

NIGHT + DAY

WED

02.13-02.19

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE
WEEKLY ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

Love at first bite

The neighborhood restaurants we keep going back to

PAGE 14

THEATER
A RELUCTANT LEADER STEPS UP IN NCRT'S 'OUTSIDER' 20

MOVIES
SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 23

COVER STORY RESTAURANTS WE LOVE

WE'RE ALWAYS CHARMED BY THESE NEIGHBORHOOD EATERIES, INCLUDING NORTH PARK'S THE SMOKING GOAT, WHICH TURNED 10 THIS MONTH

BY MICHELE PARENTE

We love them, we hate them, we're obsessed with them, we ghost them.

In so many ways, restaurants are like dating. Think about it: There's the sexy newcomer we get all dressed up for, post about constantly but eventually get bored with and drop.

There's the hipster we don't feel cool enough for but then outgrow.

There's the guilty pleasure you're embarrassed to even tell your friends about, and the sorry one your parents love as you give it a shot and instantly regret it. And then, finally, really, it's the mobile delivery app from a buddy that's the one you love, the one you can't imagine life without, the one that's unpredictable and charming, intimate and comfortable, occasionally even quite romantic. That's your favorite neighborhood restaurant — even if you don't live in the neighborhood. It's the special place you go back to over and over, the one that gives you that warm and fuzzy feeling the moment you walk in. Or even think about it.

The kind of place like The Smoking Goat. Along with Jaymes Gastropub and the now-closed Urban Solera, the Goat helped put North Park on the culinary map as a destination for great neighborhood restaurants with elevated eats. The Smoking Goat will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Wednesday, and fittingly for a place we love, it's owned by a husband-and-wife team, Fred and Tammy Pehl.

Ever since the delightful French bistro opened in 2010 as a

THE SMOKING GOAT'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

When: 5 to 9 p.m. Wednesday

Where: 3408 30th St., North Park

Cost: \$40 for three courses, sweets and a glass of bubbly

Phone: (619) 955-5295

Online: thesmokinggoat.com

cozy, 800-square-foot spot for steaks, steak frites, duck fat truffle fries, goat cheese cheesecake and expertly chosen wines, it has been embraced by locals and out-of-town visitors alike. And the Pehls, who have been married for 13 years, have been hugging their right back with their hospitality and fine fare.

Owning a beloved restaurant takes more than running a business that simply serves food and drinks, they said. They're aimed for excellence without pretension. They've adapted to changes in the restaurant industry while remaining consistent. And as with any relationship that endures, the key to the couple's success has been a commitment to making their better half feel special.

"All of our employees need to have the same passions that we do... in our restaurant, it's a memorable experience," said Fred Pehl, the restaurant's chef.

This is a relationship you're creating, a relationship with your guests, added Tammy Pehl, who manages the day-to-day operations of the Goat and its sister restaurant next door, One Door North. "We're looking for a longtime relationship with our guests — it's just as much as

goodbye. We're teaching the servers it's not just about the money."

Over the past decade, the Pehl's family has grown — they have two children, ages 7 and 9 — and The Smoking Goat has expanded as well. After it was clear in 2012 that they had a hit on their hands, they took over a recently vacated space adjacent to the restaurant, tripling the Goat's size to 2,500 square feet.

Working with your spouse isn't always a recipe for a successful marriage, but the Pehls have cooked up a strategy that keeps them sweet on each other.

"We stay in our own lanes," said Tammy Pehl. "We have different styles. He has vision; he's more creative. I'm more engaged in the business; I'm the one who says, 'Let's see how to get that done.'"

And when one wears into the other's lane?

"One never to our success is we can argue, and it's OK," Fred Pehl said.

Something the couple agree on is that love seems to be in the air at The Smoking Goat. Among the restaurant's staff, at least four couples have met, dated and gotten married in the 10 years it's been open. Customers have met there, too. Two got engaged at the Goat this past New Year's Eve.

"The whole restaurant was involved in the proposal," he said. With Valentine's Day on Friday and The Smoking Goat's anniversary on Wednesday, the hopeless romantics in us prompted us to peruse our Little Black Book for other neighborhood restaurants we love. Swipe right on them, San Diego. They're keepers.



