

Beverly Dubrin's

Where-To-Guide

Vol. 25/ No. 3 • \$7.00

May – June 2006

Tells You Where To Go For Restaurants, Shopping, Services, Travel And Why!

In This Issue

THE TEMESCAL IS CHANGING

A booming Oakland neighborhood

LIVERMORE VALLEY: PART 2

First-class golf
Historic downtown Pleasanton

RESTAURANT ROUNDUP

Lobster Rolls at
Old Port Lobster Shack
&
Yankee Pier

Caffe Espresso

DISCOVERIES & NOTES

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BEVERLY DUBRIN'S WHERE-TO-GUIDE (ISSN#1053-2005) is published six times a year. Annual subscription rate is \$40; Canada:\$45, Foreign:\$50. U.S. funds only. Back issues available at \$7 each. Imprinted three-ring binders, \$15 each. Make checks payable to BEVERLY DUBRIN'S WHERE-TO-GUIDE, P.O. Box 4274, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

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The Temescal is Changing

The Temescal, the North Oakland neighborhood whose business/commercial district is centered around the junction of Telegraph Avenue and 51st Street, is one of Oakland's oldest neighborhoods.

In the not-so-distant past, this multi-cultural neighborhood has not exactly been a place where one would just go out for a stroll, particularly after dark. But, that is all changing. Rather rapidly, restaurants, shops, and housing (luxury condos and lofts, in particular), are coming to the Temescal. And, with all this activity, people from all over the Bay Area are visiting and moving to the neighborhood. The Temescal might just be becoming the kind of neighborhood that Oakland's Rockridge was two or three decades ago...a well-located Bay Area neighborhood where a single-family home or a condominium is still affordable and where the retail area is growing to support the needs of the new local population.

The boundaries of the Temescal are roughly, Highway 24 on the West, Broadway on the East, 40th Street on the South, and 52nd Street on the North.

What attracted me to the Temescal was the opening of **BAKESHOP BETTY'S** bakery/café. I've known Betty and her marvelous scones, shortcakes, and other tasty baked goods from her booth at the Walnut Creek Farmer's Market. When she told me that she and her husband had opened their own shop (she still sells at Walnut Creek and Danville Farmer's Markets), I was anxious to make a visit. Shortly after I heard about **BETTY'S**, I started hearing about a neighboring restaurant, **PIZZAIOLO**.

Once I visited **BETTY'S**, and **PIZZAIOLO**, I made more discoveries. **GENOVA DELICATESSEN** has been in the neighborhood for years, originally serving the large Italian community that made the Temescal their home; **GENOVA'S** current Temescal location is relatively new, but they remain rooted in this community. The outstanding Mexican restaurant, **DONA TOMAS**, is next door to **PIZZAIOLO**. The neighborhood has several one-of-a-kind shops and there is nary a **STARBUCK'S** anywhere to be seen, at least for the time being.

If you are not familiar with the Temescal, attending the **TEMESCAL STREET FAIR**, which is coming up on June 17, 2006, from noon until 6 p.m., will be the perfect introduction to the neighborhood. The **STREET FAIR** showcases the neighborhood's artists, restaurants, merchants, and community services. There will be live entertainment on a main stage and on a children's stage. The **FAIR** takes place on Telegraph Avenue between 51st and 48th Streets. There will be valet bicycle parking...take your bike on BART and save on gasoline.

If you can't make it to the **FAIR**, plan a dinner or lunch here and give yourself an additional hour or so to explore the neighborhood.

The Temescal is a good neighborhood in which to stop for an early dinner before a performance at the Paramount Theatre in downtown Oakland; it's on your way, if you are driving from either Berkeley or Contra Costa County. If you find yourself at Oakland's Children's Hospital, you can walk here.

You can get to the Temescal on BART, but you will have to walk eight blocks from the MacArthur Station or ten blocks from Rockridge. There is AC Transit bus service from either BART station.



The Temescal is Changing *continued*

A BIT OF HISTORY

We've already mentioned that the Temescal is one of Oakland's oldest neighborhoods. We consider the **TEMESCAL BRANCH LIBRARY AND TOOL LENDING LIBRARY** at 5205 Telegraph Avenue to be its most interesting historic spot. Andrew Carnegie paid for the **LIBRARY** building in the early 20th century. The exterior is Tudor Revival style. It is worth going inside for a visit to the **TOOL LENDING LIBRARY** in the basement. Tools can be checked out for three days at a time, with the exception of house jacks that can be checked out for seven days. The library is open Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday. Check their website for hours and a list of tools: <http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/Branches/temtll.htm>.

A bit further away from the central business district (drive by, if you want to take a look) are the **DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES (DMV)** at 5300 Claremont Avenue and the **STUDIO ONE ART CENTER** at 365 45th Street. The DMV's building is situated on the site once occupied by the **LUSK CANNERY** campus, which was, in the last half of the 19th century, one of the world's largest fruit and vegetable packers. **STUDIO ONE** occupies a building that was built as an orphanage in 1894. Today **STUDIO ONE** is a community center that offers art classes and community activities.

