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Sandwich shop still grinding away in Ontario

David Allen, Staff Writer Created: 12/03/2011 06:07:11 AM PST



Grinder Haven, one of Ontario's oldest restaurants, has changed operators but is still selling submarine sandwiches as it's done since 1958. (David Allen/Staff)

GRINDER HAVEN, the Ontario sandwich shop, is alive and mostly well. Cristobal Ramirez, who bought the shop in 2003 from longtime owner John Goble, is back in charge after two years of leasing out the operation.

"Grinder Haven is still open," Ramirez told me.

The other operator recently left to open a competing grinder shop several blocks east, as noted here in October. He left owing back rent—\$20,000, by Ramirez's account.

Ramirez is also faced with restoring the venerable shop's reputation, telling me that many customers had complained that the quality had slipped.

(They weren't alone. I wrote something to that effect on my blog last summer.)

Just like Subway, the delightfully named Grinder Haven (724 W. Holt) sells submarine sandwiches, using the East Coast nickname, grinders.

Business has fallen off and Ramirez wants to get the word out that he's still selling sandwiches, using what he says are the original recipes.

He isn't, however, baking his own bread, as the shop did for most of its history. "It was very, very, very expensive," Ramirez said. But he's having a bakery deliver fresh rolls each morning.

Grinder Haven opened in 1958, making it one of Ontario's oldest restaurants.

Surprisingly, another of those legacy restaurants is seen by Ramirez and his wife as their biggest rival.

"Vince's is our main competitor," Rosie Ramirez said. "They've been here as long as Grinder Haven."

Even longer, actually: Vince's Spaghetti has been around since 1945.

I get the comparison, though. Both are on Holt Boulevard and both appeal to nostalgia-minded diners.

"But they sell spaghetti," Rosie added. "We sell sandwiches."

Indeed. And I wish a long life to both places.

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~~STRIKING INCIDENTS consumed Upland police one recent weekend. I mean "striking incidents" literally. Family members apparently can't keep their claws off each other. From the blotter:~~

~~* "A woman phoned requesting help due to being injured by her sister. The two adult sisters had argued and then fought. One punched the other in the face causing a bloody nose. Officers arrived and arrested the aggressor for battery."~~

~~* "A male called due to his girlfriend striking him in the face because he had neglected to purchase diapers for their baby. The female had locked herself in his truck and was refusing to get out. Officers arrived and arranged for the female's parents to pick her up."~~

~~* "Dispatch received a call from a distraught woman. She had recently reunited with her sister after not seeing her for many years. All went well for several hours until they mixed alcohol with their psychotropic medications. A fight ensued in which they punched each other. Officers detained one of the sisters for psychiatric evaluation. The other sister went back home to San Diego."~~

~~What can I say? Upland is not only family friendly, it's unfriendly family friendly.~~

~~ON MY blog, you'll find news of a Claremont student who won the World Puzzle Championship in Hungary; a request for your memories of the old St. Charles Grill; a roundup of the three books I read in November; and an account of my visit to Nara, a Japanese restaurant in Chino Hills. Also, I rated the bowling at Arrowhead Lanes in San Bernardino and launched an Occupy movement (focusing on pie) at Flo's in Chino.~~

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~~POMONA'S CHRISTMAS Parade takes place downtown next Saturday. More than 100 entrants and 2,000 participants have signed up. The parade begins at 10 a.m. and travels west on Second Street and south on Park Avenue.~~

~~Boxer Sugar Shane Mosley is the grand marshal. Among those taking up the rear: Steve Julian, the KPCC-FM morning host who is a Pomona native, and yours truly. Paired for the event, Julian and I will make up the media contingent.~~

~~Should be a good deal all around. If you want to throw rotten produce at us, well, if you miss me, you're bound to hit him, and vice versa.~~

~~But for a less messy two-for-one deal, we'd rather you just waved in our general direction. See you there?~~

VISITORS TO the "Wish Tree" in the University of La Verne Campus Center, in a version of the tree authorized by Yoko Ono, are invited to write a wish on a tag and hang it from the tree.

The first was placed by the university's energetic new president, Devorah Lieberman, who filled her tag with four numbered wishes:

"1) Social justice 2) Recognize that our differences make us stronger 3) Listen! 4) Appreciate!"

I wish she'd had more space. She might have added "5) Be! 6) Feel!"

Among the other wishes seen on my visit, some of them serious, some comic:

* "I wish I could get my degree in 36 months."

* "I wish this tree was bigger."

* "I wish I cud spel gud."

* "I wish for coffee."

* "I wish for nothing but smiles."

* "I wish...!"

* "I wish people would look at my heart and not my skin."

* "I wish this was a money tree."

* "I wish the girl I've fallen madly in love with can get her ex to stop trying to kill me."

My own wish is that all those wishes come true. Especially the last one.

David Allen writes Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, despite your wishes. Reach him at david.allen@inlandnewspapers.com or 909-483-9339, check out facebook.com/davidallencolumnist and follow @davidallen909 on Twitter.

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