Bo-Beau Kitchen + Bar

As inviting and delightful as a French country inn, the original Bo-Beau is a quintessential date night locale. Standout dishes include the crispy Brussels sprouts with pancetta, sauerkraut and balsamic, mussels in lobster bisque with cherry tomato kraut, and a soul-satisfying beef Bourguignon. 4936 W. Field Lane Blvd., Ocean Beach. (619) 224-2884. bo-beaurestaurant.com/bo-beau/kitchen+bar

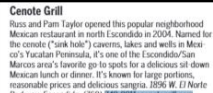
Cafe Athena

There's a relaxed vibe at this airy taverna, and the regulars all seem to know each other. No doubt they're drawn to the expertly made Greek classics, like smoky lamb shanks, lamb and onion bourekas, baked lamb and eggplant moussaka, and the two best desserts this side of Santorini — rose water topped baklava and galaktoboureko, oven hot phyllo rolls of feta custard and orange zest. 2846 Garnet Ave., Pacific Beach. (858) 274-1140. cafeathena.com



Campfire

Practically from the day it opened in 2016, John Restrick's rustic open fire focused restaurant on Slate Street became Carlsbad's most popular restaurant. It's a hit with locals, who crave its roasted vegetable and meat dishes, and Black Book for other neighborhood restaurants we love. Swipe right on them, San Diego. They're keepers.



Cenote Grill

Russ and Pam Taylor opened this popular neighborhood Mexican restaurant in north Escondido in 2004. Named for the cenotes ("sink holes") caverns, lakes and wells in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, it's one of the Escondido/San Marcos area's favorite go-to spots for a delicious sit-down Mexican lunch or dinner. It's known for large portions, reasonable prices and delicious sangria. 1896 W. El Norte Parkway, Escondido. (760) 885-9991. cenotegrill.com



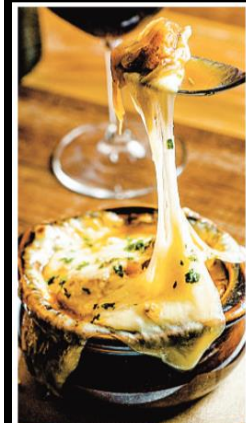
Cecarria

A bright new star on San Diego's burgeoning Italian food scene, the instantly popular Cecarria buzzes with energy, thanks to its small part to its fit of enthusiastic owners. Can't miss dishes include foie zucca, crispy octopus, short rib pappardelle, tonarelli cacio e pepe, and the made-to-order tabbouleh tiramisu, one of the best desserts in San Diego. Or anywhere: 4163 Voltaire St., Point Loma. (619) 226-6222. cecarria.com



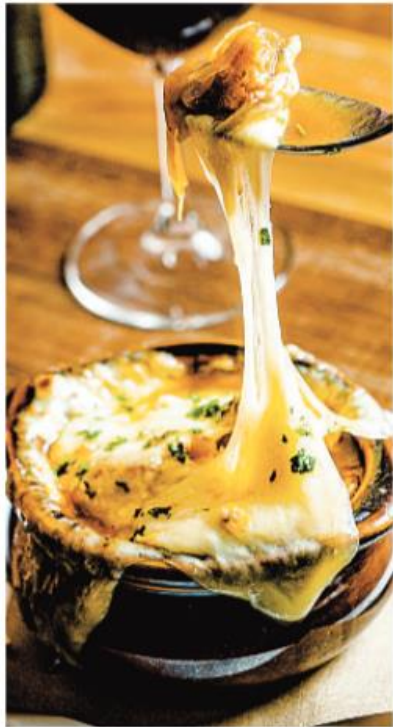
Ciao Ristorante

Opened 22 years ago by Giuseppe and Gloria Di Giovanni, the Italian restaurant is an institution in north Vista. Last year, the family completed a three-year renovation that tripled the size of the property to 12,000 feet, adding a second modern Italian restaurant as well as a wine bar, deli/casino, bakery, gelateria and 250-seat ballroom. Ciao is known for its large portions, sangria, tiramisu and fresh baked Italian bread. 2025 E. Vista Way, Vista. (760) 630-7333. ciao.com



SMOKING GOAT PHOTOS
Ever since Tammy and Fred Pehl opened The Smoking Goat in 2010 as a cozy, 800-square-foot spot for French onion soup, steak frites, duck fat truffle fries, goat cheese cheesecake and expertly chosen wines, it has been embraced by locals and out-of-town visitors alike.





