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## Chipotle Mexican Grill Opens in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Multi-generations eat at Chipotle on its opening day in Lafayette

Photo Sophie Braccini

Is Chipotle a kids' joint? It certainly looked like it on opening day on September 21 in Lafayette. Reporters and photographers from several school newspapers came to the new restaurant that opened at 3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite F, between Peet's Coffee and Noah's Bagels. The fast moving line, after 3:00 p.m., was mostly made of kids from the nearby middle school, but there were also older patrons sitting at tables, enjoying their \$7 freshly made burrito.

"Chipotle is cool, hip and a bit quirky," said local Marketing Manager Ashley Head who had come to support the opening, "high school and college students love us." According to Head, what makes the brand popular is that the menu is very simple: only 14 to 17 ingredients to choose from, that patrons can see and combine the way they want. "And, of

course, because it is very good," she added.

The company's communications emphasize its claim to quality and the local nature of the ingredients that are used in the restaurant: "When he started his first restaurant in Denver, Colorado, Steve Eells was not very pleased with the taste of the carnitas (roasted pork), so he looked for a tastier meat and found naturally raised animals taste better. Since then, we sell only meat that comes from naturally raised animals," states a press release.

Head also pointed out that the cilantro is organic and comes from Hollister, the romaine lettuce from Salinas, tomatoes are sourced from Taylor Farms also in Salinas (June through November), and all the dairy products are purchased at Petaluma Creamery. "There are no growth hormones or antibiotic residues in the

meat/dairy products we use," stated Head. This commitment is part of what the publicly traded company calls "Food with Integrity."

Selling good quality ingredients in a fast food setting for a reasonable price means that the volume has to be very high. "We serve 150 people in an hour," explained the energetic manager, Patty Rojas, who oversees 15 employees in the Lafayette location, some of them local students. Speed and accuracy are top requirements for employees working in the assembly-line type setting.

Chipotle's menu consists of four main items – burritos, tacos, bowls and salads – with a choice of chicken, steak, or vegetarian (with guacamole). The price of the items is based on the type of meat chosen. Additional toppings include rice, beans (vegetarian or not), four types of salsa, sour cream, cheese, and lettuce. "The relatively small number of ingredients we offer allows us to focus on their quality," said Head, "and we also can keep it affordable to everyone."

The same day Chipotle opened in Lafayette, the company also inaugurated a restaurant in San Francisco. All the restaurants are owned by the company; at this time there are 45 of them in the San Francisco Bay Area, and more than 1000 in the US and Canada, with some new openings in Europe. Chipotle was ranked the third fastest growing restaurant chain in 2010.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

## business briefs

### Sandy's Temporary Move

As owners Sandy and Louis Richard prepare to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary and the 33rd anniversary of their clothing store, Sandy's, they've also had to move their well located store on Mt Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette (next to Postino, Radio Shack, Patchi's and Tart) to the back of the building while renovations are taking place. "We are looking forward to the change," said Richard, "we will take that opportunity to change our décor and we'll take a fresh look at our collection." Richard is not afraid of moving. As a secondary business he and his family have moved their primary residence eight times over the past 30 years, renovating and improving homes primarily in Lafayette. "We are used to packing and unpacking and living in a construction zone," says the cheerful storeowner. "We noticed the difference (being in the back) during the Art and Wine Festival," says Richards, "every year we've had quite a lot of people coming in, but this year, not many made the effort to come by." The company that owns, and is renovating, the building paid for a prominent sign to be painted on the plywood that blocks the entrance of the old store. "Our regular clients come, but otherwise, the only foot traffic we have are the people who dine at Patchi's and have time to roam around while their pizza is cooked." Richards says that he is grateful for the owner to have paid for the sign. The plan is to get back into their normal space sometime at the beginning of 2012. "The City of Lafayette is planning to renovate our stretch of sidewalk," says Richards, "it is my understanding that the work has to be approved by the end of the year to take advantage of federal funding. We won't go back to our space until it is finished." Richards already has ideas about the new space: "Over the years, our merchandise has evolved toward special occasion clothing," he says, "our décor was contemporary/industrial style; we want the new Sandy's to be more cozy and inviting. It will be really beautiful."

### Open House at the Contra Costa Academy on October 9th

Former Stanley and Campolindo student, and recent graduate from University of California San Diego (with a degree in Computer Arts), Bobby Mazaheri, decided to start his own business when he had problems finding his dream job after graduation. A few months ago he started the Contra Costa Academy, an after school program for children who want to learn game creation on I-phones, apps, animation, etc. The four-week session take place Monday-Thursday 3:45-4:30 pm at 3400 Mt. Diablo Blvd Lafayette. On October 9th, an Open House will be an opportunity for his first students to showcase their work. Parents and students are invited to come and take a look. Mazaheri has taught for four years and has published many games. He gained industry experience working for Electronic Arts, Sony, and Bandai/Konami. For more information go to [www.contracostaacademy.com](http://www.contracostaacademy.com).

### News from the three Chambers of Commerce

#### Lafayette

- Shop Lafayette Committee Meeting, October 11th, 12:00-1:00 pm in the Chamber meeting room
- Monthly Mixer, October 12th, 5:30-7 pm at ManorCare Health Services, 1226 Rossmoor Pkwy, Walnut Creek
- Ribbon Cutting for Studio Jule, October 13, 5-5:30 pm at 1024 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette

#### Moraga

General Meeting Friday, September 30, 7:30 am at the Hacienda de las Flores. The topic for this month's meeting is important information about the needs of Moraga's infrastructure. Whether you live in Moraga or not, this information is important for you to have.

#### Orinda

Business Neighborhood Watch Meeting, Thursday, October 13, 8:00 am, at Kattenburg Architects, 11 Moraga Way, #3, Orinda. The group aims to prevent crime in Orinda businesses and is supported by the Orinda Police Department. Coffee will be provided. RSVP via email to [info@orindachamber.org](mailto:info@orindachamber.org) or phone (925) 254-3909.

## Our Magical Summer of '42

We were just kids, not even twenty years old but so much in love. When we said "forever" we meant it. We survived wars (not between us!), we raised three kids, built a great business, and even sailed around the world. A few years ago we moved from our large family home – thought that downsizing would make life easier. And it has.

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