ANOTHER EAST BAY GOURMET GHETTO IN THE MAKING?

It was food that brought me to the Temescal, and it is food that now keeps me coming back.

BAKESALE BETTY

Although I have the opportunity, every Sunday, to buy from **BAKESALE BETTY** (5098 Telegraph Ave.; 510/ 289-5505; www.bakesalebetty.com) at the Walnut Creek Farmer's Market, I can't pass by her Temescal shop without stopping in. An extra special feature of the Temescal shop, is that Betty serves lunch! Before noon each day, customers line up for one of Betty's freshly-made sandwiches. Her "signature" sandwich is the Fried Chicken Sandwich (\$7.25), a piece of perfectly-cruste fried chicken breast topped with spicy jalapeno cole slaw and piled into a crispy torpedo roll. If you choose to eat in the shop, your seating is on wooden stools or on the window sill and your table is a higher stool on which is perched a metal tray that serves as a functional table top for at least two. Each day, Betty features about three different lunch items. When I stopped here a week ago, in addition to the Fried Chicken, she offered two other sandwiches: an Egg Salad and a Beef with Horseradish. Sometimes she makes Meat Pies for the lunch. As I was savoring the last bites of my sandwich, one of the counter people brought me a generous sample of a to-die-for Lemon Bar. Of course, I could not leave without buying one to take home to Jim, and, while I had my wallet out, I also bought several freshly-baked

cookies. Betty, in her bright blue wig, is here every time I stop by. She came to California from Australia in 2000, worked awhile at Chez Panisse Café, and then went out on her own, selling at Farmer's Markets. The shop, which is open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, is always filled with customers...no wonder; everything is fresh, delicious, and reasonably priced. The locals visit regularly. Betty and her husband are also "locals," living in a flat above the shop.

PIZZAIOLO

If there is a "hot" restaurant in the East Bay today, it is **PIZZAIOLO** (5008 Telegraph Ave.; 510/652-4888; <http://www.pizzaiolo.us>; Dinner from 5:30 p.m. Tues. – Sat.; no reservations). Chef/owner Charlie Hollowell and his partner, Omar White, are also, like Betty, Chez Panisse alumni. They converted a Temescal hardware store into this restaurant where crowds line each evening, before they open their doors at 5:30 p.m., to wait for a table. As a tribute to the old neighborhood, Hollowell and White have left the "G & G Hardware Dutch Boy Paints" sign hanging on the building. Chef Hollowell, like Betty, lives in a flat above his restaurant.

On our first visit to **PIZZAIOLO**, on a weeknight, Jim and I got in line at 5 p.m. We were not alone. Within a half hour of opening, the dining room and bar were filled and hungry, but patient, customers were lined up, or sitting on the benches outside, waiting for up to an hour for a table. Since we don't like to wait for a table, we always arrive at **PIZZAIOLO** early.

It is **PIZZAIOLO's** thin-crust, wood-fired pizzas that established its reputation. Each day's menu features about half a dozen pizzas and several other main dishes, appetizers, and side dishes.

In order to sample as much of the menu as possible on our first visit, Jim and I ordered more than we could consume in one seating, planning to take home leftovers. From the Antipasti section of the menu we chose a Fritto Misto of Spring Onions and Artichokes, served with a Meyer Lemon Aioli. We passed on the Pasta selections but could not resist the Buttermilk Fried Hoffman Farm Chicken that was served with Mashed Potatoes, Giblet Gravy, and Coleslaw. We left the decision on our Pizza topping to Chef Hollowell by ordering the Pizzaiolo Pizza which is a pie whose toppings are the whim of the chef; ours turned out to be a tasty creation topped with Manila Clams. **PIZZAIOLO's** desserts are always tasty, but sometimes more filling than I desire. If I finish my dinner a few minutes before 7 p.m., I dash over to **BETTY'S** for a cookie or a Lemon Bar, my idea of the perfect lighter dessert.

PIZZAIOLO's wine list, printed on the back of the menu, offers a selection of Italian, French and domestic wines, many by either the glass or bottle. All dishes are made with sustainable ingredients; the house coffee is microroasted organic coffee from Oakland-based Blue Bottle Coffee.

Most people who dine at **PIZZAIOLO** do not order as much as Jim and I did on our first visit. On weeknights in particular,

The Temescal is Changing *continued*

many neighborhood residents pop in for dinner on their way home from work. Since our first visit, we order more like the regulars, perhaps sharing a salad and a pizza one night, making a meal of one of the meat dishes another night, and just snacking on Antipasti and Side Dishes (Contorni) on another night.

If you don't arrive at **PIZZAIOLO** before 5:30 p.m., chances are that you will have a wait of up to an hour. But, once seated, you are never rushed; the servers know and understand the menu and will gladly advise you on ordering.

DONA TOMAS

DONA TOMAS (5004 Telegraph Ave.; 510/450-0522; <http://donatomas.com>; Dinner Tues. – Sat.; reservations accepted) was “the first kid” on this block of outstanding places to eat. A sister restaurant to the more casual **TACUBAYA** in West Berkeley, **DONA TOMAS** serves some of the most authentic and most interesting Mexican food in the Bay Area.

