



## ANCIENT CITY APPETITE

BY JOSHUA BAER

### OASIS CAFÉ

7 Caliente Road, Santa Fe (at La Tienda in Eldorado)

11:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Tuesdays through Saturdays

505 467-8982

If I told you that two of the grilled sandwiches at Oasis Café were extraordinary—that the pleasure eating either or both of them was worth the fifteen-minute drive from Santa Fe to Eldorado and that you should go eat there right now—I would forgive you if you said, “Sure, that sounds interesting,” but waited a month before you took my advice. I can say this because that’s what I did when a friend told me that Oasis’s Cubano was the best he’d ever had, and that I should drive out to Eldorado and order one right away. The paradox is familiar to anyone who lives according to her or his appetite. Food tastes better when you’re hungry, but when you’re hungry for something exceptional, and don’t want to cook it yourself, satisfying your hunger usually involves driving to a place that’s not right around the corner, parking, going in, sitting down, ordering, and drinking an iced beverage while you wait for the food you can’t wait to eat. Was the food worth the wait? Like it or not, this is the standard by which cafés and restaurants are judged.

When it comes to the Cubano at Café Oasis, the answer is “Yes.” Not only is Oasis’s Cubano worth the wait, it’s prepared by John Conlon, a chef disguised as a grill man at a hole-in-the-wall café in Eldorado. John’s mother was Bunny

Conlon, the art dealer and radiant enthusiast who became Santa Fe’s sweetheart during the late 1980s. Bunny died of Parkinson’s in 2014. After looking after his mother for eight years, John and his wife, Rebecca Silva, opened Oasis Café.

“We’re here twelve hours a day,” John told me, “trying to make sure the quality is always good. The restaurant business is in my blood.”

John makes Oasis’s grilled sandwiches on focaccia bread he bakes each morning. These are the two you don’t want to miss.

Cubano. \$10. Pulled pork, ham, pickles, Swiss cheese, garlic-lemon aioli, and mustard. John grills the sliced focaccia until it reaches a state of grace: not too crisp, not too soft, just the moment in time when the sandwich becomes a delicacy.

Tuna Melt. \$6.50. “A basic tuna salad with fresh herbs,” says John, “with a little yogurt and some capers.” If Oasis’s Cubano is a concerto of flavors, their Tuna Melt is a sonata of textures. It would be sophistry to say the Tuna Melt is better than the Cubano, or vice versa. Just order both, and get ready to be happy.

Photograph by Guy Cross. Ancient City Appetite recommends places to eat, in and out of Santa Fe. Send your favorite places to [places@ancientcityappetite.com](mailto:places@ancientcityappetite.com).