



Photo by Sally Egan

MUY COOL!

Viva Madrid! is the place you show off to out-of-towners

By Stacy Davies

If you're fortunate enough not to live in a part of the Inland Empire where fine dining means Chili's, then you most likely have one unique, fancy eatery that you drag out-of-town aunts or long-lost high school rivals to when any of them magically appear on your doorstep—especially if they, with crinkled nose, sniff “you live *where?*,” effectively throwing down the IE-is-a-trash-can-prove-me-wrong gauntlet.

While LA has many premiere supper spots, even in smaller burgs like ours, there's usually at least *one* grubbery of which a city is most proud—the one that denotes *immediate* social coolness. In the IE, Riverside has Mario's Place and Redlands has Joe Greensleeves, Claremont has Viva Madrid!

So shuttle your milquetoast aunt or Botoxed ex-cheerleader pal down to Claremont's Village (“Oooh! A *village!* How cute!”), duck her through the mini alley off Yale Avenue, passing through the charming inlet lined with ladies selling handmade dangly earrings, and step up to the wooden façade of the only authentic Spanish joint for miles. Feeling like you're entering a set from Pirates of the Caribbean (the ride, not the movie), sit at haughtily mismatched tables and chairs and scan the walls and raftered ceilings laden with sconces, wrought iron candelabras, paintings of matadors and demure ladies, statues, stained glass, and an assortment of rusted and antiqued randomness. All of it's for sale, by the way—even the table at which you sit.

Funky like the interiors of an artist's twisted head, Madrid is synonymous with eclectic and hip. The décor is not the only unexpected turn—the cuisine itself seems a paradox. Steamed strawberries with cheese on a plate of 15-year-old Spanish vinegar? Crab crepes topped with avocado sauce? Squid stuffed with chorizo? HELL YEAH. The menu is the kind of reading material that you quote aloud at the table, open-mouthed like a cod-

fish, eyes sparkling curiously. This will happen *a lot*, as you take turns announcing each of their 49 appetizers or tapas (including the special ones). Just order up a carafe of tarty-tasty sangria, chew on the swimming fruit, and make sure to order at least four tapas, as you'll be fighting over them all—especially the ones that come with garlicky tomato bread. Also try a wee *ensalada*—we like the one with fruit and nuts and cheese, of course, but there are others that are toned down.

The paellas made with saffron rice are the most popular *entradas*, and they have three kinds to choose from—the *mixta* is various fish, including mussels and swordfish with chorizo and chicken; the *carnaria* is chicken and pork; and the *valenciana* is for the veg-heads. All are rich mixtures that for timid systems may induce late-night dreams of running from snarling sausages; for most of us, these would be good dreams.

Madrid also offers more recognizable fare—rib eye steak, grilled pork chops, lamb, gulf shrimp and salmon. Everything is fancied up though, with caramelization, honey sauce, marmalade and bechamel, and topped with almonds, crumbled cheeses, garlic and olives. Basically, you will *reek* when you leave here, and probably all night long, so if you're single, *do not* stop by the local bar to pick something up, and if you're unsingle, well, make sure you *both* eat the anchovies.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays you can also enjoy some flamenco guitarists, which always adds a little thickness to the atmosphere—although with food and surroundings this gorgeous, there's really no need to prime the pump. **IE**

VIVA MADRID! 225 YALE AVE., B, CLAREMONT (909) 624-5500. WWW.VIVA-MADRID.COM. OPEN TUES.-SUN., 5-11 P.M. CLOSED MON. [DINNER FOR TWO: \$50-60] BEER AND WINE ONLY. NO RESERVATIONS.

Dining Guide

If you'd like your restaurant included in our dining guide, please email your website link to calendar@jieweekly.com, or fax your menu to (951) 284-2596. Reviews where indicated, by Stacy Davies, Barbara Hernandez and Pat Strong.

Average price per entree.