It is also one of the neighborhood's largest restaurants, occupying two storefronts. It has a large heated outdoor patio behind the restaurant.

Start and accompany your meal with a Margarita, Mojito, Mexican beer, or a shot of the Tequilla of your choice. Going non-alcoholic? Your choices are far from boring and include Mexican Coca Cola, the day's Agua Fresca (fresh fruit juice), and Hibiscus Iced Tea. I like to munch on Toasted Pumpkin seeds with my before-dinner cocktail.

As a Chile Relleno fan, I have to recommend their version, both as an appetizer, in which the Ancho Chile is stuffed Chorizo and Yams, and as a main course, usually stuffed with a blend of Mexican cheeses and seasonal vegetables. The Carnitas is slow roasted Niman Ranch pork seasoned with Mexican oregano, grilled scallions, fresh lime, and radishes. The popular Sopa de Lima is a lime-infused chicken soup.

I rarely pass up dessert at **DONA TOMAS**. Their flavorful fruit sorbets or their Vanilla Flan are my favorites to end a meal filled with exotic flavors.

As at **PIZZAIOLO**, **DONA TOMAS** prepares its dishes with local and organic ingredients, whenever possible. Its coffee is organic from Mr. Espresso. Should you find that your wait at **PIZZAIOLO** is going to be longer than you hoped, consider dining at **DONA TOMAS**; even without a reservation, there is a good chance you will get a table or be able to have a meal of appetizers at the bar...different cuisine, but just as interesting and satisfying.

GENOVA DELICATESSEN

Many of us are loyal customers of the **GENOVA DELICATESSEN**s in Walnut Creek and Napa, but the Temescal location is where this popular Italian deli got started. Its current location in the Walgreen's shopping center is relatively new. **GENOVA**'s original site was damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

This **GENOVA** (5095-A Telegraph Ave.; 510/652-7401)

offers all the goodies of the others: made-to-order sandwiches, all varieties of salads and antipasti, fresh ravioli, Italian meats, cheeses and wine, and packaged Italian specialties. But, this deli has much more: a salad bar, a soup bar, lots of outdoor seating, a bakery counter. Stop for lunch or an afternoon pastry and then take home some prepared food for dinner.

□□□□

In the above mini-reviews, we've mainly mentioned the restaurants that are currently attracting visitors to the Temescal. We've observed that these are also popular with the neighborhood locals. There are numerous other places to eat in the neighborhood, many of which reflect the diversity of the neighborhood. The following descriptions are brief introductions to some of the other Temescal dining spots.

Several Japanese and Korean restaurants are clustered on Telegraph Avenue around 42nd and 43rd Streets. Those in and around **KORYO VILLAGE CENTER** (4390 Telegraph Ave.) are said to be authentic and excellent, catering to the local community.

TEMESCAL CAFE (4920 Telegraph Ave.; 510/595-4102) is a neighborhood hangout. It serves American food for breakfast, lunch and dinner, has indoor and outdoor seating, and has free internet.

ASMARA RESTAURANT (5020 Telegraph Ave.; 510/547-5100; www.asmararestaurant.com) serves Eritrean and Ethiopian dishes. The beef, lamb, chicken and vegetarian dishes are seasoned to your preferred degree of spiciness. You eat with your hands, piling or stuffing your food onto/into the traditional Ethiopian Injera bread. **ASMARA** is in the same block as **PIZZAIOLO**, **DONA TOMAS**, and **BETTY'S**.

A newcomer to the neighborhood, **LA CALACA LOCA** is in a mini-mall called the Temescal Triangle (5199 Telegraph Ave., at 51st; 510/601-8226). Open daily for lunch and dinner and also for breakfast on Saturdays and Sundays, **LA CALACA LOCA** serves Mexican fast food with a difference. That difference is the high quality of the ingredients that go into its tacos, burritos, and quesadillas: Fulton Valley Farms chicken, Niman Ranch meat, line-caught mahi mahi, Romaine lettuce for salads...in other words, the same kinds of quality ingredients that the neighborhood's newer restaurants are using. Those watching their fat intake will take comfort in knowing that **LA CALACA LOCA** dry-grills its tortillas unless you ask for them to be fried with cheese. There is a large indoor dining area and also some outdoor seating.

When **PIZZAIOLO**'s upscale pizzas are not what you are craving in a pizza, **LANESPLITTER PIZZA AND PUB** (4799 Telegraph Ave., 510/653-5350; www.lanesplitterpizza.com) is your answer. Choose between a thin crust Neapolitan pie or the thicker Sicilian crust pie. The toppings are typical of those that most American pizzerias feature with lots of cheese (a four-cheese blend) and spicy tomato sauce. **LANESPLITTER'S**

The Temescal is Changing *continued*

pizza is excellent. And, they even make concessions to more diverse pizza palates with some vegan offerings and the option of a soy cheese. Bottom line is, come here when have an urge for a traditional slice, or even a whole pie, and a beer or two.

