

NEWS

Jazz back on top at Yoshi's

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BODY & SOUL

Lotions, potions and a talent show

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FOOD & WINE

30 years of cozy La Mediterranee

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ MAY 2009



KATHRYN AMNOTT

Like its mural of musical greats, the crowd at the Fillmore Street Cafe in the jazz district is eclectic. It has the least expensive cup of coffee in the neighborhood.

Brother, can you spare *a* latte?

INSIDE

- Traffic in the coffeehouses is booming, but not sales
- Coffee shop etiquette, plus security and tech tips
- A tour of local java joints: the 'Mo to Pacific Heights

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WITH NEARLY 10 percent of the city's work force pink-slipped, the crowds in the neighborhood's coffee shops have surged, and they're staying longer. But now the sitting and sipping experience is all about job searches, networking and free WiFi. If you're one of the poor, huddled masses without a home office and a fast internet connection, you need a place to roost with affordable online access and an atmosphere to motivate, incubate and concentrate. To explore the vibe, the clientele, the prices and the workplace amenities, we perambulated and caffeinated among the newcomers and old-timers at coffee shops in the neighborhood. Our findings begin on page 7.

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FURTHERMORE



The proposed site plan for the renovated Kimbell Field at Geary and Steiner.

Synthetic Turf: Better Than Grass

TO THE EDITOR:

Recently some folks have asked, "Why renovate Kimbell Field with synthetic turf?" [See "Sun May Set on Natural Grass at the New Kimbell Field," April.]

The answer is simple: so more neighborhood kids can play sports at Kimbell. By installing synthetic turf and slightly adjusting the layout to add an additional small multi-use field, the number of players using Kimbell Field can double, and the field will never be down for rest, regrowth or to recover from rain.

The field will still have three ball diamonds and the existing soccer-football field with lights, plus a new batting cage. The park will be closed for construction for a few months this summer and into the fall, but should be up and running by the end of the year. The project is jointly funded by the Playfields Initiative, a partnership between the city's Recreation and Parks Department and the City Fields Foundation, to provide athletic play spaces for all San Francisco kids.

Perhaps a better question is, "How do we make sure that neighborhood kids get to use and enjoy the new field when it reopens?"

The good news is that as part of City Fields' partnership with the city, the Recreation and Parks permits and reservations system has been completely overhauled and reorganized to make sure neighborhood kids get to use their neighborhood fields.

Gone is the first-come, first-served approach, which gave some groups

greater access to the best athletic fields and left some local kids on the sidelines. Recreation and Parks is now giving priority access to neighborhood kids playing in neighborhood programs. Now we need to make sure that groups that didn't use Kimbell in the past know how to book time for their programs.

To that end, Recreation and Parks has offered to participate in community meetings now and just prior to the field re-opening to explain the process and outline the schedule for reservations. To make life easy, permit requests are now made online and distributed several months in advance so everyone has plenty of time to plan.

At the same time, the park will feature a sign promoting "open play hours" when the field is not reserved to make sure that everyone gets to play. While Kimbell Field has historically been fully booked with little open time, now there will be guaranteed time for games of catch or pick-up ball so even kids who don't participate in school or organized sports can still enjoy the new ball park.

The athletic field renovation is just the first part of a larger effort to improve Kimbell Playground. The grassy area, the playground and other park amenities are scheduled for restoration in 2011 thanks to the recent neighborhood parks bond. Combined, these projects will transform Kimbell Playground into one of the best parks in San Francisco.

PATRICK HANNAN
CITY FIELDS FOUNDATION

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The neighborhood connection

Every month, 20,000 copies are delivered to homes and businesses in the Fillmore, Pacific Heights and Japantown. We thank you for your support and encouragement and we welcome your ideas and suggestions.

Archive of recent issues: www.NewFillmore.com

Comments and letters about neighborhood issues are welcome there, too.

JAZZ DISTRICT

'We're Going to Get Back to Jazz'

■ Q & A

It's Too Good Not to Work'

STILL LEARNING the way around his sleek new domain in the Fillmore Jazz District, Yoshi's artistic director Jason Olaine took time to unleash his enthusiasm for the club in a conversation with jazz critic Anthony Torres.

If you had a mission statement for Yoshi's now, what would it be?

What has built Yoshi's reputation is jazz. Yoshi's both nationally and internationally is known as one of the great jazz clubs and great homes for jazz musicians. That comes from how we take care of the musicians when they get here. Hand-in-hand with that is taking care of our customers. Without them we have no home for the musicians. So we really are in the business of taking care of our people.

That is what got us to the success we had before we got to the Fillmore — and that's how we got to be a part of the whole resurrection of the jazz legacy in the community.