Ever since Tammy and Fred Piehl opened The Smoking Goat in 2010 as a cozy, 850-square-foot duck fat truffle fries, goat cheese cheesecake and expertly chosen wines, it has been embraced

WE'RE ALWAYS CHARMED BY THESE NEIGHBORHOOD EATERIES, INCLUDING NORTH PARK'S THE SMOKING GOAT, WHICH TURNS 10 THIS MONTH

BY MICHELE PARENTE

We love them, we hate them, we're obsessed with them, we ghost them.

In so many ways, restaurants are like dating.

Think about it:

There's the sexy newcomer we get all dressed up for, post about constantly but eventually get bored with and drop.

There's the hipster we don't feel cool enough for but then outgrow.

There's the guilty pleasure you're embarrassed to even tell your friends about, and the corny one your parents love so you give it a shot and instantly regret it.

And how different, really, is the mobile delivery app from a booty call?

Then there's the one you love, the one you can't imagine life without, the one that's unpretentious and charming, intimate and comfortable, occasionally even quite romantic. That's your favorite neighborhood restaurant — even if you don't live in the neighborhood. It's the special place you go back to over and over, the one that gives you that warm and fuzzy feeling the moment you walk in. Or even think about.

The kind of place like The Smoking Goat. Along with Jaynes Gastropub and the now-closed Urban Solace, the Goat helped put North Park on the culinary map as a destination for great neighborhood restaurants with elevated eats. The Smoking Goat will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Wednesday, and fittingly for a place we love, it's owned by a husband-and-wife team, Fred and Tammy Piehl.

Ever since the delightful French bistro opened in 2010 as a

THE SMOKING GOAT'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

When: 5 to 9 p.m. Wednesday

Where: 3408 30th St., North Park

Cost: \$40 for three courses, sweets and a glass of bubbly

Phone: (619) 955-5295

Online: thesmokinggoatrestaurant.com

cozy, 850-square-foot spot for escargot, steak frites, duck fat truffle fries, goat cheese cheesecake and expertly chosen, well-priced wines, the Goat has been embraced by locals and out-of-town visitors alike. And the Piehls, who have been married for 13 years, have been hugging them right back with their hospitality and fine fare.

Owning a beloved restaurant takes more than running a business that simply serves food and drinks, they said. They've aimed for excellence without pretension. They've adapted to changes in the restaurant industry while remaining consistent. And as with any relationship that endures, the key to the couple's success has been a commitment to making their better half feel special.

"All of our employees need to have the same passions that we do ... to make it a memorable experience," said Fred Piehl, the restaurant's chef.

"This is a relationship you're creating, a relationship with your guests," added Tammy Piehl, who manages the day-to-day operations of the Goat and its sister restaurant next door, One Door North. "We're looking for a longtime relationship with our guests — it's not just hi and

goodbye. We're teaching the servers it's not just about the money."

Over the past decade, the Piehls' family has grown — they have two children, ages 7 and 9 — and The Smoking Goat has expanded as well. After it was clear in 2012 that they had a hit on their hands, they took over a recently vacated space adjacent to the restaurant, tripling the Goat's size to 2,500 square feet.

Working with your spouse isn't always a recipe for a successful marriage, but the Piehls have cooked up a strategy that keeps them sweet on each other.

"We stay in our own lanes," said Tammy Piehl. "We have different styles. He has vision; he's more creative. I'm more engaged in the business; I'm the one who says, 'Let's see how to get that done.'"

And when one veers into the other's lane?

"One secret to our success is we can argue, and it's OK," Fred Piehl said.

Something the couple agree on is that love seems to be in the air at The Smoking Goat. Among the restaurant's staff, at least four couples have met, dated and gotten married in the 10 years it's been open. Customers have met there, too. Two got engaged at the Goat this past New Year's Eve in true rom-com style, Fred Piehl said.

"The whole restaurant was involved in the proposal," he said.

With Valentine's Day on Friday and The Smoking Goat's anniversary on Wednesday, the hopeless romantics in us prompted us to peruse our Little Black Book for other neighborhood restaurants we love. Swipe right on them, San Diego. They're keepers.