

California politicians: "Lockdowns are for little people."

Four-dollar Gaslamp breakfast deal ■ San Diego's resident mezcal

Reader

Emmanuel
Cafferty
is not
a white
supremacist

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Editor's picks from this week's free classified ads
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MICKEY MOUSE THEME ornaments with Christmas tree skirt, two big shoes, and two dozen ornaments.
JERRY D. Stop telling us how to play pool. We manage a billiard bar, we know. Stop telling us how to play cards. We frequent casinos.
SEEKING REPTILES. Rehome your turtles, tortoises, and lizards.

Prickles of pepper

San Diego is a breakfast city

Gaslamp Quarter. People wary. Streets empty. Seagulls fighting over scraps. One place crowded: breakfast joint on 6th and J. It's blossoming in sky-blue umbrellas and rosy pink chairs. And busy! Really surprising at this time, about two o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. Any restaurateur will tell you that Tuesday is the worst day of the week, business-wise.

For me, this is perfect. I got off the Green Line trolley at the Gaslamp Quarter. Started wandering. Looked like no chance of a brekky among the bars that were open. Then I came to Sixth and J, and this brick and black pile that's a Residence Inn by Marriott. But it is transformed along J. They've built a long coral of temporary timber fencing. It's the extended sidewalk seating for the Gaslamp Breakfast Company.



Mashed potato waffle. You'll just have to talk to your taste buds

Actually looks great. Tables stretch around both corners of the block. The scene is bustling out with all these people, spaced two tables apart, but still looking kinda cozy.

The reception guy takes me halfway down the block to the nearest available table. Leaves a QR code for the touchless menu. Says they've still got an hour till their three o'clock closing.

Server named Felipe comes up, asks if I want anything to drink. And by that he means anything. Like, they have a full bar. But coffee is all I care about right now. They do have nitro cold brew, \$4 for 8 ounces, or \$6 for 16. But no. Things are a little chilly, even in the sun. So this coffee's gotta be hot.

And what a good choice. Yes, their drip coffee costs \$3.50, but it comes in a huge bulging cup, with a small top, so the heat stays in. Also, it's bottomless, if you ever make it through the first cupful.

I sip and look. And wow. Eye catches a little box at the bottom. "3 eggs any style, \$4." That plus toast with jam (\$1.50), and you've got yourself a decent breakfast. Nine bucks including the giant coffee.

But here goes my wandering eye. I'm back up

the top, and ooh, their *chilaquiles Suizos* ("Swiss") have *queso fresco* and poached eggs. Cost \$13, or \$18 with shrimp, \$16 with chicken.

So yes, now we're back up to the regular Gaslamp price range. But I am tempted by a fresh take on Benedict: fried rice Benedict. For \$14 you get "crispy ham, *sambal* (Indonesian relish) hollandaise, pickled radish salad, two poached eggs, house potatoes." Hmm. Except just below, we're talking the sweetness of various waffles, like a S'mores waffle with graham cracker crumble (\$9), or the delish-sounding orange thyme waffle with mascarpone and orange segments, plus honey (\$9).

Then again, back to savory: they sneak in a, wow, mashed potato waffle.

Now there's a thought: a savory waffle! This comes with cheese sauce, spicy sausage and green onions. Plus two eggs any style. I'm going for this one.

"Eggs?" says

Felipe.

"Over

easy," I say.

Felipe

says mashed

potato waffle

is one of the

surprise hits

at this location.

(Turns out they're

the same gang who

started Breakfast Republic,

with places all over the county, including one just a couple of blocks away. Seems they set this Gaslamp location up to ease the long waits at their 707 G Street East Village place.)

My waffle arrives. It is a lush affair. Somewhere underneath on this plate there's an actual waffle with crispy golden edges. But topside, it's all about the ooze of the cheese, the electric green scattering of chives, and specially the sausages and the sneaky little spice nips they give you. Works so well with the giant coffee. And best thing is, you can really gulp that hot stuff down, knowing you'll never run out.

I keep trying to remember: this is Thanksgiving season behind the Covid Curtain. So how come I feel so great? I chomp through, till I finally start to feel the prickles of pepper on the roof of my mouth. Scrumptious!

"I can see clearly now, the rain is gone." Johnny Nash on the sound system sings out the perfect song for this bright, sunny day.

Then, a reality check out on J Street. Guy and a girl pass by, wheeling a pile of gear that looks like it's their entire life. He notices a vacated table. Slips over and grabs a leftover tortilla. Walks on, waving it about. Then, when a car eases around the corner, he slaps it on the side window. Driver jerks to a stop, flings his door open, starts jumping out. Girlfriend screams "Covid!" He gets back in and

**TIN
FORK**
ED BEDFORD



Felipe heads for kitchen through empty interior

screeches off.

Then it's back to Johnny Nash. "Yes I can make it now, the pain is gone! All of the bad feelings have disappeared."

When you can feel everybody relax.

Next time, I think I'll have the fried rice Benedict. Want to try that Indonesian *sambal*.

I like this place. Gotta hand it to the owner. Felipe says his name is Johan Engman. Young guy. Correctly saw that, at heart, San Diego is a breakfast city. That's the meal we love the most. Proof? When everyone else is closing down, he's opening and opening. A dozen brekky places already, and counting.

I pay up, \$17.78. Feel I got my money's worth. But nice to know there's a \$4 three-egg option if I'm strapped.

Gal also getting up to leave is wearing this



Felipe delivers hot sauce

maroon sweatshirt with a wine glass on the front. "Wine," it says, "the glue holding this 2020 shit show together." ■

The Place: Gaslamp Breakfast Company, 551 J Street, downtown, 619-937-3074

Hours: 7am-3pm daily

Prices: Large coffee, \$3.50, bottomless; three eggs any style, \$4; toast with jam, \$1.50; *chilaquiles Suizos* with *queso fresco*, poached eggs, \$13; with shrimp, \$18; with chicken, \$16; fried rice Benedict with "crispy ham," *sambal* hollandaise, two poached eggs, house potatoes; S'mores waffles with graham cracker crumble, \$9; orange thyme waffle with mascarpone, orange aguaniz, honey, \$9; mashed potato waffle, with cheese sauce, spicy sausage, two eggs, \$13; *bacon omelet* or scramble, \$13; chicken confit and grits, \$14; banana bread pancake (cream cheese glaze, candied walnuts, bananas, maple syrup), \$10

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11.25.20