S & S SEAFOOD (4923 Telegraph Ave.; 510/654-5504) is one of the many dining spots that remain from the neighborhood's "old days." For the most part, you come here for takeout orders of fried fish...snapper, clams, calamari, catfish, and more.

UNIQUE SHOPS

So far, other than Walgreen's and a cell phone store, there are no signs of chain stores. Instead, there a small number of unique shops that make the Temescal worthy of a special visit. These are a few shops that intrigued me. Don't be shy about dropping in; there is a good chance the owner will be there to greet you.

When was the last time you got into a heated game of Dungeons and Dragons? And what ever happened to your favorite Scrabble partner? Regulars at **IT'S YOUR MOVE GAMES AND HOBBIES** (4920 Telegraph Ave.; 510/547-4386; www.itsyourmovegames.com) always have people with whom to play their favorite games. If you lost your old Scrabble game, you can buy a new one here. Ever heard of Rocketville? The game is sold here. In addition to having an extensive stock of board games, role-playing games, and games of all sorts, **IT'S YOUR MOVE** hosts tournaments and casual competitions almost every day. The current game schedule (posted on their web site and at the store) includes Dungeon & Dragon nights for adults, Dungeon & Dragon afternoons for kids, and Scrabble night. There are lunch hour games sessions and open game

sessions when you can play a variety of games.

SAGRADA SACRED ARTS (4926 Telegraph Ave.; 510/653-7196.; www.sagrada.com) is dedicated to the spiritual. During Passover I was attracted to the shop by a window display of Passover books. **SAGRADA** carries spiritual items for people of all faiths. It has a wide variety of books, including books for children, as well as such items as meditation bells, rosaries, and candles. The store has been in the neighborhood since 1994.

Knitters flock to **ARTICLE PRACT** (5010 Telegraph Ave.; 510/595-PURL; www.articleprac.com) for its choice of hundreds of yarns and all kinds of supplies for knitting and crocheting. If you want to learn to knit, they give classes. If you are in the middle of a project and you mess up, you can come in for a free 15-minute help session.

When I last stopped at **PORCH LIGHT ANTIQUES** (5026 Telegraph Ave.; 510/597-0588; www.porch-light.net), I realized that if I had not donated the hamper from my dad's condo to the Salvation Army, I would be in possession of a valuable collectible. At **PORCH LIGHT**, one like it was priced at much more than I am sure my parents paid for it 60 years ago. **PORCH LIGHT** has a mish-mash of small home furnishings, decorative items and gifts. Their jewelry cases are filled with unusual pieces. Some of their merchandise is truly vintage, some is new but "vintage inspired."

We mentioned **HOOPER'S CHOCOLATES** (4632 Telegraph Ave.) in the January/February 2006 Where-To-Guide. Just before going to press, we noticed that **HOOPER'S** was closed and that a *For Sale* sign was posted in front of the building. Unfortunately, this is the end of an era. □

Livermore Valley Part 2: Golf & Historic Pleasanton

Most visitors to the Livermore Valley come for the wine, the golf, or to attend an event at the Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton. The Valley also attracts numerous business travelers who come to visit the Hacienda Business Park, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and the nearby Bishop Ranch. Some of the Bay Area's biggest companies have offices in the area...Chevron, Oracle, Agilent, Hewlett-Packard, and Safeway, to name a few.

We highlighted some of our favorite wineries in Part 1 of this series on the Livermore Valley, in the March/April 2006 Where-To-Guide. Now, we will tell you about some of the Valley's golf options and explore the lively downtown area of historic Pleasanton.

GOLFING IN THE LIVERMORE VALLEY

The newest golf courses in the Valley are **THE COURSE AT WENTE VINEYARDS** and **POPPY RIDGE GOLF**

COURSE. LAS POSITAS GOLF COURSE remains a long-time favorite. Other popular nearby golf courses include **THE BRIDGES GOLF CLUB** in San Ramon and the **DUBLIN RANCH GOLF COURSE** in Dublin. Tee time reservations can be made by phone or online on the course's web site.

THE COURSE AT WENTE is an 18-hole Greg Norman course at the same location as Wente's Vineyard Tasting Room and Restaurant. It is at this Wente location that their summer concert series takes place. The course is open to the public. While writing about this course, I amused myself by watching the live webcam that transmits to their website from the course; if you play here, be sure to tell the folks back home to look for you.

POPPY RIDGE'S opening ten years ago put the Livermore Valley on the map for golfers all over the world. Its beautiful restaurant even attracted non-golfer me to the course. It was at about the same time that the **PURPLE ORCHID INN** opened just up the road (www.purpleorchid.com). This 27-hole Scottish Heathland Course, designed by Rees Jones, has even named

Livermore Valley Part 2 *continued*

three of its holes after wine grape varietals: Chardonnay, Zinfandel and Merlot. Golf publications compare **POPPY RIDGE** to Scottish links courses, both in design and playability. The course is open to the public, with discounts to Northern and Southern California Golf Association members.