I understand the experiment that happened recently with diversifying the music program, and it is a legitimate question: Can we do jazz 14 times a week and not undermine ourselves? So we tried to do different things, and I think there is a place for a range of things here. But I think those other experiments should be the spice, not the main ingredient. We are going to get back to jazz as our basis. We are going to make jazz our core competency. We are going back to that. But we are going to bring in some other music that makes sense here.

We are going to do what we do best — and that's jazz.

How do you make Yoshi's a place people want to come?

We're going to do some of the things we used to do before: putting unique combinations of artists together you don't find in other places, some kind of all-star formats. Yoshi's used to have a reputation for that, and it's in the spirit of the Fillmore Jazz District. Back in the day, you used to have jam sessions. We would like to get back to that. We would



Jason Olaine returns to Yoshi's as artistic director of the Fillmore club after nine years in New York. "I know the Bay Area is ready to embrace Yoshi's San Francisco," he says. "It's already begun."

like to provide opportunities for younger musicians to play with more established musicians. There are a lot of things we can do.

We will try to do a real breadth of music, whether it's Cuban and other Latin music, or whether it's singer-songwriters, or R&B, blues — and of course jazz, all types of jazz. Really, there's a lot of room to do what we do, as long as it's done with integrity.

We need to get back to our fan base and make sure that our fans have a sense of ownership and pride in what we're doing. And I'm happy to be a part of that. I am from the Bay Area and I think I know this place. I feel like I can program music for everyone to be happy and wanting to come back for more.

This is a premier built-to-order venue. How do you take advantage of that?

It's a dream venue, because it's small enough to do intimate shows and just big enough to do big shows — and there's enough room on the stage for the musicians to really blow it out. And the food is great — and it's a beautiful space. So if we don't get it right, shame on us.

All the ingredients are here, so why not make it thrive?

It's going to. It's too good not to work. There are some kinks that need to be worked out, but a lot of it is building and recapturing a vibe.

It should be a hip place you want to come.

We want people to come and hang out in the lounge or in the upstairs bar. We want a DJ spinning, or even a small combo playing.

Is there something you want to relate to the community?

Really, it's that Yoshi's is reaching out to the community and sending a message that jazz is here, and jazz is here to stay. My mission is to ensure that is the case not only with local musicians, but that we get the national acts, too — and that we have the one-of-a-kind events that only happen at Yoshi's San Francisco.

And that we make it something that we at Yoshi's San Francisco and the community can really feel proud about — that the musicians feel is the greatest jazz club in the world, and that our patrons feel that way. We want our regulars, as well as those who walk in for the first time, to feel, "That was an amazing experience and I want to come back again. I was treated well, able to get drinks and get my food on time. I was treated with respect."

There is really no bad seat in the house. We just want to do what we do, and do it better. And if someone wants to offer ideas of how we can improve our service, or has suggestions about artists they would like to see in the room, then by all means contact me at olaine@yoshis.com. I want to hear from people.

Yoshi's Brings Top Jazzman Back to Book Fillmore Club

AT THE beginning of the year, shortly after its first anniversary, the owners of Yoshi's announced the hiring of a new booker for their elegant Fillmore club, who promptly declared that, on his watch, jazz "won't be the main focus."

What a difference four months makes. In April, Yoshi's owner Kaz Kajimura had another announcement of another new programmer for the Fillmore club, one with deep jazz roots: Jason Olaine, who for the past decade has been moving among many of the mountaintops of the jazz world, including Verve Records and the jazz festivals in Monterey, Newport and New York City.

It is a homecoming for Olaine. He was artistic director from 1993 to 1999 of the first Yoshi's in Berkeley and Oakland. He vows that his return will bring a renewed focus on jazz to the Fillmore club and a commitment to establish it, like its sister club in Oakland, as a world-class venue.

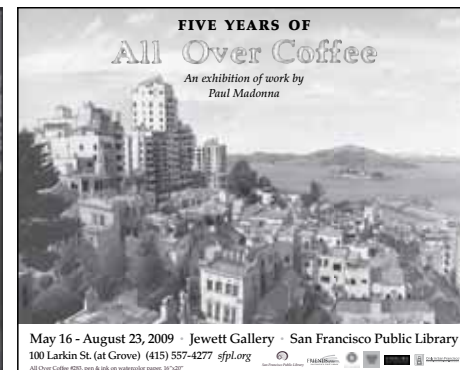
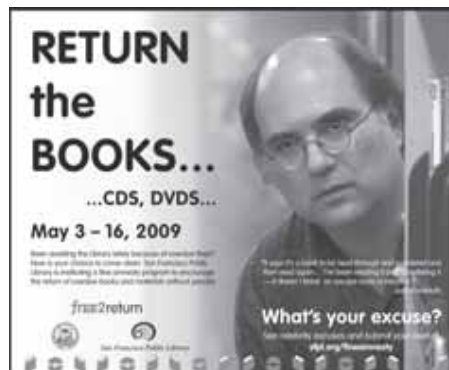
"I look up at the pictures in Oakland and I see familiar faces and remember some great times," Olaine said. "I anticipate that Yoshi's San Francisco will begin to feel the same way soon."

