

# Weekend

MOUNTAIN VIEW VOICE

- RESTAURANT REVIEW
- MOVIE TIMES
- BEST BETS FOR ENTERTAINMENT



VERONICA WEBER

The Santa Fe omelet comes with polenta at Country Gourmet in Mountain View.

## ■ RESTAURANT REVIEW

### A truly hearty breakfast

MORNING PORTIONS RANGE BETWEEN GENEROUS AND GIGANTIC AT COUNTRY GOURMET

By Dale F. Bentson

On chilly and not so chilly mornings, I love waking to thoughts of a bounteous breakfast. My lifestyle doesn't allow for indulgence in a big breakfast very often, but when it does, it's a place like Country Gourmet in Mountain View that whets my appetite.

Country Gourmet has been a fixture on the southeast corner of El Camino Real and Rengstorff Avenue for decades. Architecturally, the restaurant resembles a small farm structure. Built in the late 1960s, the building originally housed a unit of the long-defunct Red Barn restaurant chain, according to owner Herman Shaw.

"The property had been in the family for many years. After Red Barn closed, the building sat empty for some time," Shaw said. In 1981, his son conceived the family-restaurant idea and the place has been a local favorite ever since.

Shaw is the only family member active in the restaurant but has other business interests that limit his on-site time. "We have a manager and most of the staff has been with us for 10 years," he said.

From my perspective, it seems to be a well-run operation.

While Country Gourmet is open six days a week for breakfast, lunch and dinner, I'm focusing on the early menu for this breakfast review.

► See **COUNTRY GOURMET**, page 14

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VERONICA WEBER.

The Belgian waffle at Country Gourmet is topped with fruit.

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### COUNTRY GOURMET

► Continued from page 13

“Healthy Food and Lots of It” is the logo beneath the Country Gourmet sign that beckons along El Camino. It’s one advertising line that few could dispute, at least the “lots of it” part. Portions range between generous and gigantic, frequently overflowing the large plates that the orders are served on.

Just inside the door, the “Place Order Here” sign was a little off-putting on my first visit, where

the service was semi-self-serve. Orders were delivered to the table but there was no attendant table service. There was an area for water and soft drinks, while another section was designated as the serve-yourself coffee station. The behind-the-counter staff was friendly but I missed a perky waitress sashaying around the breakfast room, refilling coffee mugs willy-nilly and calling everyone “hon.”

Printed menus were ready for diners at the door, listing the usual retinue of omelets, scrambles, Benedicts, quiches, pancakes and eggs any which way, with sides of

fruit, biscuits, potatoes, meats, toast options, grilled polenta, guacamole and hollandaise sauce.

There was also a chalkboard behind the order/pay position that catalogued 17 additional breakfast specials. “Come earlier” was my lesson; several of the specials were already sold out.

According to Shaw, the most popular item is Belgian waffles (\$7.95). The waffles are topped with a thicket of blackberries and sliced strawberries, along with Chantilly cream and scoops of sweet butter, with syrup on the side. It’s an artistic plate, worthy of a Dutch Master’s signature, but this edible art would have pleased even Vermeer — had he loved waffles.

Pumpkin pancakes (\$7.95) were also topped with a bucketful of sweet butter, with cranberry and maple syrups on the side. There were no additional frills, and my initial reaction was that eight bucks was a lot for two pancakes. Still, it was plenty to eat: I could barely manage a salad for dinner that evening. The pancakes were dense and flavorful, fresh-tasting and slightly nutty. My only real complaint was that the cranberry syrup was teeth-chattering sweet.

The San Jose omelet (\$8.75), served open-face, was layered with bacon, cheddar and jack cheeses, diced tomatoes, roasted tomatillo salsa, avocado and sour cream, and came with a choice of two sides. Although I couldn’t finish it all, my mind still carries an image of that tempting omelet.

Corned beef hash (\$8.95) was a mini-mountain of grilled potatoes, house-made corned beef, bell peppers, tomato and onions, topped with two poached eggs under a blanket of hollandaise sauce.

The hash and eggs were delicious and the hollandaise well prepared. I didn’t like them together, though. The lemony sauce seemed at odds with the other savory ingredients rather than complementing them. Next time, I’ll ask them to hold the hollandaise and give the hash its just due: a liberal splash of Tabasco.

I cringed when I saw the size of the Italian sausage omelet (\$8.95). The eggs ballooned with spicy sausage, mushrooms, feta cheese, fresh arugula and sweet peppers. Unwisely, I chose potatoes as one of the sides. Not that they weren’t delicious, but it was just too much when coupled with the huge biscuit that was more scone-like and bigger than any other flaky little breakfast biscuit in the neighborhood. I passed on dinner altogether that evening.

Country Gourmet has an excellent children’s menu (\$5.25). Every order is served with a ramekin of fruit and choice of milk or juice

#### DINING NOTES

**Country Gourmet**  
2098 W. El Camino Real  
Mountain View  
650-962-1700  
cgmountainview.com

**Breakfast hours:**  
Tue.-Fri. 7-11 a.m.;  
Sat.-Sun. 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m.  
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and either pancakes, chocolate-pancake, cheese omelet or breakfast quesadilla (eggs, bacon and cheese) all designed specifically for children.

The interior of Country Gourmet is zigzagged off with wood planters filled with living plants, making the dining room more intimate than if it were one large open space. There is a small patio for use in warmer weather. Tables are tile-topped, chairs of sturdy wood.

Daylight floods the room even on inclement days thanks to high-up windows. Restrooms must be accessed from the parking lot, but are part of the building, a hold-over from Red Barn days.

Next time you're hankering for an all-American, amped up, heavy-duty, super-delicious, home-styled, 100 percent authentic and "lots of it" breakfast, Country Gourmet is the place for you. Who knows? You might be hungry again in a day or two. ▣



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