



Farmer's Table: A Welcome Edition to La Mesa Dining Scene

March 30, 2017

La Mesa has long been overlooked by city dwellers and north county residents. Located near El Cajon on the I-8 corridor, this little town is starting to look, well, *different*.

Just nine miles east of downtown, La Mesa is a unique neighborhood with its own character. More rural and small-town in nature, the city has been going through a revitalization. As rent skyrockets across the city and residents and businesses from other areas seek a less expensive place to call home, La Mesa has seen a boom. The city is home to 58,769 residents as of 2014, that number is up 7% since 2000.

As the population expands, so does the need for great dining destinations.

If the area is new to you, head east on the 8 or the 125 and exit Spring Street towards La Mesa Boulevard. At the intersection of these streets you'll find a small downtown shopping area with tons of character. There are a variety of shops, bars and restaurants to visit. A few new additions to the neighborhood include Blvd Noodles, BO-beau kitchen + garden, Sheldon's Service Station and Farmer's Table.

For this trip to La Mesa, we had the opportunity to try Farmer's Table, and we urge you to do the same. Enter the spacious restaurant on the corner and you'll be greeted by friendly staff and a warm environment. Rustic-but-trendy decorations adorn the space and range from luggage inside the welcome booth to the tractor in the main dining room. 80% of all materials used in decorating the space was reclaimed, including the benches and tables made from old car parts, tires, and vintage suitcases. Sit outside on the patio or around the indoor-outdoor bar area. Heaters will keep you warm on those cool evenings, so don't worry about being cold.





Farmer's Table brings together fresh, local flavors and unique dishes. They use locally sourced organic ingredients, which the manager explained, means that they know their suppliers very well. The freshness in ingredients is immediately apparent, that is, if you order something fresh.

We started with the Bison Tartare (a best-seller at their sister restaurant Farmer's Bottega), which was served with a generous helping of avocado, formed into a beautiful round, topped with bison and the unexpected flavors of mango and pomegranate. The surprise was a small quail egg nestled to the side of the dish, allowing the diner to drop the egg onto the microgreens and watch the yolk cascade onto the items below. It was a beautiful thing to behold.



For the appetizer, we also ordered the Grilled Octopus. Not a “normal” selection for some, but worth a try. Octopus can be notoriously difficult to cook, and can end up rubbery and unappetizing if done wrong. Something that can go wrong so easily was done very right at Farmer’s Table. Served with watercress, radish, fingerling potatoes and leeks, the plate was garnished with a beautiful pink flower (different than pictured below). The flower made the purple hues in the octopus stand out. It was one of the most beautifully plated dishes I’ve had in a while.



Alongside appetizers my dinner guest and I had a few cocktails. Throughout the meal we had a Barnyard Mule (Woodford bourbon, ginger beer, lime juice, bitters with fresh blue berries), The Farm Hand (Hendrick's gin, St. Germain, lemon juice, simple syrup, cucumber and black pepper) and a Pinata (Milagro tequila blanc, blood orange, jalapeno simple syrup, lime juice with a tajin rim).

The cocktails sounded delicious. In practice, they may need a little fine-tuning. Farmer's Table hasn't been open for long, so we hope they'll make some changes. The Barnyard Mule was surprisingly sweet, but drinkable. The Farm Hand was a bit heavy on the gin (although a great choice of gin), could have used a little more St. Germain, and would have benefitted greatly from muddling the cucumber.

The stand-out cocktail was definitely the Pinata (or is it Piñata? Not quite sure). It was a fresh take on a standard margarita. Mix in blood orange instead of triple sec, use jalapeno syrup to add some subtle heat, and garnish with a Tajin rim. The hurricane glass (not the glass pictured) and straw made it difficult to enjoy the Tajin rim, but it was tasty.

The beer list is also pretty good. With go-tos like Karl Strauss' Aurora Hoppyalis, Ale Smith's .394, and Alpine's Duet, you can't go wrong. They've got beers from San Diego favorites like Ballast Point, Modern Times, Mother Earth and Stone, so there should be something for everyone.



Pinata Cocktail



After some helpful suggestions from the waiter, we settled on our dinner selections of Duck Gnocchi and a Black Truffle Pizza. The duck was cooked beautifully and the gnocchi was light and fluffy. A favorite among diners according to the waiter, it was very good. The Black Truffle Pizza is a new addition to the menu, and was very tasty as well. The crust was crisp, with some delicious blackened bits to give it a rustic flavor. The truffle flavor was pronounced but not overwhelming. It was great left-over the next day too.

Speaking of leftovers – you will very likely leave home with something to nosh on tomorrow. While the entrees are a bit steeply priced between \$20 and \$30 (pizzas are more reasonable), you should be able to get a dinner *and* lunch out of it, especially if you order an app, bruschetta or salad.

The meal left us quite full, but what would a restaurant review be without dessert? My friends know me as a sucker for bread pudding, so I had to give their daily selection a try. That's taking one for the SD Entertainer team. Dessert selections include a daily bread pudding, pannacotta, lava cake or lemoncello cake. The daily bread pudding was a peach-variety, topped with ice cream. Again, portions were large, so it's easily shared. It wasn't too sweet and finished the meal off beautifully.



Farmer's Table is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, so if you're in the neighborhood stop by. If you're not, you may want to venture out to La Mesa to try for yourself. If you're there for breakfast and want a challenge, check out their insane bloody marry – served in a pitcher with an entire roasted chicken on top.

Alberto Morreale and Vincenzo Loverso are co-owners of Farmer's Table. Alberto co-owns the highly successful Hillcrest and Liberty Station Fig Tree Café locations and is the owner of Farmer's Bottega in Mission Hills. Vincenzo holds an extensive pedigree, having previously opened Hillcrest's Fresh Catch Fish Market & Grill and is currently serving as the owner of San Diego Dining Group, which operates Greystone The Steakhouse, Osetra The Fishhouse, and Osteria Panevino.

Location: 8141 La Mesa Blvd, La Mesa, CA 91941

Hours: Breakfast/Lunch 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. daily; M – Thurs 4:30 p.m. – 10 p.m., Fri – Sun 4:30 p.m. – 11 p.m.

www.farmerstablelamesa.com

All photos courtesy of Farmer's Table.