see the steam from the food rising. Surprised, my taste buds screamed from the succulent chicken. You could cut the chicken with a fork it was so tender. The chicken was so juicy. It felt like fresh grapes in my mouth.

The mushroom sauce was poured on top of the chicken and garlic potatoes. To spice up the sauce, chili peppers were added. It was cooked well; all of the seasoning stood out. It stood out so much I couldn't stop eating it. On the other hand, the garlic potatoes didn't taste anything

like garlic. They tasted more like cheese, seasoning salt, and the potato seasoning that you buy at the grocery store in the vegetable aisle.

Other foods that the Olive Garden served were the pizza and rigatoni with sausage. All the food was served hot. My mom had the rigatoni with tomato sauce. She said that there was too much tomato sauce, and it tasted like it came from a jar. The sausage was also salty and spicy. My mom said it was so spicy she felt like a cartoon with steam coming out of her ears.

The pizza looked like a fresh salad. The peppers were bright green and full of juice. The pizza was easy to bite into and a little oily, my brother said. When the pizza was served, there was more than enough food for him to eat; the pizza was medium size and had six slices.

The green salad served before the meal was fresh. Like the traditional salad, parmesan was grated and put on top of the lettuce. The Italian dressing was zesty and had a strong hint of garlic. The tomatoes were juicy and sliced into little half circles. Baguettes were also served before our meal. They were served hot straight out of the oven. They were so soft, warm, and easy to chew.

There were several things that I liked about the Olive Garden. The way the food smells when it is first placed in front of you and how the herbs and spices stir up your appetite. The chatter that sounds like a medium size breeze rustling through leaves gave the restaurant a pleasant feel. This made the meal taste better. Melt in your mouth, soft baguettes that taste the best when they were out of the oven. If you like succulent meat, a great selection of food, fresh salad and bread, and a nice pleasant atmosphere, I suggest you go to the Olive Garden quick!

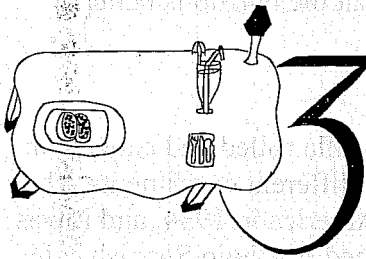
Olive Garden
24688 Hesperian Blvd., Hayward
510-782-6385

Tacos Con Chile!

By Edgar Diaz

La Pinata 3 has been serving the Bay-Area since 1995 with its Mexican cuisine. Once at our destination, we arrived through the back entrance near the parking lot. When entering, you can hear dishes being moved around, chefs talking, and the vibrant feeling of an ordinary restaurant that makes you feel like you're at a party in your home. Photos of different sports team sponsored by La Pinata 3, from soccer to baseball, decorate the walls. Tequila bottles in glass cases make you feel like you're entering an old fashioned Mexican house. The scene of the tequila bar with people's drinks being served makes you feel like you're in a cantina. The oak wood chairs are fashioned like old style Mexico.

A PIÑATA



Once I sat down, I examined the restaurant. Pinatas hung nicely from a thin wire. The walls were painted showing a Mexican theme. Beautiful flowers were adjusted nicely on the side. Within a certain time, a waiter walked in to receive our orders. We ordered drinks. I ordered sangria. This restaurant serves two versions of this drink, alcoholic and non-alcoholic. The restaurant's smell felt like a mother's cooking on a hot sunny day.

Once I sunk my teeth into one taco, the rich taste was very sweet. It made my mouth drool. I washed it down with my sangria. After eating I was really full. I made room for flan. This dessert smelled like sweet syrup and pancakes in the morning. Along side my flan was whipped cream and two strawberries.

The history of tacos flashes back to the time of the Aztecs. Montezuma had a favorite drink made from vanilla and cocoa with a drop of honey. This is a native Mexican dish invented by the Mayans. The Spanish also imported plants and animals that no Mexican had ever seen before. These included horses, cattle, pigs, sheep. For the food part, they also introduced nuts, almonds, rice, wheat, and barley.