Olaine returns to the Bay Area from New York, where for nine years he was director of A&R for Verve Records. He won a Grammy Award for an album he produced by pianist Herbie Hancock and was nominated for others.

His return to Yoshi's was hailed by the musicians he claims as his top priority.

"Jason is one of the best and brightest in the biz," said saxophonist Joshua Redman, director of the SFJAZZ Collective. "He truly understands the jazz world from every perspective." Redman said Olaine's return "can only mean great things for the Bay Area music scene."

Olaine will continue as general manager of Monterey Jazz Festival Records, which is releasing performances from the storied festival's 50-year archive. He will also continue as artistic director of legendary jazz promoter George Wein's festivals in Newport and New York.



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CRIME WATCH

Possession of Stolen Property Fillmore and Clay Streets March 26, 6 p.m.

Officers were summoned to the Bank of America concerning a man who was attempting to commit a fraud. The teller told the officers the suspect, who was detained at the scene, had attempted to cash a check. The teller was not convinced the person cashing the check was the same person depicted on the identification card and named on the Social Security card. The teller did some quick research and discovered that the ATM card linked to the account had been stolen. Simultaneously, a coworker contacted the woman to whom the card belonged; she informed him her purse had been stolen. The teller then called 911. The officers confirmed that the woman's purse had been stolen. They placed the suspect under arrest and he was booked at Northern Station.

Narcotics Van Ness Avenue and Pine Street March 28, 9:30 a.m.

Officers received a call concerning an unwanted guest at a hotel. They arrived to witness an ongoing dispute regarding the guest's hotel charges. The officers went to the woman's room and smelled the strong odor of marijuana. The woman had left her room, but officers located her outside the hotel. A computer check revealed there were several outstanding warrants for her arrest. During a search of the suspect, officers found marijuana. She was placed under arrest and booked at Northern Station.

Shoplifting Geary Boulevard and Webster Street March 28, 4:45 p.m.

Officers on patrol observed a man run-

ning away from the Safeway store. A security guard flagged down the officers and told them the man had dashed out of the store with a bag of groceries for which he had not paid. The officers chased the suspect and detained him. He told them he had stolen the items. The manager signed a citizen's arrest form. Because the suspect had prior arrests for theft and had served time in county jail, he was booked on a felony charge.

Warrant Arrest Van Ness Avenue and Eddy Street March 29, 5 p.m.

An officer was on patrol when he recognized a man from a prior contact. The subject had an outstanding warrant for his arrest for the possession of \$15,000 of narcotics. When the warrant was confirmed, the officer detained the subject without incident and he was placed under arrest.

More Incidents in the Neighborhood: Eddy and Scott Streets, March 29, 1:58 p.m.

— Street robbery with force
Jackson and Divisadero Streets, March 29, 2:14 p.m. — Vandalism to a vehicle
Divisadero and Eddy Streets, March 29, 6:07 p.m. — Missing person found
Ellis and Steiner Streets, March 29, 6:24 p.m. — Battery; possession of alcohol by a minor
Eddy and Scott Streets, March 31, 1:54 p.m. — Hot prowling burglary
Ellis and Scott Streets, March 31, 6:53 p.m. — Domestic violence
Geary Boulevard and Divisadero Street, March 31, 2 p.m. — Domestic violence, false imprisonment, interfering with a phone line
Eddy and Steiner Streets, March 31, 9:50 p.m. — Driving with suspended license.



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BODY & SOUL



On the last Sunday of the month, the chandelied showroom at Kiehl's is awash in light and alive with the sound of music during the store's open mike afternoon.

Moisturize — and Vocalize

The crew at Kiehl's includes some star performers, and they can sing, too

By ALICE KOESTERICH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KRISTEN STEHLER

IF THE economy's got you singing the blues, then don your porkpie hat and head to Kiehl's at 2360 Fillmore on the last Sunday of the month. From 3 to 5 p.m., you're invited to sing, dance, read poetry or try out your latest stand-up routine at the store's monthly open mike festivities. Hopeful performers are encouraged to sign up for a 15-minute spot before the event, but walk-ins are welcome.

The idea was the brainchild of Kiehl's manager Kris Thorgate, who wanted to showcase the talents of her sales team and create an unusual community experience. Open mike afternoon at Kiehl's provides a friendly environment for all to strut their stuff without judgment; not once has a mango lip balm been tossed at a performer.

Staff members at Kiehl's not only know the difference between the epidermis and the dermis, but they can also sing on key. The well of talent includes: Shannon, an artist specializing in mixed media; Meredith, a singer and songwriter with a blend of country/Americana/indie songs, and former *American Idol* hopeful Courtney. Meredith and Courtney perform throughout the city when



Mary Elizabeth Beckman provides acoustic rock amid the body products at Kiehl's.

they aren't selling skin care and beauty products.