LAS POSITAS is a municipal course, designed by Robert Muir Graves, that dates back to 1966. It has an 18-hole course and a 9-hole Executive course. Fees are more moderate at **LAS POSITAS** than those at the newer courses.

THE COURSE AT WENTE VINEYARDS 5050 Arroyo Rd., Livermore; 925/456-2475; www.wentegolf.com.

POPPY RIDGE GOLF COURSE 4280 Greenville Rd., Livermore; 925/447-6779; www.poppyridgegolf.com.

LAS POSITAS GOLF COURSE 917 Clubhouse Dr., Livermore; 925-443-3122; www.laspositasgolfcourse.com.

THE BRIDGES GOLF CLUB 9000 S. Gale Ridge Rd., San Ramon; 925/735-4253; www.thebridgesgolf.com.

DUBLIN RANCH GOLF COURSE 5900 Signal Hill Dr., Dublin; 925/556-7040; www.dublinranchgolf.com.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN PLEASANTON

If someone had told me 20 years ago that downtown Pleasanton would become a vibrant, upscale place, I would have laughed in their face. Well, the joke is on me. Today downtown Pleasanton is bustling with excellent restaurants, unusual shops and art galleries, and a luxury hotel. Gone are the days when the only “nice” place for a meal was the **PLEASANTON HOTEL** and when most of the shops specialized in Western-themed items.

Downtown Pleasanton has a history of being a business center. Settled in the 1850s by Spanish families, and originally called Alisal, it was on the main route to the Mother Lode and a popular stopover for gold miners on their way to seek their fortune. In the early 1900s, downtown served the thriving agribusiness community that grew up around the downtown. Many of the buildings on Main Street date back to downtown Pleasanton’s early days. Learn more about Pleasanton’s history at the **MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET** (603 Main St.; 925/462-2766; Wed. – Sat. 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sundays 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.) which is housed in a 1915 Spanish Colonial building.

Not having visited Pleasanton in several years, my first pleasant surprise was **THE ROSE HOTEL** (807 Main St.; 925/846-8802 or 800/843-9540; www.rosehotel.net), the 38-room European-style boutique hotel right in the center of town. I mentioned it in Part 1 of this Livermore Valley series, but must elaborate a bit more on the hotel’s charm. It pays tribute to Pleasanton’s original early-1900s **ROSE HOTEL** in its design and to historic Pleasanton with the vintage photographs that hang on the walls of its lobby and mezzanine areas. But, with its old-world charm, **THE ROSE** has successfully incorporated current-day amenities: wireless internet, a large private parking area, on-site fitness center, complimentary movies for in-room DVD players, and more. Sports legend John Madden’s son Mike is the owner and developer of **THE ROSE**.

ART

Remembering back to the days in the 1970s and 1980s when just about all Pleasanton’s art galleries were dedicated to Native American art, it is refreshing to discover a more diverse art scene here today.

One of my favorite new galleries is **WORTHINGTON GALLERY WEST** (739 Main St.; 925/ 485-1183; www.worthingtongallerywest.com). Owner Claudia Hess has made it her mission to bring an appreciation of art to as many people in the community as she can reach. She conducts art events for school kids, holds workshops and classes in the gallery (her Art Collecting 101 is always popular), and speaks to groups. She describes the art in her gallery as the “art of the world.” There is something here for just about every taste and budget. You may find a rare Miro lithograph next to a \$4.50 handpainted Indonesian ring holder in the shape of a cat. When I last visited, she still had some Kuna Indian Molas from a show she held at the end of last year. Ms. Hess has had a lifetime of experience in the world of art; her mother is an art historian who operates the **WORTHINGTON GALLERY** in Chicago.

At **STUDIO 7 FINE ARTS** (77 W. Angela St. off Main; 925/846-4322; www.studio7finearts.com) I found a delightful mix of handblown glass, paintings, ceramics, and exquisite contemporary handmade jewelry.

My favorite Native American/Western art gallery from the “old days,” **MESA TRADING CO.** (608-G Main St.; 925/426-9229; www.mesastore.com), is still here. I continue to enjoy visiting and searching for a new pair of silver earrings or another fetish for my collection. The gallery always has unique Katchinas and beautiful Native American pottery.

Pleasanton’s commitment to the arts is seen in the new **FIREHOUSE ART CENTER**, a theater and art gallery that are being developed in the historic firehouse building on Railroad Avenue. The design of the **CENTER** is in place and funds are being raised (www.pleasantonartsfoundation.org).

SHOPS

The best approach to the shops on and off Main Street is to just pop into any and all that attract your attention.

THE WINE STEWARD AT THE ROXY (641 Main St.; 925/600-9463; www.winesteward.com) is a friendly wine shop with a knowledgeable staff. It is in a 1920s building that was first called the New Lincoln Theatre and, in the 1940s, the Roxy Theatre. **WINE STEWARD**’s wines range from the finest of imported bottles to an eclectic selection of over 70 under-\$10 offerings. The store features wines from Kermit Lynch in Berkeley. They also carry Italian specialty foods, including fresh pasta and sauces, from AG Ferrari.