La Pinata 3 was a great experience. The food and service were great. I really felt comfortable going there, and I will go next time. Anyone with a taste for Mexican food should come. They will feel like they are at home.

La Pinata 3
2699 Merced St., San Leandro
510-352-8901

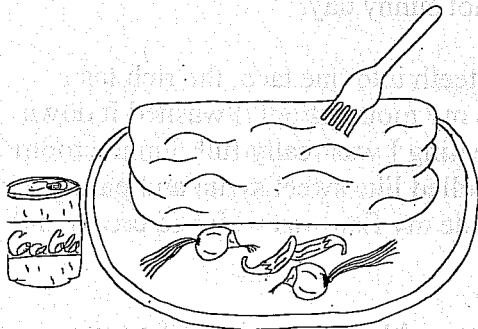
Ricos Tacos: Bonita Guadalajara

By Pablo Ramirez

The taco truck Bonita Guadalajara is not really decorated. It is just as simple as a house, but when you get closer, you can smell the succulent fresh meat as fresh as the spring. Also, it has the main menu where you can observe and order your favorite dish.

When I go I just stare at the window where they have the frosty sodas and waters. The sodas look very soggy, and I go thirsty when I look at them. My favorite dish is the burrito because it looks as big as a cowboy boot. The burrito comes with light chopped meat; also it comes with savory beans that look like marbles. They are delicious. When you order a burrito with extra cheese, you can have a cheesy burrito. The salsas that this taco truck has taste as hot as the sun because they have some fiery salsas.

When you have your burrito, you can see how mouthwatering it is. It looks very tingling because of the salsas. Also, the smell is very aromatic. When I have the burrito in my hands, I go very hungry because of the faint smell. Another dish that is very good is the torta because it has beans and chopped meat. It has almost the same things as the burrito and is also mouthwatering and very delectable, but I don't really order the torta because I think that the burrito is better.



The burrito is a tortilla rolled and cooked on a griddle, then filled with different condiments. The burrito was first seen in America in 1934, and it was sold at Los Angeles's famed El Cholo Spanish café during the 1930s.

The history of my restaurant is that the owner decided to open the taco truck because he said that he used to work in a Mexican restaurant for three years, and he was a very good cook. The taco truck is not really old; it is about four years old. It is a very good taco truck because the owner has experience cooking burritos, and he cooks them deliciously. That's why he decided to open the taco truck.

Bonita Guadalajara, I think, is one of the best taco trucks in east Oakland, and if you want to try this taco truck, go to International and 90th Ave. Once you try one of the dishes or a frosty soda, you won't be sorry, and you will come back to taste another dish.

Bonita Guadalajara Taco Truck
International Blvd. and 90th Ave., Oakland

Italian Heaven

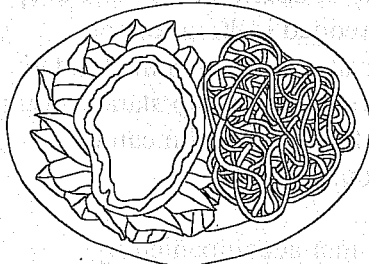
By Araceli Heredia

Pizza, one of the most popular Italian dishes in the United States, turns out not to be so popular in Italy. It was first made by poor people in a poor village, looking for something to eat. My guess is that they did it with whatever was available—bread, tomato, and cheese—and they had their pizza. Food that was once for people who couldn't afford much now has people going crazy; paying lots of money for it. Everyone has had pizza. That's why I decided to do something different.

My friends and I decided to go to Pasta Pomodoro. This is a little Italian food restaurant found in Emeryville, California. Surrounded by other small restaurants, this one is found on the second floor of a shopping center in Emeryville.

