



ANCIENT CITY APPETITE

BY JOSHUA BAER

SANTACAFÉ

231 Washington Avenue, Santa Fe
 Open seven days 11:30 am - 10:00 pm
 Reservations recommended
 505-984-1788

There are two kinds of restaurants in Santa Fe, the ones with their own identities and the ones who wish they were Santacafé. It's hard to blame the wannabes. If you look up the word "consistency" you'll find a picture of people eating lunch in the patio at Santacafé. Between the middle of May and the first of October, there is no better table in New Mexico.

Before you go, call ahead and ask for a table in the patio. The best times are late afternoon and early evening. If you go between 1:15 and 1:45, you'll get a good table, the kitchen will still be on its toes, and the lunch crowd will be gone. In the evening, ask for a patio table at 6:00. If you sit down any later than 6:30 you'll still have a fine dinner, but you'll miss the parade of locals dressed like tourists and tourists dressed like locals being seated at their tables under the lights and the tent.

Santacafé's lunch and dinner menus are full of surprises—all of them pleasant. These are dishes you don't want to miss.

Crispy Calamari with Four Chile Lime Dipping Sauce—at lunch, \$12.50 as an appetizer, \$14.50 as an entrée; at dinner, \$10.50 (small), \$12.50 (large). The best fried calamari anywhere. Ask for extra dipping sauce.

Nathan's All-Beef Frankfurter on Housemade Bun with Sauerkraut Slaw,

Jalapeño Mustard, and Rosemary Potato Chips; \$8.50. At last. An appetizer with a sense of humor.

Grilled Ruby Trout with Saffron Rice, Spring Vegetables, and Cilantro Butter; \$16.00. The lunch menu's sleeper entrée.

Chef Fernando's Housemade Lobster Roll with Pommes Frites; \$20.00. Order a side of the green goddess dressing and pour it on the roll. The joy that comes with eating spectacular calamari and a delicious lobster roll fifteen hundred miles from the ocean does not happen by accident. The people in the kitchen are on your side. They want you to be amazed.

Grilled Sterling Silver Rib-Eye Steak with Pommes Frites and Chimayo Red Chile Béarnaise—\$29.00 (only on the dinner menu, but if you're there for lunch and it's after one o'clock, don't be afraid to ask). The green-chile country mashed potatoes are a better side for the rib-eye than the pommes frites.

Congratulations to Judy Ebbinghaus, Bobby Morean, Fernando Ruiz, and the staff at Santacafé on your fourth decade of setting and exceeding your own standards. Santa Fe would not be Santa Fe without Santacafé.

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.