

By Phil Faroudja

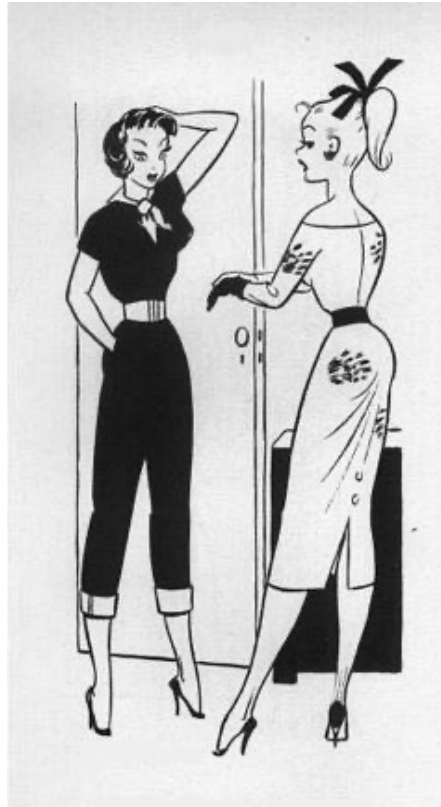
FOOD & WINE: "Look at that restaurant, Larry. Isn't it beautiful?" said the woman standing behind me. We were all gathered at the entrance of Little Original Joe's, the new eatery on Chestnut Street. It truly is impressive. An expansive space with endless tables, fanciful decor, dark red chairs next to black booths, and a sparkling bar, it has been a hit from the beginning. Joe's does not take reservations, though; you just show up and hope the line is short. The menu runs the gamut and features salads, pastas, pizzas, vegetarian dishes and over forty wines. The owners operate other dining places around town but this is their first in the Marina ... "Do you smoke or drink?" doctors always ask. For those who have sworn off liquor, The New Bar at 2181 Union Street specializes in a curated selection of nonalcoholic wine, spirits and more. I bought an excellent cider ... Daily Driver at 1977 Union Street is a recently established bagel cafe, and laid out with creativity. There is an elegant recliner by the window, unusual for such a shop, and interesting and colorful furnishings. An effort has been made.

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DISPATCH FROM LOS ANGELES: Fearful of Covid and too much of a coward to approach an airport, I had not traveled in three years. So it was nice in May to finally visit Los Angeles, though I had forgotten what a hassle flying is: you must remove your shoes, belt, wallet, etc. when passing through security ... But if you ever go to Southern California, be sure to check out the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. It presents stunning exhibits about movies like 'Casablanca' and 'The Godfather,' studio founders, special effects and other subjects ... The town looked good overall and drivers are a lot less belligerent than in SF. Yet, scars from the pandemic remain. I was surprised to see on Melrose Avenue -- a major commercial street -- numerous closed storefronts and weeds on the sidewalk,

unheard of in the neatly manicured urban area. Similarly, Santa Monica's famed Third Street Promenade, bustling for years, was partially abandoned with some retail outlets even boarded up. So we are not out of the woods yet ... I drove to a public parking lot in downtown Santa Monica, and amazingly, the first ninety minutes were free. After, you pay \$2 an hour. Tourists always complain about SF's high parking prices, so perhaps we can do something similar here.

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"How exactly do you dress for a 'Presidential Debate Watch Party,' anyway?"

ELECTION SEASON: More candidates continue to enter the race for mayor, and some themes have emerged. In a sign of a less progressive city, all have proposed a 'tough on crime' agenda. Dishonest nonprofits are being called out regularly. Everyone supports affordable housing, but the trick is making it happen ... So we are pleased on July 17 to welcome mayoral candidate Mark Farrell to our monthly meeting. He will take your questions and none will be screened. You won't want to miss this special event ... And that's a wrap for this issue. See you around!

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