As you go in, you feel a change in the air—cold outside, warm inside. You go deeper in, and you can smell nothing but a little hint of garlic. As you look up, you can see what else, garlic cloves sewn together tied up on the ceiling. We hear nothing but people talking low, so low you can hear the soft music playing in the background.

Right when we sit down, the waitress is there, asking us if we need any help and giving us our menus. The menu she gives us is filled with food, many kinds of food. Most have some kind of pasta in them, and most have chicken too. The food is Italian, so the dishes have a lot of tomatoes in them. There is food that we hear a lot about in the U.S. like ravioli, certain pasta, and spaghetti.



The dish I decided to get was parmigiana.

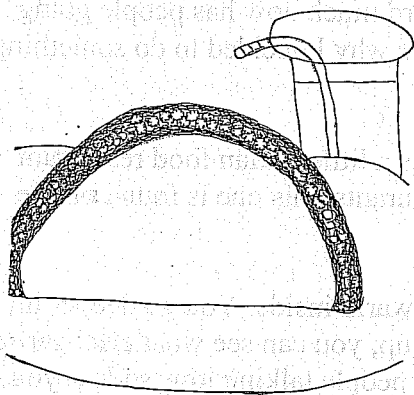
This was long strings of spaghetti on one side and green cooked spinach with the most tender chicken I've ever tasted on the other side. They served the spaghetti with enough tomato on it to taste it, but not too much they couldn't taste much else. The food was served delicious and hot.

Pasta Pomodoro
5614 Shellmound St., Emeryville
510-923-1173

The Best Tacos in the Bay Area!

By Yolette Jamison

Acapulco's is a very diverse environment. When you first enter Acapulco's, you feel like you have just entered a high school reunion. Everyone inside including the customers are very welcoming as you are being chauffeured to your seat. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who enjoys eating great food and having a good time. They have the best waiters and waitresses that you will ever find in the bay area. It is guaranteed that any night you go there, you will always get great service.



While at Acapulco's I ordered a taco dinner that came with a side of Mexican style rice and refried beans. There were many different aromas inside Acapulco's that just made my mouth water, and I wanted to try them all. The tantalizing smell of the ground beef made me want to devour this intriguing meal, and the taco shells were as crispy as fresh tortilla chips. Inside this yellow u-shaped tortilla, there was ground beef, lettuce, jack cheese, onions, and, if you like, sour cream. The savory flavor of the ground beef lingered in my mouth long after I swallowed.

The Mexican style rice had a spicy taste to it, but it wasn't overwhelming. I was able to enjoy the rice as I was eating it. This particular rice had a reddish tint to it as if somebody had thrown several dashes of chile powder on it. Then you have the traditional refried beans. There wasn't really anything special about them to me, but that's just how I felt about them. You might actually enjoy them—different strokes for different folks.

The word taco means wad or plug, but it refers to a light meal or snack. A taco is a deep fried tortilla bent to form a u-shape, then filled with ground beef, shredded iceberg lettuce, shredded cheese and whatever else you would like to add. Tacos became popular in the United States in the early 1950's because a lot of Mexican-Americans were setting up taco stands along the side of busy highways. The taco is a known traditional Mexican food; the origin can be traced back to Mexico, but it cannot be traced to any particular person.

Some other enjoyable dishes on the menu are their burrito dinner accompanied by Mexican rice and refried beans. You have a choice of chicken, steak, or shredded beef. Almost every meal you order will be accompanied by Mexican rice and refried beans, and if it isn't, you can always ask for it. They also have great tamales: you have a choice of chicken or shredded beef. Then there are the enchilada dinners: you have a choice of one enchilada or two. For drinks you can have either water, any choice of soda, or iced tea with lemon, and of course any type of beer you can think of.

