

CITY BEAT

For the greener good

**CLAIRE'S ON CEDROS
SERVES TASTY FOOD IN AN
ECO-MINDED ENVIRONMENT**

BY CANDICE WOO

I'm usually all about the food, but Claire's on Cedros is worth seeing just for the setting. The first time I went, it was a good 10 minutes before I set foot inside restaurant, so enraptured was I by the plants, almost all edible, that ring the building, from fruit trees to herbs and vegetables. Set across from the Solana Beach train station on the northern stretch of the Cedros Design District, at first glance Claire's looks like a very attractive, but not entirely uncommon, beach cottage. But upon closer inspection, you'll see that from the foundation up, it's anything but common.

Completed last summer, Claire's on Cedros is a green building from top to bottom—from repurposed denim used to insulate the ceiling and walls to a driveway that's paved with pervious concrete that allows rainwater to drain back into the ground instead of running off and marked with preferred parking spaces for carpoolers and eco-friendly vehicles. Inside, there's an abundance of reclaimed wood from churches and barns, tabletops constructed from ground sunflower stalks, a chandelier

made from whisks and hanging light fixtures that resemble bird's nests.

The restaurant, already certified by the Green Restaurant Association and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), just received the exalted Platinum LEED status, a designation given by the U.S. Green Building Council to recognize the highest degree of environmental sustainability and energy efficiency, making Claire's one of only a small handful of restaurants in North America to reach this level.

All this is not to say that the food isn't worth a trip, too; the people who pack the restaurant and its sun-dappled patios from early morning until closing time at 3 p.m. aren't just coming to use the low-flow hand

CLAIRE'S ON CEDROS

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faucets. Everything on the menu, which changes with the seasons but has a general theme of American diner food, is made from scratch. Longtime friends and North County locals

Claire Allison and Terrie Boley run the restaurant, with Claire overseeing the kitchen and bakery, where all the breads, pastries and desserts are made on-site. You've probably eaten Allison's handiwork even if you haven't been to her restaurant. She ran the bakery at the popular, local Milton's Delicatessen for many years and developed the recipe for its now-famous multi-grain bread.

Breakfast here is served all day and includes a homemade granola parfait with



Claire's on Cedros is more than just a beach cottage.

fruit and yogurt or heartier Clairecakes (pancakes), either cinnamon-spiced or the excellent oat-and-whole-wheat, which you can get topped with fruit or with a side of homemade turkey sausage. If you like starting your day with something sweet, there's French toast made with homemade brioche, stuffed with ricotta and sprinkled with toasted pecans. If you prefer something savory, get the Vegetarian Benedict, a homemade croissant stacked with mushrooms, onions, spinach and avocado, dressed with a hollandaise, or the caprese frittata, an open-face omelet layered with provolone, homemade ricotta, two kinds of tomatoes, arugula salad and basil pesto, which is often made from the garden's

herbs. It's served with slices of ciabatta, whose crust coloring is a little light for me; I prefer chewier bread with a darker, more developed crust.

But the bread loaves are just fine for the lunch sandwich I'm currently fixated on, which melds slices of warm, slow-roasted pork loin with fontina cheese, crisp and peppery arugula, sweet pear relish and spicy chipotle aioli. I'd happily drive the 20 miles just to eat this again, although in keeping with the restaurant's principles, I should really come by bike, bus or train. **CB**

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