Under \$10 \$
\$10-\$20 \$\$
Over \$20 \$\$\$

CLAREMONT

Aruffo's
Great Italian fare, especially the Aglio Arrostito appetizer—bruschetta, bread, fresh garlic, sun-dried tomatoes, olives and a variety of pestos to dip it all in. Yum. 126 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 624-9624. \$\$

BC Café
Not the most beautiful place on Earth—looks like a regular old lhop or something, BCC scores big points on fantastic food and friendly staff. The stuffed pancakes are to die for. 701 S. Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 482-1414. \$

Danson & Espiau's Restaurant
Formerly two separate restaurants that a few years ago decided to merge. They serve American and Mexican dishes and are most known for their salad, dressing and chips. Espiau's has been serving salad since 1928. 109 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 621-1818. \$\$

Darvish
This Persian palace offers all your favorite kabobs and there's a belly dancer on weekends, we hear. Call to confirm. 946 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-4910. \$\$\$

El Rancharo
Authentic Mexican food in a mellow atmosphere. Great for the price. 984 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-8824. \$

Harvard Square Café
Not a huge menu. HSC concentrates and perfects what they do serve. The eggs benedict are some of the best we've ever had, the penne arrabiata is killer, just like the shitake-enrusted pork loin. For light lunch fare, try the ham and Brie baguette sandwich. (SD) 206 W. Bonita, Claremont (909) 626-7763. \$\$

Inka Trails
Peruvian food is the thing at this little known, but often passed by spot on Foothill Blvd. Small, intimate, with excellent food, try out the Lima-styled fare and check out the Peruvian artwork. (SD) 1077 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont, (909) 624-8299. www.inkatrailsrestaurant.com. \$\$

Nogi Japanese Restaurant
Besides the fact that this place offers some of the best sushi

and tempura around, you gotta come here just to meet the owners. A former fashion designer, Keiko is very friendly and determined that you have a perfect eating experience. (SD) 950 W. Foothill Blvd., Claremont (909) 626-1582. \$\$

The Press
The place for cool people in the upper IE. Lots of artists, educators (The Colleges are just across the street), musicians writers, etc., with healthy food and excellent Key Lime martinis. (SD) 129 Harvard Ave., Claremont (909) 625-4808. \$

Tutti Mangia
Upscale Italian restaurant with classy ambiance and great food. 102 Harvard Ave., Claremont (909) 625-4669. \$\$

Viva Madrid
This restaurant is our favorite in all of the upper IE. Artistic and eclectic décor and the occasional flamenco band complement an authentic, extensive Spanish menu featuring paella and various potato, vegetable and warm fruit appetizers. The Sangria is superb. No reservations. (SD) 225 Yale Ave., B, Claremont (909) 624-5500. www.viva-madrid.com. \$\$\$

Yiannis Greek Restaurant
Everyone I know loves this place. 238 Yale Ave., Claremont, (909) 621-2413. \$\$

COLTON

Hawaiian Blues
There's nothing that goes better with oysters, lomi lomi, or the Kalua pork and cabbage than some grass-skirted blues singin'—that would be you, since this is a karaoke restaurant. But please, no more “Tiny Bubbles.” It makes us bump them up. 1280 E. Washington St., Ste. 10, Colton, (909) 370-3100. \$

Jean's French Restaurant
It's French food. In Colton. Let us know if they don't have frogs legs or Brie. 592 N. La Cadena Dr., Colton, (909) 825-0905. \$\$

Pinnacle Peak Steak House
This is a meat lover's paradise. Huge slabs of meat that would make any carnivore grow fangs and howl at the moon. And, it's a pretty cheap deal considering. The sides are equally palatable: ranch style beans good enough to be canned and sold to the public, hot fresh bread, corn on the cob and good “cold” iceberg salad served with dressing that kind of tastes like Marie Calendar's, especially the ranch. It's done up like a big barn and it's known for being the place that will cut the tie off anyone stupid enough to wear one. Plus, they have a full bar and all the standard beers on ice. Serving dinner daily. (PS) 2533 S. La Cadena Dr., Colton, (909) 783-2543. \$\$

Ravi's India Cuisine
Serving authentic Indian food, made with spices imported from India. Specialties include tandoori chicken, chicken tikka, tandoori nan, and masala dosa. 1091 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (951) 824-1100. \$