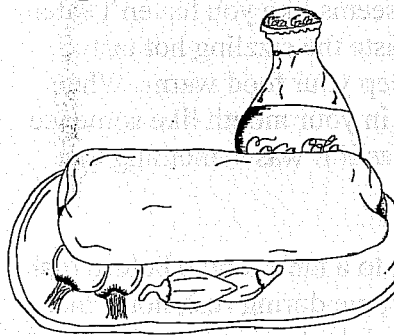
From your seat you can hear the sound of dishes clanking and food sizzling. You mostly hear a lot of laughter along with people talking. Every now and then you might hear a baby cry, but it doesn't bother you because it doesn't happen often.

Welcome In!

By Jose Luis Rodriguez

The restaurant Otaez is a great place to eat at, especially if you love Mexican food. Otaez is the best known for Mexican food in all of Oakland. The food has a great taste. After all, they make it your way. The people that go there are many kinds of races, white and brown skin people. When you enter the restaurant, you can see all the people eating there. The decoration is really nice. It makes you feel like you are in Mexico. The exterior has a really nice painting of women working making tortillas.

The menu was simple, not that fancy. On the menu, there was some interesting stuff, like my friend ordered this plate called carne asada. It looked mouthwatering, really appetizing. My brother ordered this plate called enchiladas. They also looked really intricate by the way they were put together. But I ordered a burrito; it also looked good. My brother's plate came with four tortillas rolled up, covered with red sauce, like a person covered with a blanket going to sleep.



The burrito that I ordered was kind of big. It had rice, beans, beef, tomatoes, sour cream, onions, and lettuce. It had a big tortilla wrapped up in foil. The tortillas tasted bland with not that much flavor. The first bite tasted succulent because it was creamy. The taste was mild, not that hot. When I was eating it, it tasted as delectable as a juicy and delicious watermelon. The tortilla was handmade.

The burrito has its own history. Many people think that they were invented in the USA, but guess what? They were not invented in the USA; they were invented in the north region of Mexico in a place called Sonora. Rich people used to eat all of the things that go inside the tortilla, but they ate the ingredients each on different plates.

Otaez has a really aromatic smell that when you pass through there, it is like the smell grabs you and takes you inside. The smell of the beef sizzling is so strong that you can't fight it off. The place is so great. It has the best food of all International Boulevard restaurants. It's like if you don't go, you are committing a sin. I promise you will love it!

Otaez Restaurant
3872 International Blvd., Oakland
510-536-0909

A Wonderful Taste

By Teresa Hernandez

In Alameda, next to the shopping centers and the beach, Applebee's is right there. From the looks of the outside, it looks like a nice good restaurant to eat at. The inside of the restaurant is well lit and casual. You smell the spices and food floating by your nose. The walls are covered with pictures of famous people for the older people to look at. A horse that is carved out of wood for decoration is for the little kids. It is a place for everyone to go and eat.

On the menu are all types of choices of food. They have hamburgers, fries, steaks, shrimp, potatoes, etc. Everything they serve smells and looks delicious. When your food gets to you, it is steaming hot like it is on fire. The beverages that are on the menu are sodas, alcohol, ice cream, and lemonade. Desserts are ice cream with chocolate toppings. They have kids' meals so that they will eat all their food.

A dish that I ate at Applebee's tasted very delightful. It consisted of steak, mashed potatoes, onions, vegetables, and a slice of crunchy garlic bread. But what made the food taste good was the seasoning that they used. On the steak they used some garlic, black pepper, seasoning salt, and some salt. The mashed potatoes had the same as the steak did; just the mashed potatoes had the peel left on. The vegetables were steamed, and the onions were fried. The smell was hot and good, like when you're really hungry and it seems like you haven't eaten in days. It makes your stomach and taste buds go crazy waiting to taste the sizzling hot tasty food. When the food comes to you, it is left in your frying pan to keep your food warm. When you bite into your steak, it is very tender and juicy like it is melting in your mouth like some ice cream. The potatoes are smooth and soft, and you can just swallow as if it was something to drink.