On open mike Sundays, shoppers can browse Kiehl's products, savor refreshments and enjoy free entertainment in the historic Victorian shop on the corner of Fillmore and Washington, long the home of Belmont Florist. With the elegance of

hardwood floors, a crystal chandelier, tin ceilings and a vintage Harley-Davidson, the landmark building offers an old-fashioned grassroots approach to doing business. And it seems to be working. Every month, there's been an increase in performers and customers.

Mary Elizabeth Beckman, a Marin resident, heard about open mike at Kiehl's while brunching on Fillmore one Sunday and loved the idea of performing in the beautiful space. Her soothing melodies of acoustic folk enticed a group of 20-something shoppers to stay and listen.

Alternative soul singer and songwriter Ruce, a repeat performer, noticed a significant increase in customers and listeners from a few months ago. His original song about his hometown of Boston received hearty applause from a group of women penning the array of Kiehl's baby products. In addition to playing at Kiehl's, Ruce also performs at the Hotel Utah, south of Market.

Art Persky, a nearby resident, said he loves the idea of another venue for music and the added vibrancy it brings to the street. Tracey, a tourist from San Jose, initially was drawn into Kiehl's for its new mineral-enhanced mascara, but stayed to hear the music, finding the atmosphere "fun, relaxing — and very San Francisco."



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THE BARISTA BAROMETER

Traffic, If Not Sales, Booming at Local Cafes

HOW HAS the economic downturn affected business in local coffee shops? According to several general managers of the neighborhood's mocha meccas, sales may not have increased dramatically, but the customer base has. More people now have the freedom to hang out on the street, even if they don't necessarily have a lot of money to spend.

Kay-C Hayden, manager of the Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, says that since her corporate bosses installed free WiFi six months ago, the cafe is filled with more people for longer periods. Some patrons—"squatters"—buy a coffee and camp out for hours. But sometimes those who work or study there for hours start with coffee and end up buying food items throughout the day, which translates into more purchases overall than from the usual foot traffic.

There has also been a shift in what customers buy. Instead of fancy lattes or cappuccinos, they more often buy a regular cup of coffee or a bag of beans to brew at home. "The same \$10 goes to a few regular cups of coffee," Hayden says. "So the financial backing is there. It just goes toward less luxurious items."

Peet's manager, Milette Obach Duque, has worked in the store for seven years. She sees more faces these days.

"Customers are here not only to work, or for the free WiFi, but to socialize," she says, noting that sales have remained steady. "Right after the holidays, we were the only Peet's out of 300 stores around the country that scored 100 percent on performance, customers and budget," she says. "People feel welcome here, and go out of their way to come here."

Down in the jazz district, Fillmore Street Cafe manager Munir Adem says he noticed that more people began showing up after the shift to free WiFi, but that sales went down. There has also been an increase in the number of workers who stop by from new businesses in the area.

"Yoshi's and 1300's employees come here for the food — maybe because it's cheaper — for their break-times," Adem says. "And Bruno's folks come for the coffee in the morning before they open."

Office Space: Barista Included

What you need to know about setting up shop in a cafe

By CHERYL LURIE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATHRYN AMNOTT
WITH MARK ANTHONY O'NEILL, CONTRIBUTING RESEARCHER

ONE THING IS CLEAR: The rules have changed as more and more office-spacers descend upon the cafe culture. Before you snap up your laptop and head out to set up camp at one of the neighborhood's many coffee shops, consider this report from the front.

■

ETIQUETTE: Cell phone calls are now accepted behavior inside most coffee houses, if done in reasonable tones and for a short duration. But remember that your neighbors can hear you — and not many want a dose of diverticulitis with their danish and double macchiato. If you have to shout above the din, take it outside.

Wear ear buds if you plan to listen to audio on a laptop. No one wants to hear the *Wonderful World of Uralus* while sipping a caramel latte.

And if you're sick, stay home. One advantage of being laid off is that you don't have to prove to your boss that you're a trooper.

Finally, be respectful of your host. Don't bring in food or beverages from outside sources to fuel your work.

■

TECH TIPS: Since access is not always obvious, first ask the barista how to get WiFi. Each cafe has different protocols, codes at the register or designated networks with the cafe name. Most laptops can automatically detect the nearest unsecured WiFi networks, but in a coffee shop you may need to refresh your browser or reboot.

When it comes to electrical outlets, some cafes have only a few strategically placed outlets. Survey the area or inquire politely if it starts to turn into a scavenger hunt. Don't lift up people's pantlegs in your search. Most folks are happy to plug you into an empty outlet.

■

SECURITY: It is never a good idea to leave laptops and handheld devices unattended, even in neighborly digs. Theft is not the only concern; documents or passwords can be compromised or accessed while you are indisposed. Bring a laptop lockdown device to at least deter the grab-and-go possibility.