Two of downtown’s more hip women’s boutiques are **CHIC & YOUNIQUE** (111 W. Neal St.; 925/846-2442) and **PURE GIRLS CLUB** (660 Main St.; 925/485-4380).

A bit of Hawaii comes to Pleasanton at the **ALOHA ISLAND TRADING COMPANY** (410 Main St.; 925/417-0560;

Livermore Valley Part 2 *continued*

www.alohaislandtradingcompany.com) where you can find everything from KONA coffee to Reyn Spooner Aloha Shirts to Hawaiian music CDs to home decorative pieces. **DOMUS** (652 Main St.; 925/485-3077; www.domusonline.com) is the kind of gift/home furnishing store where you are sure to find the perfect gift as well as to be tempted to purchase for yourself. **DOMUS** aptly describes itself as a “lifestyle store” and is filled with fun, yet practical, merchandise.

RESTAURANTS

The **PLEASANTON HOTEL** (855 Main St.; 925/846-8106; www.pleasantonhotel.com) is still a thriving Victorian-style restaurant (does not operate as a hotel) with many beautiful dining rooms. It remains a popular spot for lunch, dinner, afternoon tea, and Sunday brunch. The **ENGLISH ROSE** (163 West Neal St.; 925/462-6322) is a cozy tea room and gift shop that serves full lunch/afternoon teas.

I always enjoy the Pacific Island cuisine at the **MAHALO GRILLE** (425 Main St.; 925/462-2800; www.mahalogrille.com). For lunch, I recommend the Pulled Kailua Pork Sandwich, which is served with a refreshing Smoked Pineapple Slaw. For dinner, I suggest any of the day’s fresh Hawaiian fish, prepared with a Macademia nut crust. Enjoy a sampler of appetizers by starting your meal with the Mahalo Luau PuPu Platter.

I also like the upscale Mexican food at the **BLUE AGAVE CLUB** (625 Main St.; 925/417-1224; www.blueagaveclub.com), particularly on warm days when I can dine on their outdoor patio.

Dilbert™ fans pay tribute to owner Scott Adams’ bumbling cartoon character with a casual American meal at **STACEY’S CAFE** (310 Main St.; 925/461-3113; www.staceyscafe.com). You can purchase a stuffed Dilbert doll at **STACEY’S** and have it signed by Adams (you need to leave the doll and come back about a week later for it). □

Restaurant Roundup

IN PURSUIT OF A LOBSTER ROLL

Most of my first 30 years were spent in New England. I remember my parents buying whole live lobsters for about 59 cents a pound during the summer, bringing them home and boiling them up. A favorite sandwich was the Lobster Roll, a top-loading hot dog bun packed with lobster salad.

To this day, the New England in me makes me crave lobster, especially a Lobster Roll. For several years, my special treat has been the Lobster Rolls at chef Bradley Ogden’s **YANKEE PIER** restaurants. Just recently, I’ve discovered another place for this special sandwich: **OLD PORT LOBSTER SHACK**.

I must point out, that, at about \$18 for a Lobster Roll with chips and cole slaw, our California versions are pretty pricey. I do warn that, if you love lobster, once you try a Lobster Roll, you will get hooked.. Both local restaurants mix chunks of freshly-boiled lobster with a light, flavorful dressing, and pack it high into the bun...no such thing as stringy bits of previously-frozen lobster meat. The Roll is served in a basket with house-made potato chips and a side salad.

OLD PORT LOBSTER SHACK

851 Veterans Blvd., Redwood City; 650-366-2400; www.oplobster.com
Lunch Weekdays, Dinner Tues. – Sat., Sunday lunch from Noon until 4 p.m.

You can take the boy out of Maine but you can’t take Maine out of the boy. That’s what I discovered when my friend Dixie treated me to lunch at the **OLD PORT LOBSTER SHACK** in Redwood City. Owner, Russell Deutsch came to California from Portland, Maine, where his business was exporting Maine lobsters. Until he married a Northern California girl, he had lived his

entire life in New England. From life as a New Englander, as well as from his lobster business, Deutsch knows the importance of fresh lobster. Opening **OLD PORT** earlier this year, Deutsch has brought a bit of authentic down Maine food and culture to the Bay Area.

As we were driving the 50 miles from Walnut Creek to Redwood City, I told native-Californian Dixie about the lobster-in-the-rough places that Jim and I used to stop at when we would drive from Boston to visit my sister in Portland, Maine. These roadside “shacks” were weather-beaten buildings, often overlooking the beach, where you ordered your lobster at the counter, took a seat at a picnic table, usually outside, and were soon brought a boiled lobster on a paper plate...just lots of good, fresh lobster with no frills except maybe some cole slaw or fries and some drawn butter for dipping. We would crack our lobster, dig out the meat, and eat most of our meal with our fingers. What a wonderful memory.

While **OLD PORT LOBSTER SHACK** is in a small strip mall on busy Veterans Boulevard, rather than overlooking the beach, it has much the same ambiance of the Maine lobster shacks that I was remembering...just a bit nicer. The format is the same: order at the counter, take a seat at a wooden picnic table, and wait for your lobster or fried clams, scallops, or other East Coast seafood.