At Applebee's the service is great. If you want to go straight to a table, come before rush hour because that's like trying to get by a herd of cows. But if you come during rush hour, then you're in the cold outside until your table is ready. The line is most of the time out the door. I think it is a good restaurant. So please feel free to come and taste all the good and mouthwatering food.

Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar
2263 S. Shore Center, Alameda
510-522-7071

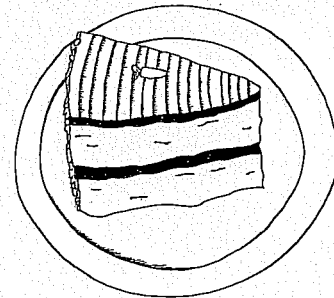
Restaurant Review

By Crystal Patino

Nestled on the corner of College Avenue in Oakland, Crêpevine is a small restaurant with a high ceiling. Surrounding the entrance and exit, a few tables lay offered to customers who choose to feel the surprisingly fresh air and get an up-close view of the not so busy street. Once led inside the restaurant, you are instantly greeted with slow, relaxing jazz music. Keeping the place vivid day and night, the bright lights hang from a flat cream colored ceiling. People sit in a scarce amount, mostly people in casual clothing with their head dug deep into a newspaper article while their hands on occasion reach to a coffee-filled mug. Aside from noticing the people, your eyes are automatically driven to the large, vibrant chalkboard that serves as the menu, mounted on the wall just behind the counter.

Ranging from Savory Crêpes, Scrambles, Omelets, Benedictions, Pancakes, French toast, Sweet Crêpes, Sandwiches, a Kid's Menu, and lastly the Salads and Pasta, all choices are advertised in bold, lively colors. Not knowing what exactly a crêpe was, I looked over the menu and learned that they are made in all sorts of styles. The Florentine Crêpe is mushrooms, glazed onions with jack and cottage cheese. The Greek Crêpe is spinach, kalamata olives, roasted almonds, onions and feta cheese. The Milano Crêpe consists of grilled eggplant, mushrooms, and roasted garlic, and spinach, tomatoes with cheddar, mozzarella, cottage cheese and marinara. In total for the Savory Crêpe gallery, there are eleven crêpes to choose from. If you choose not to try a crêpe from the Savory Crêpe section, you might be tempted to try one from the Sweet Crêpe section, each served with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream.

Only minutes after having taken our seats by a large window, my friend's delectably-smelling and looking crêpe from the Sweet Crêpe section arrived. It probably wasn't much to please someone's dessert needs; her crêpe looked like a giant Mexican tortilla folded in half and placed to the side of the plate, while across from it sat the vanilla ice cream and whipped cream, all topped with chocolate syrup. Even the large amount of empty white plate was embellished with syrup. My dessert, the carrot cake, smelled extraordinarily enticing. The golden bread was foamy while the frosting was thick in sugariness; my mouth watered at the first bite. I had gone against ordering a crêpe simply because I had been craving carrot cake for a long time. To me it seemed weird that we were given our desserts before the actual food. Giving us enough time to get halfway done with the dessert, the main course arrived. My friend's plate was big enough to satisfy a giant; on it was a bagel covered with smoked salmon, cream cheese, red onion and cut into half with mixed vegetables. My plate was deep and blanketed by pasta marinated with an abundance of marinara sauce and melted cheese; the sight looked like a boiling puddle of lava.



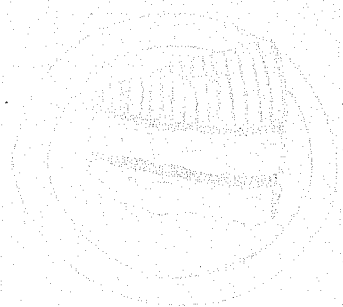
Crêpevine is fairly affordable, it seems. Ten dollars and under buys you a crêpe with additional items from the Savory Crêpe gallery. The same goes for the Scrambles, Omelets,

Sandwiches, Salads, Pasta and Benedictions. The rest of the items on the menu can range from six dollars and under. The service is fair also. Our waitress was nice and on occasion would come to our table to ask us if we needed anything else. This place is definitely worth every penny.