As with cell phones, remember that public places are rife with eavesdroppers and roving eyes. A laptop privacy screen is a good idea when working on sensitive or private documents. Shut down or log out before stepping out. Public WiFi is unsecured — that means that anyone can have access to your online information.



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Fillmore Street Cafe
1301 Fillmore Street (at Edwy)

In the old What a Grind digs, with free WiFi, generous tables and the cheapest cuppa joe (\$1.25) on the street, this joint is a hidden treasure. Breakfast specials handwritten on the chalkboard keep the Yelp crowd coming back for "perfectly toasted" bagels and egg sandwiches, all 5 to 6 bucks.

Independently owned and operated, this multi-culti neighborhood cafe is run by three former patrons who remember regulars' drink orders from way back and play laid-back Bob Marley throughout the day. The crowd, like the mural of musical greats, is eclectic: graphic-novel artists, musicians, parolees, Fillmore Center residents and staffers from Yoshi's and other nearby new businesses.

The electrical outlets are a bit rough and unlingued, like some of the crowd, but manager Munir Adem keeps a protective eye on his patrons. "We see these folks everyday. If someone forgets their wallet, we help them out," says Adem. "We don't let anyone get uncomfortable or bothered here."

The frills are in the coffee and the breakfast sandwiches, not in the decor, but the prices can't be beat. Watch for the outdoor patio opening soon — that may help the masses discover this gem.



Cafe Murano
1777 Steiner Street (near Sutter)

A block off Fillmore, tucked away in the condo canyon of Steiner Street, hides a neighborhood favorite. True to its name, there are pieces of Murano glass on the honey pie cabinet shelves and a variety of ye olde kitsch: a vintage Dr. Pepper transport box, hand-painted signs, tabletop Pac-Man for 25 cents a player and a Vespa under an Italian umbrella in the rafters.

With free WiFi, a handful of small tables inside and out, plus two desktop computers inviting you to log on, the connected crowd converges here in the late morning, along with skateboarders and guys channeling the *Flight of the Conchords* New Zealand fashion sense.

Kids are welcome, and there's a variety of children's books. But a sign warns: "Unattended children will be given an espresso and a free puppy."

Expertly crafted cappuccinos and lattes complement a variety of breakfast and lunch fare. Baristas are friendly and familiar, and prices are a pink-slipper's delight: \$1.35 for a regular drip coffee and 50 cents for a refill.

The Grove
2016 Fillmore Street (near Pine)

Loud and busy from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., there's no doubt the Grove is one of the most popular places on the street to meet, greet and eat. But it is one of the few cafes without free WiFi — access costs \$6 a day.

Still, if you need a bit of homey, fishing lodge ambiance and a hearty snack in a lively atmosphere, this is the place. Equipped with ample plug-in strips hidden behind wall ledges and under the table near the fireplace, the Grove allows you to move around. As a bonus, it has one of the most artistic one-seater restrooms on the block, with painted walls and tiles and natural light from the alley window.

Once your ears get accustomed to the roar of the convection fan, you may even hear strains of Springsteen mourning another Monday or Rod Stewart gargling glass. Sip a mocha in an oversized cup from the friendly, foam-artistic baristas.

Break open the piggy-bank, though. The Grove has the highest pay-to-play cost: coffee is \$2.10 and refills are \$1. And the food police are very strict: Management actually showed a sign that said "no outside food or beverage" to a couple with coffee in tow who were waiting to pick up a to-go order.



Royal Ground
2060 Fillmore Street (at California)

The tech-friendly Royal Ground is a bright, low-key neighborhood place with lots of room, big tables, varied edibles and free WiFi. Most of the patrons are regulars, young professionals and dental students, with the occasional eco-couple wearing matching ponytails and sustainable outfits. A regular drip is \$1.50, refills \$1.

The Royal's throne room is more of a trip to the dungeon. Wedged back past bags of coffee beans, the tiny loo has precarious steps and wind chimes that dangle a warning about the low ceiling. If you scattered enough breadcrumbs to find your way back, you may encounter the effusive cookie man and sandwich maker in his natural habitat. He's a part-time, semi-retired counterwoman who works to get out of the house.

A bonus for multi-taskers: The adjoining door to the laundryroom allows you to monitor your sudsing duds without hearing the machines. But beware of the continuously piped mellow rock. Three hours of Mariah Carey and Lionel Richie can drive you to decaf.



Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
2201 Fillmore Street (at Sacramento)

With free WiFi, plenty of outlets — look up — leather chairs and windows looking out onto the crossroads of the neighborhood, the Coffee Bean is one of the most office space-ious cafes in the 'hood. The ambient chill music, laptop-friendly tables and studious crowd allow for the maximum concentration-incubation-motivation environment.

If the suburban surroundings start to induce brain freeze, move outside. The Bean has the street's best south-side seats in the sunshine.

