



ANCIENT CITY APPETITE

BY JOSHUA BAER

JOHNNIE'S CASH STORE

420 Camino Don Miguel, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Mondays through Saturdays

505 982-9506

Red Chile Tamale: \$2.00.

Green Chile Tamale: \$2.00

Fast Bites® Sausage and Cheese Sandwich: \$1.00

Baken-Ets Hot 'N Spicy Chicharrones: \$1.15, a bag.

Yoohoo: \$2.75

Starbuck's Frappucino: \$2.00.

Goodart's Peanut Pattie: \$1.15

Blue Sky Jamaican Ginger Ale: 85 cents.

Nestle's Dibs: \$2.99, a carton.

Ice: \$2.50, a bag.

You don't go to Johnnie's Cash Store for cuisine. You go because, less than fifty years ago, there were five hundred groceries stores in Santa Fe, one store per block. You go because the east side is still a soulful neighborhood, even for the people who sold their souls in order to buy houses there. You go because the Armijo family, who runs Johnnie's Cash Store as much as a shrine as a business, decided that selling their property, watching a crew tear down the store, and watching another crew erect yet another six-thousand-square-foot monument to people with more money than taste was not in the best interests of their family, Camino Don Miguel, the east side, or Santa Fe.

You go to Johnnie's Cash Store because being in an authentic place is a lost art, an experience you can't buy or sell no matter how little or how much money you have. You go because you really like a woman and want to take her to lunch at a place that matters to you, a place that says, "I may not be as rich or sophisticated as the other men you've dated, but there's a place in my heart that appreciates time and space." You go because you really like a man and want to take him to lunch at a place that reminds you of your parents, maybe even of your grandparents, a place that says, "I'm tired of pretending to like what I don't like. I'm ready to like what I love."

You go because, outside the store, there's a sense of peace and quiet at the picnic tables, a sense of watching the world go by without watching it go to hell. You go because, inside the store, there are displays of trophies, some tall, some short, some shiny, some not so shiny, all of them won by members of the Armijo family. You go because you went a long time ago, had a tamale, and wondered why you didn't go there more often. You go because Johnnie's Cash Store is a survivor, an echo of the Santa Fe we all wish we had discovered.

Ancient City Appetite recommends places to eat, in and out of Santa Fe. Photograph is by Guy Cross. Send the names of your favorite places to places@ancientcityappetite.com.