We got there at about 11:45 a.m., just before the lunchtime rush. Since Dixie and I came for Lobster Rolls, our only decision was between the Maine Lobster Roll, in which the chunks of lobster are mixed with mayonnaise, lemon juice, chives, salt and pepper, or the Naked Lobster Roll in which the lobster meat is unadorned and simply piled into the roll and served with side dishes of mayonnaise and drawn butter. All Lobster Rolls are

Restaurant Roundup *continued*

served in a top-loading hot dog bun that is buttered on the outside and toasted. The Rolls are accompanied by housemade Potato Chips, Bread & Butter Pickle Chips, and your choice of Cole Slaw or Pesto Pasta Salad. **OLD PORT** has their hot dog buns baked specially for them; you can buy them here by the dozen to take home.

Dixie and I both went for the “traditional” Maine Lobster Roll (\$17.75) and were delighted with the sweet lobster meat mixed in its tasty, but not overwhelming, dressing. It was served in a wire basket with the Potato and Pickle chips. A cup of Cole Slaw sat in a side holder attached to the basket. This was a wonderful and filling lunch.

When I spotted Deutsch’s 2004 Maine license plate as part of the decor, I went over to chat with him about New England and its seafood. This led to my asking about his Clam “Chowdah.” After singing its praises, he served Dixie and me small cups of a perfectly-seasoned New England style chowder which was packed with clams, potatoes, carrots, and celery. It was so good, we took an order home for Jim who is a self-proclaimed New England Clam Chowder aficionado. Jim gave it two thumbs up.

My only regret about **OLD PORT** is that it is not closer to my home and office. I need to return soon to sample the Fried Clam Roll (\$16.75), the Beer Battered Fish and Chips (several choices on the fish), and to have another Lobster Roll. I did suggest to Mr. Deutsch that he consider a Contra Costa location.

YANKEE PIER

378 Santana Row, San Jose; 408/244-1244
286 Magnolia Ave., Larkspur; 415/924-7676

San Francisco International Airport, United Domestic Terminal 3, beyond Security

Lunch and Dinner Daily; Airport location opens at 5:30 a.m., serving typical breakfast dishes as well as Clam Chowder, Oysters, and Crab Omelettes

Since Chef Bradley Ogden opened his first **YANKEE PIER** seafood restaurant in Larkspur in October 2000, I’ve headed out here whenever I’ve had a craving for New England seafood. **YANKEE PIER** now has two other locations, one in San Jose in Santana Row and another at San Francisco International Airport in the United Airlines domestic terminal. Ogden’s inspiration for **YANKEE PIER** came from the clam shacks that he discovered when he studied cooking in New England.

Usually I order the Lobster Roll, since this has been the only restaurant in the Bay Area where I could find it on the menu. One day, when I arrived for an early lunch, they had not yet boiled the lobsters and I so, instead of a Lobster Roll, I tried the Fried Ipswich Clams, an excellent choice that has become another of my **YANKEE PIER** favorites. At the Santana Row **YANKEE PIER**, I recently expanded my horizons further with the Clam Po’ Boy sandwich, a wonderful presentation of Fried Clams. Jim usually orders the Clam Chowder to start and follows that with the Fish & Chips.

The **YANKEE PIER** menu goes beyond just New England seafood, offering several different fresh fish, many from local

California and Northwest waters, each day. The **YANKEE PIER** menu also includes several specialties from Chef Ogden’s **LARK CREEK** restaurants, including the Yankee Salad with its Fuji apples, walnuts, and blue cheese, and such desserts as the Butterscotch Pudding

OLD PORT OR YANKEE PIER?

How does **OLD PORT** compare to **YANKEE PIER**? While there are some differences in the ambiance and menus at the two, I have to say, I am happy to enjoy the New England seafood at either restaurant. I must emphasize that **YANKEE PIER** has been in business for over five years and that it started small, as has **OLD PORT**, which has just five months of experience. Quality-wise, both are outstanding.

On the tables at both restaurants are baskets filled with packets of Old Fashioned Oyster Crackers from the Westminster Cracker Company in Vermont (established 1828). These oyster crackers are the “real” New England thing to put in your Chowder, or to just munch on, as I like to do.

The lobster meat that I tasted at **OLD PORT** might have been a bit sweeter than what I recall at **YANKEE PIER**, but there was no discernible difference. **OLD PORT**’s buns are the more authentic and tastier. The homemade potato chips at both are yummy. The serving of Cole Slaw at **YANKEE PIER** is a bit larger; both are tasty. I like that **OLD PORT** offers the choice between Cole Slaw and Pesto Pasta Salad for the side salad. At **YANKEE PIER**, you are served Sour Dough Bread with all meals and, at the end of your meal, your check is accompanied by a piece of Salt Water Taffy, from Marini’s on the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

OLD PORT has a more casual ambiance than **YANKEE PIER**, making it more like the places I remember from Maine. **YANKEE PIER** has table service; at **OLD PORT** you order and pay at the counter and the food is delivered to your table. **YANKEE PIER** accepts reservations for any size party; **OLD PORT** only accepts reservations for large parties. Parking is no problem at **OLD PORT**...it is in a small strip mall with plenty of parking. **YANKEE PIER** in Larkspur offers valet parking in addition to free or metered parking nearby; at Santana Row, there is plenty of free parking.