With coffee at \$1.70 and a free refill, you could polish that resume and then stick around to watch the characters who show up later in the day with their dogs. Bearded, fedora-ed and spritely, resident historian Kelly Johnson has been a Fillmore fixture since 1969 and can usually be found out front chewing the fat with the regulars.

Pee't's Coffee & Tea
2197 Fillmore Street (at Sacramento)

Pee't, at the apex of Fillmore at Sacramento, is the boisterous, gregariously social sister among neighborhood java houses. The elbow-to-elbow seating really packs 'em in, so much so that manager Milette Obach Duque replaced one pew-style bench with chairs to make folks feel more comfortable seated hip-to-hip. Tabletops are small and outlets sparse, yet by 8:30 every morning, the espresso machines are barely audible over the clackety-clack of laptop keys.

Later in the day, the Society of Distinguished Gentlemen holds court on all things literary, while a troupe of toddlers boosts the decibels and the quotient of Cheerio comfort. By the time the yogonistas glide into the fray after setting their intentions for the day, your two-hour window for free WiFi will have timed out.

You'll need to visit the register for another code and another cup of \$1.70 joe — no break on the refill. Just keep smiling. You never know when you'll be captured on camera and become the shop's next customer of the week.

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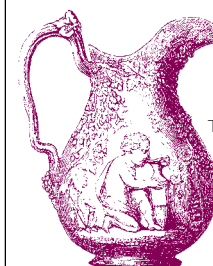
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Starbucks
2222 Fillmore Street (near Sacramento)
1501 Fillmore Street (at O'Farrell)

The ubiquitous Starbucks imposes a corporate uniformity on its franchises: Both locations on Fillmore — plus one around the corner at Mollie Stone's and another at Divisadero and Bush — have consistent prices, decor, signage and soundtracks — and fees for Wi-Fi access to the tune of \$3.99 for a two-hour connection. (Free access is only for AT&T high speed or U-Verse customers, but the service is so slow it's hardly better than dial-up.)

The upper Fillmore location sports a fraternity of students, squatters on laptops and cover-to-cover news-jockeys as homogenous as the decor. The O'Farrell crowd moves along; there are no laptop loiterers here.

The prices may be fixed (\$1.55 for a regular, 50 cents for a refill), but the barista-tudes are not. The crew members in the jazz district may not have dramatic foam-flair, but they work hard and play off the neighborhood regulars with casual aplomb. The upper Fillmore contingent seems disengaged and unconcerned, even when replacing a customer's coffee cleared by mistake.



Tully's
2455 Fillmore Street (at Jackson)

At the top of Fillmore stands the lone Tully's. With few inside tables and outlets, Tully's is more equipped for a hit-and-run than a day of work. It's often bubbling with chatter from people who come in waves from nearby schools, churches and businesses. By 8:45 most mornings, the high-powered buggy brigades get their charges ready for drop-off at the preschool across the street. Tweens line up for their first legal habit. Teachers gear up with double-shot, no foam, soy milk lattes. The cafe fills with lively repartee as parents, nannies and neighbors converge.

One drawback: no restroom. But Tully's has an arrangement with Pets Unlimited, one block south at Washington Street. Potential danger: Cute kitten and puppy photos may lead to immediate adoption.

Not many folks roost here for long periods of time or come for serious work, but the baristas make it feel like the caffeinated version of Cheers. Just picture Norm tottling down the block to see a man about a horse.

Martha & Bros.
2800 California Street (at Divisadero)

Martha & Bros.' Pacific Heights location is a few blocks from Fillmore, but it's been a neighborhood fixture for almost 20 years. The dark, cozy decor and the cushy red couch make it worth the four-block detour.

WiFi is free, the basic cup is \$1.50 and the baristas are a friendly, family affair. Originally from Matagalpa, Nicaragua, Martha and her brothers learned the coffee trade from their uncle's coffee plantation and opened their first location in Noe Valley in 1987.

Sweet alternatives for free WiFi

BITTERSWEET CAFE 2123 Fillmore Street, near Sacramento. Free WiFi with sparse outlets (extension cords up front, some in back room). The best seats are the two window benches, but there are no outlets. A small space upstairs is good for meetings or for working away from the crowd, but it's a bit dark. The good news: You are surrounded by chocolate.

TANGO GELATO 2015 Fillmore Street, near Pine. Free WiFi, but there's only one plug, located near the gelato case. If you don't need power, outside tables are the best, especially on sunny days. Great panini with free gelato.

NEW NEIGHBOR



Lobster rolls, \$1 oysters — what's not to like?

After a few weeks of serving lunch only, the neighborhood's newest restaurant, Woodhouse Fish Co., opened for dinner April 20 on a perfect, warm evening.

