

LOCAL HIDDEN BRUNCH GEMS

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In fall of 2021, when some of the newer members of *The Collegian* were getting to know each other, we decided to have some bonding time by having a “Friday Brunch,” which at the start of this semester turned into a “whenever we’re all available at the same time” brunch.

While most of the time we’d argue so much about where to go, we’d all just settle for iHop, there were some local gems we found along the way.

MIDTOWN CREPERIE AND CAFE

Once featured on Guy Fieri’s Food Network show “Diners, Drive-ins and Dives,” the Midtown Creperie is a cute little location on Miracle Mile that offers both savory and sweet crêpes in addition to mouthwatering authentic beignets. The hot chocolate is definitely worth a try as well. However, it may not be the best for people with allergies, as when requested if they are able to leave certain items out, the server informed us that many of the sauces are premade. Limited parking, as with most Miracle Mile locations. Recommended to call ahead to see what current wait times are.



EMPRESSO

Empresso is a super cute local chain of coffee houses with one location being in College Square, within walking distance south of San Joaquin Delta College. Pre-pandemic, this was my go-to hangout spot. I would come here to study or just hangout and grab a quick bite between classes. What I like most about them is not only their atmosphere, but their support of local artists. Their walls feature a frequently-changing selection of artworks by local artists for sale. They have a large variety of coffees, tea, and baked goods to choose from. My favorite food item there is an asiago bagel, either as a breakfast sandwich or with cream cheese. They do offer additional toppings for bagels such as lox and jams. For those looking for something more adult, they also have beer and kombucha on tap.



THE OMELETHOUSE

I had my doubts about this place, but was willing to try it because I had heard nothing but good things. It was closer to the industrial part of town by Cherokee Road off Highway 99, but despite the location, I have to say, I was impressed by The Omelet House.

While it is called the Omelet house, I unfortunately did not try the omelets. Everyone else in my party did, and I was filled with regret that I didn’t try one. They looked and smelled amazing. The envy I felt soon dissipated and was replaced with awe as I had a massive waffle combo placed in front of me. I had my combo split up with my waffles on the side and ended up giving my eggs and bacon away because there was so much food, I couldn’t possibly have eaten it all. I had the banana, chocolate, and strawberry waffle with whipped cream for \$12.49, and was able to take half of it home and eat it later. Delicious, reasonably priced food in huge portions? What more could I ask for?



THE FARM CAFE AT MICHAEL DAVID

The Farm Café at Michael David Winery, or as locals know it Philip’s Farms, is a local staple located off Highway 12 in Lodi. While I’ll admit, I am a bit biased when it comes to Philip’s Farms. I remember when I was younger, and my family would go for bike rides and brunch here. I remember the Harvest Festival in October, when they would have a giant pile of hay bales for kids to climb on and pumpkins to take home, and when they had little animals you could buy feed bags to hand feed. After the remodel and rebranding, the ambiance definitely changed. It’s not bad, just different.

I enjoy their fruit and yogurt bowl, which comes with a selection of fresh baked breads dusted with powdered sugar. My favorite of the breads, and possibly the best I’ve ever had, is the zucchini-orange bread (full order \$9, half order—no bread—\$5). They also have their famous homemade pies in as many flavors as you can think of. The Mexican french toast is also very good, but be warned: french toast covered in cocoa powder, chocolate sauce, strawberries, powdered sugar, and whipped cream can send even the most accomplished sweet-tooths into a sugar-rush. There’s something for the whole family to enjoy here.



HOUSE OF SHAW

House of Shaw is a cute little coffee shop/bakery located slightly off of Miracle Mile. They sell loose leaf teas, coffees, and fresh baked goods. When I visited, I had a delicious slice of Marzouka’s Apple Cake for \$7, which included a piece of cinnamon apple cake covered in whipped cream and a light caramel sauce. I also sampled the hot chocolate, which was just the right amount of sweet and chocolatey. It was a bit hard to find since it wasn’t on the main Miracle Mile road (we actually missed it the first time, and had to turn around), and there was a small parking lot which was hard to maneuver, but that is a bit of a plus since parking in this area of town is scarce. All in all, not a bad place.



HEIRLOOM KITCHEN

The Heirloom Kitchen is a newer addition to Stockton. Located at the corner of Ben Holt Drive and Pacific Avenue, where Payters used to be, this establishment works mostly with local and organic products. As a result the food you get is very high-quality.

The only turn-off is the price. A brunch for two, including a generous tip, could cost \$60, with carrot cake French Toast (with rum raisin syrup, walnuts and whipped cream, \$16), a breakfast skillet (with veggies, eggs, mushroom and not enough meat, \$16) and \$6 mimosas.