Sayaka Japanese Restaurant
Sushi, sashimi, and nigiri, as well as *teppan-yaki* alternatives like calamari, New York steak, and lobster tail, served in a sleek, contemporary setting. 1063 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (909) 824-6958. \$\$

Sassy Steer
Two levels decorated in the supper-club style, featuring hearty pork ribs and top-grade, juicy steaks. 1141 S. Mount Vernon Ave., Colton, (909) 370-3424. \$\$

CORONA

Backwoods BBQ
An authentic mesquite smoked Texas-style BBQ restaurant. Catering, entertainment and games can be found in this family facility. 4300 Green River Rd., Ste. 102, Corona, (951) 371-7227. \$

Cask 'n Cleaver
Featuring only top choice Midwestern com-fed beef, the Cask 'n Cleaver has a reputation for serving the best in steak, ribs, chicken and seafood. Open for dinner. 100 N. Lincoln Ave., Corona, (951) 735-8550. \$\$

Honolulu Harry's
Classic California fusion cuisine influenced by Bali, Shanghai, the South China Sea, Latin America, Hawaii and our very own California Coast. Basically, any place that's sexy. 370 N. McKinley St., Corona, (951) 272-9753; www.honoluluharrys.com.

J.P.'s Broiler International
Filipino, Jamaican, Italian and Chinese food are served here. But they lean more towards Filipino food. Their favorites are the curragy, the Milagat soup with beef and they have a barbecue short ribs meal for \$8.50 as a lunch special. 3848 McKinley St., Corona, (951) 736-3676. \$

Misato Japanese Restaurant
AKA “Desperately Seeking Sushi.” You don't even have to be desperate to enjoy the wide variety of traditional and seasonal sushi selections prepared with the freshest fish available. Misato also offers a number of vegetarian items, and an interesting dessert menu, including “Danny's Tempura Ice Cream.” Try the red bean or green tea variety. 261 S. Lincoln Ave., Corona, (951) 272-2900. \$\$

Napa 29
Only in the IE can you get a high-falutin' restaurant in a strip mall. This place is chi-chi cha-cha! 280 Teller St., Corona, (909) 273-0529. \$\$\$

FONTANA

Cowboy Burgers & BBQ
Thick, juicy burgers and heaping plates of barbecue beef ribs, prepared from scratch. 11673 Etiwanda Ave., Fontana, (951) 681-2020. \$

Jolly Farms Bar-b-que
They specialize in roasted chicken dinners and deli sandwiches. They are smaller but have decent seating for casual dining. 9511 Sierra Ave., Fontana, (909) 822-8975. \$

Mario's Italian Restaurant and Pizza
Besides the pizza, this restaurant's most popular meal is the chicken catchori and spaghetti. They also make good Italian sandwiches. 9733 Sierra Ave., Fontana, (909) 350-1212. \$

HEMET

Anchor Restaurant
They serve all-American food and Italian and some Japanese as well. Moderately sized restaurant, they come complete with a huge lounge and banquet room for 300. 2524 E. Florida Ave., Hemet, (951) 925-0591. \$\$

Dattilo Ristorante
Don't be fooled by the name; they serve just as much American food as Italian food. They have just about everything, except for baked potatoes. One of their more popular dishes is the halibut. Their restaurant is medium-sized and can seat 120. 2288 E. Florida Ave., Hemet, (951) 658-4248. \$\$

Nana's Elegant Afternoon Tea Parties
Providing elegant afternoon tea parties for a minimum of eight guests. 26447 Hamre Place, Hemet, (951) 658-2010. \$\$

HIGHLAND

Cuca's
Featuring daily specials, tacos, burritos, tamales, hamburgers and more, the food is made from genuine, original Mexican recipes. 3644 E. Highland Ave., #2, Highland, (909) 425-0854. \$\$

Manhattan Bagel
Featuring fresh-baked bagels in a number of varieties. 7243 Boulder Ave., Highland, (951) 862-1111. \$

Pepper Steak Restaurant
Good dinner specials including their pot turkey, meatloaf and the shrimp and pastrami dish. This restaurant is mainly an all-American restaurant but also has some Mexican dishes on the