Crêpevine

5600 College Ave., Oakland

510-658-2026



Sparkling

By Ines Contreras

Sparkling from wall to ceiling, the New China Buffet opens its doors to anyone who wants to come in. Their chairs and tables have a dazzling glossy look that makes you want to rub them to see if they're really wood or plastic. The mural of the Great Wall of China stretches on a big thick canvas. The color on the mural and the way it's drawn makes you think that Picasso is still alive and that he drew it. As you sit and look outside, their windows have a white square glass that makes you think that they have a picture there when in fact it is real life. It's what's happening outside. New China Buffet has one characteristic you can't compare to other restaurants, its cleanliness. The restaurant is so clean that it seems it is made of crystal glass and that dirt does not exist in the world. All you can smell is the delicate, fresh aroma of vegetables and meats that enrich everyone's nose—not the chemicals used to sparkle up the nice restaurant.

A unique popular snack that the Japanese developed was sushi. In the 18th century, the Japanese developed various styles of sushi to satisfy everyone's taste. At New China Buffet, the rice that covers the sushi rolls is soaked in vinegar and sugar, giving them a sweet and sour flavor like a sour candy to a lollipop. The best part of the sushi is the chewy seaweed that has a salty flavor of the sea. The soft avocado dissolves in your mouth and gives a bitter taste of pistachio. They also add a fresh and crunchy cucumber just snatched from the garden to give the sushi roll a fresh taste of vegetable. The touch of the sushi roll is so delicate and smooth like a teddy bear for a baby. The stuffed sushi roll gives it a firm grip that when you take a bite from it, nothing falls into your plate but only into your mouth.

The delicate taste of glimmering hot orange chicken drives everyone crazy. Once you put the chewy orange chicken in your mouth, it makes you want to stuff your mouth until nothing fits anymore. The crunchy flavor of broccoli with beef tastes like soy sauce with teriyaki, all mixed together to give you what's known as Mongolian beef. Too many dishes to decide on, but they have a fiery taste that makes you want to eat forever.

The name New China Buffet comes from a chain of restaurants with that name. It opened three months ago offering up to 150 items daily, including barbecued grill, Chinese dim sum, sushi, Japanese cuisine, and Italian cuisine. It opens everyday of the year including holidays. Monday-Friday lunch costs \$6.25 and Saturday-Sunday is \$9.99, including holidays at \$9.99 the whole day. Its hours are from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. everyday. The buffet to go for lunch is \$2.95 per pound and for dinner is \$3.95 per pound.

Rolled and firm are the sushi rolls that jump from the bar into everyone's mouth. Hurry before they are gone! And let the last sushi roll be yours!

New China Buffet
15071 East 14th St., San Leandro
510-317-9998

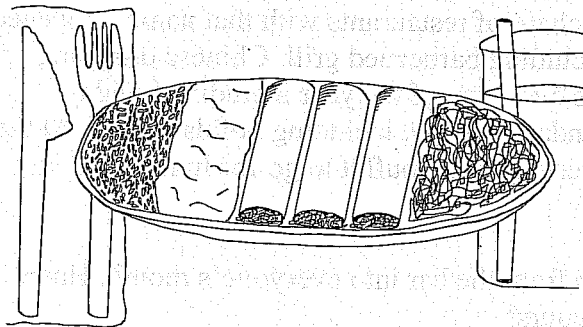
Go Crazy with TORTA LOCA

By Angelica Arechiga

As I grew up at home, I remember always eating enchiladas. My great grandmother, grandmother, and now my mother make this delicious dish. But I've always wondered where it actually came from. Who were the first to actually come up with such a breathtaking dish? This is when I decided to research the well-known enchiladas, and to my surprise, I discovered that the first civilization to create and eat the enchiladas were the Aztecs. It's been about 500 years since they created the enchiladas, and, to this day, it's one of the most traditional plates in Mexico. Here in the United States it was first known in 1888, but it wasn't until 1949 when it was described as "a Mexican dish prepared more for tourists than local consumption."