The space at 1914 Fillmore — for ages the home of Toraya, the sushi bar and Japanese restaurant — has been completely remodeled. Now it has a classy but casual look, with wooden floors, a tall tin ceiling and lots of nautical art, including a giant squid whose tentacles reach out to the street. Nearly everything on the menu comes from the water, and prices are surprisingly reasonable. On Tuesdays from 4 to 10 p.m., oysters are \$1 each.

Dylan MacNiven and his brother Rowan (above) run the place. Another brother, Tyler, made the film of West Coast fisheries that plays continuously inside an ornate gold frame. Already they're at home in the neighborhood. "If it stays like last week," said Dylan, entering the second week of lunch and dinner, "we'll be some happy brothers."

FOOD & WINE

'I Knew It Would Be Perfect'

For 30 years, La Med's food and spirit have made it a local favorite

By ROSE ROLL

MAY 11 marks the 30th anniversary of La Med, a neighborhood gem tucked into a cozy space at 2210 Fillmore Street, near Sacramento.

Compared to the average restaurant lifespan — less than five years — it's impressive, though not particularly surprising to those who know the place. La Med, as the locals fondly refer to it, is a perennial favorite that serves up flavorful, reasonably priced Mediterranean fare in a lively and inviting atmosphere.

"It was a different neighborhood then," when the restaurant opened in 1979, owner Lavon Der Bedrossian remembers. "Maybe one in 10 people knew what hummus was. I frequently had couples walk in who had never eaten Middle Eastern food before. I would tell them, 'Let me bring something out, and if you don't like it, you don't have to pay for it.'"

He would present platters of meza, or Mediterranean tapas — delicacies such as dolmas, hummus, baba ghanoush and tabouleh — and the next night, those same couples would be back, bringing their friends with them.

The food at La Med is all homemade and reflects the French, Armenian and Lebanese background of its founder. In addition to the traditional Middle Eastern kebabs, hummus and filo dough



The walls at La Medterranee are lined with eclectic bits of visual fun, each with its own story. The sculpture that hangs from the ceiling earned an artist a few meals.

"I saw that this spot was available in the *Chronicle*," he recalls. "It used to be the Full Belly Deli. I would have their pastrami sandwiches all the time. Little did I know that I would own it one day. When I walked in, I knew it would be perfect for what I wanted."

TO PAGE 12 ►

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For 30 Years, Good Food at Fair Prices

■ FROM PAGE 11

When La Medderranee first opened, Der Bedrossian emptied his apartment to furnish it, and the personal touches remain. The walls are lined with eclectic bits of visual fun: handmade Armenian dolls in wool dresses, framed photos from bygone eras, woven rugs and paintings. The tables are inlaid with a rainbow of mosaic tiles.

There is a story behind every object. A favorite of Der Bedrossian's involves the large avant-garde metal mermaid sculpture that dips from the ceiling — payment from a French artist in exchange for a few meals.

News about La Med spread by word of mouth at first. Then, seven months after opening, it received a favorable review in the *San Francisco Business Journal*. "The night after the article came out — it was a Wednesday — the place was a zoo," Der Bedrossian recalls. "I ran out of food by 9:30."

After that, he knew he had the makings of a success. "I went out the next day and hired more people," he says. "A year after opening, I had eight employees. I had started with three." He later opened two more La Meds, on Noe Street and in Berkeley.

Now, 30 years later, Der Bedrossian remains as hands-on as ever. He invents all the recipes and trains the chefs at all three



DANIEL BERNARDI

locations. "I work seven days a week," he says. "In the restaurant business, you have to be passionate. If I didn't love it, I would have had a heart attack and quit years ago."

He says La Med's success is based on three things: consistently good food, a great atmosphere and reasonable prices.

Some customers find the food so reasonably priced they come for dinner three times a week. "It's what you would pay at the grocery store if you were cooking dinner yourself," says Der Bedrossian. A plate of meza with eight different items cost \$3.95 when La Med opened. Today it's still a bargain at \$15.95.

With prices like that, one wonders how

La Med is able to cover a staff of 28 employees and the sizable rent that comes with prime real estate on Fillmore. Catering helps. About a quarter of the revenue comes from providing platters of finger food to local hospitals, businesses and party groups.

Success means the small restaurant is almost always bustling. Six months ago when the landlord was renovating the building, La Med took advantage of the opportunity to expand into a small adjacent space that had been the entry to the upstairs apartments. It's now a secluded nook beyond a rounded archway just large enough for a few tables and a bathroom. The expansion also doubled the street frontage, accommo-

dating more sidewalk tables. All in all, the restaurant can seat about 45 diners.

La Med's intimate atmosphere is perfect for a first date, a family outing or a quick bite by yourself — although if you're eating solo, you may not be alone for long. Der Bedrossian occasionally exercises his matchmaking skills by encouraging single diners to eat together.

At times, there are sparks. "One night, a waitress came over and said the couple at table eight wanted to talk to me," he recalls. "They told me it was their first wedding anniversary, and they wanted to come back to celebrate it at La Med. I sat them together a year ago — and that's how they met."

