

Articles about La Comida

Thank you to the man who wrote the letter about Mike Pavis from La Comida, who just recently passed away.

I was truly hoping the E-R would do a tribute story on him. This man embraced his community in a number of ways - from giving many local young people their first jobs to connecting with his clients on a daily basis.

Many of us who go to La Comida regularly will truly miss being greeted by Mike and his happy smile and his loving attention to our children.

Thank you to Mike Jr., who is carrying on his father's traditions. His father made our community a better place. We will miss him.

- Pennie Chrisope, Chico

Chico has lost a treasure

With the passing of Mike Pavis, Chico has lost a living treasure. He was an instrument of kindness, gentleness, good humor, and a lover of strong families. In fact, he never met a child he didn't love and they always wanted to be close to him.

He was a giver and not a taker. He radiated warmth and concern for everyone. No one ever felt like a stranger in his presence. He gave his all to his customers, who were his extended family, and to his community, which he dearly loved.

There is a poem that expresses, I believe, this community's feeling for Mike and his sudden passing.

- Arnie Kamman, Chico

Restaurant owner a hero

Last Friday, my husband took our two children to their favorite restaurant, La Comida. I was unable to go with them as I am caring for my mother who is dying of cancer. When I got home from my mother's, my son was crying. He couldn't find his beloved Spider-Man wallet, which he'd taken with him to La Comida. I called La Comida and asked if

they'd found a Spider-Man wallet and they had. That wallet contained 16 single dollar bills my 6-year-old son had earned by helping me care for his grandmother and losing his first tooth. But then real life intruded. The girl on the phone told me the wallet was empty.

The next day the manager of La Comida called and told me they'd found the money while vacuuming. My son was overjoyed. When we picked up the wallet, he looked inside, expecting to see 16 single dollar bills; instead there were two fives and six ones. The money in the wallet was not the money my son had lost.

I have to tell you, I cried Friday night when I realized somebody in this town had taken money from a wallet so obviously belonging to a child. But I cried even harder on Saturday, when I discovered our town still has a wonderful person like J.R., the owner of La Comida, who would give of his own money to ensure the happiness of a child.

- Kimberly Hunt, Chico

The Starving Student: La Comida - More Mexican food bang for your buck

MONICA UNHOLD - The Buzz

La Comida Restaurant, 954 Mangrove Ave. in Chico (pictured here), is open from 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday to Saturday. The Paradise location, 6153 Skyway, is open from 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday to Saturday. (Bill Husa/The Buzz) All Chico E-R photos are available here.

Even a skimpy lunch at La Comida is massive enough to lull a person off to la-la land in a food coma.

The portions are cheap but huge. Diners have the choice of ordering combinations with rice and beans, or for the independent types, a la carte.

Walking through the glass door of La Comida in Chico, I was surprised to see a row of people stacked up like dominos across the tile floor, waiting to place their orders. I stepped up behind the line's human caboose and waited my turn.

For some strange reason I was craving a bean and cheese burrito. I didn't see one on the menu right away, so I improvised and ordered a cheese enchilada (\$2.30), bean dip (\$1.40) and a root beer (93 cents).

The man at the counter wore a genuinely friendly smile, but I was a

little startled when he thrust a piece of paper with a number printed on it across the counter. I wasn't expecting the cooks to call numbers, because the dining area looked classy enough to be that of a sit-down restaurant, complete with waiters juggling stacks of hot plates.

I wandered over to a table behind the partition dividing the seating area from the counter, far enough away to be a little quieter, but close enough to hear my number called. The opposite wall contained a colorful Southwestern-themed mural, complete with a clay pot and cacti. There were 30 to 40 tables scattered across the seating area, and at least one-third of them were occupied at noon.

The service was ridiculously speedy. I had been sitting down less than two minutes when a chef shouted my number. It was like one of the chefs had a premonition about what I was going to order before I even arrived. How else could one roll up a cheese enchilada, submerge it in spicy red sauce and fill up a bowl of soupy bean dip in under two minutes?

I didn't know, and honestly after the first bite I didn't care.

Soon after digging in, a small problem presented itself. Every table comes pre-stocked with chips, but one basket wasn't enough to polish off my bean dip, irresistible with the scintillating flavor that comes from the addition of the most coveted ingredient for any bean dip: cream cheese.

I looked around. I could've asked someone behind the counter for an extra basket of chips, but it was a bit of a trek and if they had refused I'd have tipped them off to my scheme. None of the customers chowing down nearby looked like vigilante tattletale types. It would be easy to swipe a new basket off a neighboring table if it weren't for those pesky table busers. The two on the floor looked pretty tough and were definitely on top of their game, swooping in like hungry vultures to clear a table the instant guests rose to their feet. Before I had even taken my first bite they had snagged the tray out from underneath my plate. One worried woman tried to delay the inevitable by telling one of the busers, "I'm just going to fill up my drink, I'm not done yet."

The busers turned their backs for a second and I slickly plucked a basket off the table behind me. I felt pretty smooth, but a little nervous one of the busers would notice my table was crowned with an extra basket of chips. After the chip caper, I avoided eye contact

with the busers, reverting to my early childhood hide-and-go-seek logic: If I can't see them, they can't see me.

In ordinary circumstances I would feel ridiculously guilty about swiping the chips. I have an irrational fear of karma coming back to haunt me, and I've never stole a thing in my life. But come on, they're only chips. The restaurant could have avoided the whole fiasco by simply offering a replacement basket.

La Comida

Biz Bits: For a tiny, family restaurant, it's not all about the money

LAURA URSENY - Business Editor

Being a tiny restaurant in a restaurant-heavy town like Chico isn't easy, but there's one celebrating its 40th anniversary: LA COMIDA Mexican restaurant. Find it tucked away in a strip center at 954 Mangrove Ave. It's not elegant; no one could call it quaint or charming, but you can take a bet that open seats are hard to find, and its longevity stands for something.

Two years ago, our restaurant columnist commented, "Even a skimpy lunch at La Comida is massive enough to lull a person off to la-la land in a food coma." She liked it, to say the least.

In 1994, an Enterprise-Record reporter sat down with then-owner MIKE PAVIS SR., who was 80 at the time. At 17, he got started as a "soda jerk" at a San Francisco soda fountain. He was working for United Artists entertainment company, and moved to Chico. UA owned a diner building on Main Street that was torn down and in 1955 CAL'S DRIVE INN took shape under Pavis, just a stone's throw from the Senator Theatre, with 19-cent hamburgers and half a chicken for 99 cents.

In 1968, Pavis opened La Comida in Chico. There is a La Comida in Paradise as well, at 6153 Skyway.

Good, rib-sticking meals were Pavis' goal — and more. And it looks like he accomplished it. Others took the pen in 2001 to leave Pavis a written legacy after he died. It was obvious the sorrow extended beyond his family. Here are a couple of letters to the Enterprise-Record: