

Claire's on Cedros – as close to perfect as a restaurant gets



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Lick the Plate

Of course there is no such thing as a perfect restaurant, but once in a while one comes along that has such a perfect mix going on it's difficult to find much wrong with it.

That mix, for "Lick the Plate" anyway, is a combination of the people running the show, the talent in the kitchen, the décor and vibe, an effort put forth to do things in sustainable manner, service, and of course the food. I can put very strong check marks next to all of those when describing Claire's on Cedros.

Claire's is a collaboration between Claire Allison and Terrie Boley, longtime friends who came together to fulfill a mutual dream to run a breakfast and lunch place where wholesome food is served in an environment that makes you feel as if you never left home. Claire is the talent in the kitchen and her background would make for a great story itself. While raising her family with her husband Greg, she created a recipe for a wholesome bread that her girls would eat. That recipe became Milton's



The beach chic interior at Claire's on Cedros. Photo by David Boylan

Multigrain Bread when she sold it to the owners of Milton's. She then ran the bakery at Milton's for 12 years.

Terrie Boley is the entrepreneur of the two, with a history of bringing together smart, talented and passionate people, a formula that has worked very well for her. She spent most of her career as a software engineer and was on the founding team of two successful hi-tech startups. She viewed Claire's as a similar opportunity to create something great, knowing the kitchen talent and inspiration was in place with Claire.

So there are two big check marks for my first two criteria with the solid team behind the scenes and talent in the kitchen.

As far as the décor and vibe, Claire's fits in perfectly

with the beach chic that is so predominant on Cedros Avenue. It's a very clean, comfortable space with outdoor seating in the front on the porch and a garden type environment in the back. Let's give that a solid check mark also.

As far as sustainable efforts go, Claire's is off the hook. They decided their building should be as sustainable as their menu. This solar powered gem of a building is LEED Platinum certified, making it the first restaurant with this distinction in San Diego. The same effort to source locally is put into their menu. Another huge check for sustainability.

I'm going to expand on my service criteria because Claire's actually devotes a page on their website to their employees, which speaks volumes about

how they treat their staff. That is reflected in the service, which is welcoming, attentive and fun. Given the volume this place does, any one of those could slip very easily but it doesn't. Mark another one off for the team and the service.

Finally on to that most critical element, the food. Claire's is a breakfast and lunch café combined with an in-house bakery. That is a very good combination to have in a restaurant.

Their cuisine consists of straightforward bistro classics made with the finest ingredients available and made from scratch. Their menu is seasonal and changes to focus on the freshest ingredients for that time of year.

It's breakfast and lunch only at Claire's. One can only fantasize about what they would do with a dinner menu. This place is foodie heaven and if you have not been, I would put it on your short list to get to very soon. The Caprese frittata with homemade ricotta, provolone, oven roasted and fresh sliced tomatoes topped with arugula salad and finished with fresh pesto and basil oil is an example of breakfast nirvana.

Selecting lunch can prove difficult, as there really are so many great looking options. One of those is the Chicken Bahn Mi Sandwich, which is

Claire's take on the Vietnamese classic. She uses marinated and grilled chicken thighs, pickled daikon radish and carrots, butter lettuce, tomato, jalapeno, cilantro and mayonnaise on a homemade baguette. This sandwich is out-of-control good.

On a side note, Claire shares my passion for chicken thighs and is slowly educating the chicken breast-only housewives of North County on their merit.

Claire's on Cedros is the real deal. Their menu, hours of operation and a lot more about them can be found at clairesoncedros.com.

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