La Med doubled its sidewalk seating capacity during a recent expansion, and added more tables inside, too.



SCOTTINZ

Brad Koester brings home the beans on his back for his new pickling business. A fixture in the neighborhood for more than 20 years, he is also a waiter at Florio.



Boozely's offers pickled cucumbers, carrots and beans.

■ FIRST PERSON

Latest in a Long Line of Picklers

By BRAD KOESTER

WHEN I was a kid, my grandfather, Arnold "Koke" Koester, taught me many important things: how to trap a muskrat, how to fish for perch, how to plant a garden, how to hunt for morel mushrooms — and how to can fruit and vegetables so that nothing went to waste and we had fresh-tasting delights from his garden year round.

My grandfather's sense of ethics about food has stayed with me though 25 years of working in the restaurant business and was with me when I started canning and pickling.

I began years ago just as a hobby, with jars of beans and pickles becoming prizes for my bicycle events — and great snacks to have around the house. They were always a welcome gift. The requests for more products and the interest from more people got me thinking that this could be not only a rewarding hobby, but a business as well.

Thus began Boozely's Pickles and Preserves. At Boozely's, my partner Lyndsey Hawkins and I pride ourselves on using locally farmed

fruits and vegetables. If you're up by 6 a.m. or so, you can catch us riding our bikes to the wholesale farmers market, a sprawling 25-acre facility with more than 30 businesses. After combing the market for the pick of the litter, we bring it by bike to our canning facility to be processed within a couple of hours. This ensures the freshest taste.

Our line of preserves is just starting to take off now. Meyer lemon marmalade and strawberry jam are our base products. We produce them in small batches and take custom orders so we can offer our customers the products they want for themselves or to give as gifts.

At Boozely's, we are redefining craftsmanship in the kitchen. Each jar is a display piece. In addition to providing great food and friendly service, we are also committed to a local and sustainable lifestyle. Our products are for sale only locally. We will deliver to your door by bicycle or other non-polluting method.

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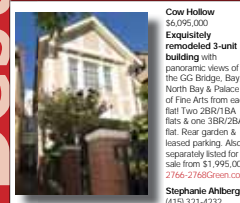
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240 Walnut St	4	3.5	2		14-Apr	2,595,000	Not Disclosed

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3175 California St	3	2	1	1175	31-Mar	649,000	610,000
2701 Van Ness Ave #409	1	1	1	785	16-Mar	649,000	639,000
1914 Pine St #4	1	1	1	1190	18-Mar	659,000	665,000
1701 Jackson St #301	2	2	1	1058	26-Mar	765,000	765,000
1805 Fillmore St #305	2	2	1	1129	31-Mar	769,000	775,000
1998 Broadway #404	2	2	1	1000	10-Apr	866,900	810,000
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2472-A Bush St	3	2	2	1732	14-Apr	949,000	900,000
2882 Jackson St	3	1	1	1582	8-Apr	1,049,000	985,000
2437 Pacific Ave	4	2	2		27-Mar	1,850,000	1,700,000

Expectations adjust, and signs of life begin to stir

The local housing market is finally beginning to show signs of life. While 15 sales in the past month is not on par with the volume in years past, it still represents a 50 percent increase from last month. In addition, properties that have been sitting on the market for several months or more have recently



been going into contract and closing. In some cases, sellers needed to adjust their initial expectations to a new market.

Consider two properties listed before the financial crisis fully hit in October:

- **1998 BROADWAY #404** (left, with balconies) came on the market last September at \$998,000. After seven price reductions and one offer that fell out of contract, the condo closed more than seven months later at \$810,000.
- **2652 CHESTNUT** was originally listed at just over \$2 million in July 2008. After nearly nine months and several price reductions, it sold for \$1.4 million.

Still, while it is too soon to declare a trend, there are signs an equilibrium is developing, with buyers beginning to feel more comfortable entering the market and sellers coming to the realization that we are not going back to the top-of-the-market prices that existed at the end of 2007.

NEW LISTINGS: We have seen quite a few new listings come on the market in recent weeks, and some will get quick attention. A spacious 6-bedroom, 6-bath single family home at 2030 Lyon was once the residence of U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein. After being quietly marketed at \$5 million, it's now listed for \$4.55 million. A well-located single family home at 2604 Sacramento is also well priced at just under \$1.9 million. It has 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, parking for two cars and room for expansion. And there's 2220 Sacramento, a large 5-bedroom, 5.5-bath home that was once the home of silver tycoon and U.S. Senator Richard Chambers. In 2002, the mansion was renovated and converted into two large condominiums.

— Data and commentary provided by JOHN FITZGERALD, a partner in the Byzantium Brokerage and an agent at Pacific Union. Contact him at jfitzgerald@pacunion.com or call 345-3034.

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