Before we got our order taken, we got a bowl full of crunchy brown chips that had been under a bright hot light to keep them warm. Along with the chips, we got a sizzling hot Mexican sauce. When I got a scoopful of the hot sauce inside my mouth, a tingling effect was caused. Hot. The chili sauce felt like a volcano eruption inside my mouth. There were no waitresses, so I had to get up and get my own food from the counter.

When I reached my plate, the rich chili smell caressed my nostrils, reminding me that Mexican food is made with exquisite hot chilies. The perfect arrangement of the dish was in small portions of beans, rice, a salad of lettuce with random small pieces of chopped tomatoes, and three bright red enchiladas. They were set up nicely, resembling the colors of the Mexican flag. Green, white, and red. The greasy refried beans tasted like the neighbors' leftovers, as if they had been preheated, but the salad was fresh as a newborn tomato. The three enchiladas tasted crunchy and hot as they touched my tongue; I could feel the crunchy and greasy enchilada melt softly inside my watery mouth. It was topped with cheese and cream, giving it an elegant look. The rice no longer retained the moist, smooth, savory flavor, but rather a dry and stale flavor.



La Torta Loca, a small restaurant, isn't much to look at. It sits in between a clinic and a big parking lot at International Blvd. and 30th. But once you enter through the door, you can find yourself lost on México's tiny, crowded "fondad."

These places are typical tiny

restaurants found inside the owners' house or next to it where the walls of the tiny fonda depict the Aztec and Mayan pyramids, their gods and goddesses, and traditional celebrations. The colorful walls comfort you and make you feel merry. The tables are arranged to seat about 36 people, but you first would have to find your way through a labyrinth of chairs and tables. As I marched into the restaurant, the first thing that caught

my ears was the loud voice of people speaking Spanish, "Hoy en los deportes Mexico..." But as I glanced around, I saw that the small compact restaurant was desolate. Out of the corner of my right eye, I spotted a big black TV. The news was on. My nostrils were quickly infused with a strong smell of oil that seemed to float above my head like smog on a hot day in L.A.

The restaurant not only makes the delicious enchiladas, but they also offer other typical Mexican dishes. In the menu you can find yourself lost in the naming of so many dishes such as pozole, menudo, tamales, quesadillas, tostadas, flautas, pambazos, sopes, and huaraches. Two of the most interesting dishes I came upon were the flautas and huaraches because of their unusual names. In English, flauta means flute, and huarache means sandal. Although they have awkward names, they sure are worth a try. The menu is strategically placed above the ordering counter, making it easier to choose what you want to order.

La Torta Loca has been in our community for more than eight years. It started as a small ordering window where hungry clients overcrowded the tiny window to get a taste of their food. There were no tables, but that didn't stop their overflow of customers. Now they have a second restaurant with tables and a jukebox. When I asked the owner what the name meant and why it was chosen, she replied, "It doesn't mean anything special. We just wanted a name by which it could be identified."

"If you like good customer service, better think twice before coming to la Torta Loca," a fancy old lady whispered as she exited the swinging door. Unfortunately, I learned it the hard way. The food here is amazingly delicious, but its customer service needs work to be as irresistible as its food. If you ask me, next time I will get the mouthwatering food to go!

La Torta Loca
3016 International Blvd., Oakland
510-533-8472

Front cover by Hector Montano & Melissa Lime

All restaurant reviews and drawings by
Ms. Hsu's English 11 students & Ms. Sufi's Art 11 students at
Unity High School, Oakland, California

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