July/August Previews

Tiburon...Terrific for a Summer Day’s Outing



Notes from a Visit to Boston

Restaurant Roundup *continued*

Poodle Louie has reminded me that **YANKEE PIER** welcomes dogs at its outdoor tables; he has dined several times at the Larkspur restaurant, enjoying the water bowl at the entrance to the patio and the dog biscuit that they serve him at the table. The Larkspur restaurant also has a sandbox on the patio for kids, making this dining area quite the lively family-friendly place. At Santana Row, there is a lot of outdoor seating where dogs and kids are welcomed.

I will choose **YANKEE PIER** for a more elegant night out, particularly if I am dining with friends with whom I want to linger over a leisurely meal. Both restaurants serve wine and beer. The selection is more limited at **OLD PORT**.

Both restaurants will prepare their meals for takeout; **OLD PORT**, with its location near a Kaiser Hospital and many office buildings, does a booming takeout business at lunch time. Prices are comparable at both restaurants.

LUNCH NEAR UNION SQUARE

When I am shopping around Union Square or heading to a matinee in the downtown San Francisco theatre district, my preference for a place to stop for lunch is one where service is

quick, prices are moderate, and where I have a comfortable place to sit. I do not like the crowded Macy's Cellar or the food court on the lower level of the San Francisco Centre.

Just recently I "discovered" a lovely spot that I have walked past many times. It is **CAFFE ESPRESSO** at the corner of Powell and Sutter Streets in the Sir Francis Drake Hotel.

CAFFE ESPRESSO is a friendly corner cafe that serves soups, salads, sandwiches, and at least one daily special hot dish. You order and pay at the counter and find a seat at a table either inside or on the outside sidewalk. I enjoyed a generous serving of Bean and Vegetable Soup which was served with a slice of warm garlic bread and a slice of sourdough bread. My bowl of soup with bread cost \$6.25. No item on the lunch menu costs more than \$8. **CAFFE ESPRESSO** is affiliated with **SCALA'S BISTRO**, the more formal (and pricier) restaurant in the hotel.

The **CAFFE** has a full bar and is also a pleasant place to stop for morning pastries or for a snack, cocktail, or pastry in the afternoon or evening.

CAFFE ESPRESSO

462 Powell St. at Sutter, San Francisco; 415/395-8585
Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner Daily

Discoveries & Notes

Who to call when no one else will take it?

GOT JUNK?

In March, my sister and I spent one full week emptying my father's condo in Florida. After sorting out the items that each of us wanted for ourselves, we had quite a bit that we did not want. Not having the luxury of time for an estate sale, or even to sell some of his possessions at consignment stores, we needed to give the stuff away.

We quickly discovered that giving things away is not always easy, particularly when you need someone to pick the stuff up.

I had arranged for Salvation Army to pick up most of the furniture and whatever else we did not want. But, and this was a big "but," Salvation Army told me up front that they would not take everything, particularly assembled beds and any mattresses.

Not having anyone in Florida who could remove the remaining stuff after we left, we needed to have a reliable solution to completely emptying the condo while we were there.

Before going to Florida, I mentioned my dilemma to a Canadian friend who asked me if **1-800-GOT-JUNK** did business in the States. I had never heard of them, but Jim recalled having seen their trucks in our neighborhood. He had assumed that they were a local operation. Checking on the Internet, I learned that the company has over 200 franchise operations in Canada and the United States.

1-800-GOT-JUNK (www.1800gotjunk.com; telephone: 1-

800-GOT-JUNK) became our solution. The company had its beginnings in 1989 when a Vancouver university student, Brian Scudamore, got the idea of hauling people's junk as his summer job. After three successful summers of working on his own with some of his university buddies, he began to expand the business. The company claims to be the World's largest junk removal service.

For me, **1-800-GOT-JUNK** was just what I wanted. I booked them online. Two men and a truck arrived within the two-hour time slot I had scheduled. They moved out the beds, mattresses, some room dividers, and then, they emptied a very dirty, messy, storage room of all kinds of junk. Not only did they work efficiently, but after all was moved, they thoroughly swept the bedroom, the storage room, and the elevator, leaving everything far cleaner than it was when they got there.

1-800-GOT-JUNK charges by the portion of the truck that is filled; our junk filled 1/4 of a truck and we paid a little over \$200 for their service. Their fee includes their coming into your home or place of business and hauling away all they take. No need to drag stuff out to the curb. We are told that the company salvages or recycles close to 90% of what they haul away. It is a win-win for all.

Sure I could have called some local salvage company to make the pickup, but I could not risk that they would not pick up at the promised time. The added bonus was that they cleaned up too.

I will certainly call them the next time I do a cleanup. □