

Not to spill the refried beans, but J is for Juanita's

POMONA A TO Z, my alphabetical look at the city's jewels, now jumps to the letter J. Forgive me for jabbering, but Pomona is so jam-packed with J candidates, it's like a jamboree.

Among them:

- Jelly Donut, named the region's No. 1 doughnut shop by Inland Empire Magazine and a Pomona favorite.

- Jazz concerts downtown the fourth Saturday of each month.

- St. Joseph's Catholic Church, built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style and one of Pomona's largest and loveliest buildings.

- Hilltop Jamaican market and restaurant, mon.

- Jon Provost, a Kingsley Elementary student who played Timmy on TV's "Lassie" from 1957 to 1964. "What's that, Lassie? Somebody's trapped in the old well again?"

Quite a jackpot. But our jury-rigged J is none of the above, as you no doubt expected. (You're so jaded.)

Our J is Juanita's.

A taco stand on South Indian Hill Boulevard, Juanita's Drive-

In has provided cheap, tasty eats for a quarter-century.

Customers swear by the place.

"The food's phenomenal with a capital F," said Steve Hammitt, 54, an insurance agent from Claremont waiting for his pork burrito last week.

Tucked between a Carl's Jr. and a 7-Eleven, Juanita's doesn't look like much. The small building with no indoor seating began as a Tastee Freez around 1956.

The food is takeout only, with two outdoor tables for dining. You place your order at the window, pay, get a slip with your number and wait. Service is speedy, but there's almost always a few people fanned out on the sidewalk.

Naturally, Juanita's has its quirks. Like a student trying to pad a book report, the menu details every conceivable variation on its burritos and tacos, sending the combinations

sprawling across three menu boards.

Say you want a pork burrito. Here are the head-spinning possibilities:

- Meat bean rice cheese \$3.25
- Meat \$3.25
- Meat bean cheese \$3
- Meat bean rice \$3
- Meat rice cheese \$3
- Meat bean \$3
- Meat rice \$3

Can we get an organizational coach in on this? (And yes, somebody forgot "meat cheese.")

Eccentricities of the menu aside, the food is top-notch. Several diners raved about the pork.

I go for the chicken-and-rice burrito myself. Some of my newsroom colleagues like the chile relleno burrito, in which a chile relleno is tucked inside a tortilla.

Juanita's is one of the great social levelers. At lunch last Tuesday, I saw all walks of humanity, from twenty-some-things to senior citizens, the well-to-do to those with no visible means of support, drivers of



DAVID ALLEN



WILL LESTER
STAFF
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The waiting is the hardest part, as Tom Petty once said, and that's true at Juanita's, one of Pomona's most popular lunch spots.

SUVs to delivery trucks, all lined up for a five-buck lunch.

Car dealer Hal Assael, a 52-year-old who pulled up in a BMW, traveled 15 miles from Glendora, no doubt passing hundreds of other Mexican restaurants along the way, just for a chicken-and-rice burrito.

"It's the best food in town," Assael said. "I've been coming here almost 20 years."

Finn Englyng, a 27-year-old cabinet maker from Claremont, was there with three buddies.

"I think it's absolutely spectacular," said Englyng, who was waiting on an order of tacos. "I like hole in the wall

places. You come to a place like this, you know you're going to get real Mexican food, not some Taco Bell or Del Taco crap."

Well said.

Of course, there is the matter of the B grade from the Health Department. As one diner told me: "I don't care about the B. If it got to a C, I'd be concerned."

Juanita's took over the spot about 1976. The first owner, Maria Tucker, had the restaurant only briefly and, in a poignant touch, named it after an adopted daughter who died at age 5.

Tucker sold the business in 1977 to her niece, Theresa

Cerna, who expanded the menu and has owned the restaurant ever since.

It's a family operation. Cerna and her husband, Jess, are often found there, as is her daughter, Marina. (A son, Ray, manages a second outlet in Ontario, Juanita's II, owned by Cerna's ex-husband.)

Theresa Cerna has had a Juanita's stand at the county fair since 2002, so she's pulling double duty right now.

Carne asada and the green chile pork are the best sellers, she told me. Tortillas are made on-site, as is the hot sauce, which comes in lidded plastic cups the size of lip balm.

Juanita's has lasted longer than any other business in that location, including the Tastee Freez, Jess Cerna told me.

"The couple that used to have the Tastee Freez," he said, "even they come here."

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Beef Dip

Pastrami Dip

TONY'S, JR.

1735 Indian Hill

Pomona

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SELL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3440 of the Civil Code of the State of California, that Glenn R. Miller of 6171 Archibald, City of Alta Loma, State of California, intends to sell to James E. Nabakowski, all that certain personal property consisting generally of all stock in trade, fixtures, equipment and good will and assignment of lease of a certain restaurant known as "Tastee-Freez" located at 1735 Indian Hill Boulevard, City of Pomona, State of California, and that the purchase price thereof will be paid at 10:00 o'clock a.m. on the 12th day of October, 1963, at the office of Bergman and Lemaster, 212 Yale Avenue, City of Claremont, County of Los Angeles, State of California.

Dated: September 27, 1963.

GLENN R. MILLER

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of September, 1963.

CAROL HOOVER

Notary Public in and for
the County of Los Angeles,
State of California.

My Commission Expires
April 1, 1967.

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