

THE Hot CORNER Mateo & Industrial



In 2002, Linear City partners Paul Solomon and Yuval Bar-Zemer began developing the corner of Mateo & Industrial.

Six years later, their efforts are paying dividends with fully realized Biscuit Company and Toy Factory Lofts, complete with entrepreneurial loft dwellers, sleek restaurants, a market and a gym. The location near the L.A. River, Downtown, Boyle Heights and Little Tokyo has the corner well-positioned to contribute to the new urbanism.

“Back when we first saw the buildings six years ago, the corner

was a bit noxious,” says Solomon. “The place was a bit abandoned and there was more of a criminal element.” Still, he appreciated the “free-spirited, creative community” of the northern Arts District, so he and Bar-Zemer decided to expand that sensibility.

Elizabeth Peterson left the restaurant business in 1999 to become an urban planner, but returned to the industry after she was inspired by Mateo & Industrial’s “diversity of residents” and the “fact that it has a small-town feel.”

In 2006, Peterson and British-born husband Tony Gowan opened **Royal Clayton’s** in the Toy Factory Lofts (1924), a former Santa Fe Railroad warehouse and Ace Novelty toy factory. Their pub features high ceilings, walls made from old doors, paintings of British monarchs like Henry VIII, and a centuries-old mirror Peterson purchased in New York.

The 72-item menu hosts English classics like shepherd’s pie, fish & chips and bangers & mash. GM John Salsow, a 30-year vegan, contributed healthier options like Grains & Grills – brown rice with grilled vegetables and sautéed mushrooms. To drink, expect English beers like Tetleys on tap, plus several Belgian brews.

On September 22, the neighborhood reached critical mass when restaurateur Steven Arroyo (Cobras & Matadors, Sgt. Recruiter, 750 ml) opened **Church & State** at the base of Biscuit

Company Lofts, in a former loading dock. He considers it a boon that he scored the “authentically bold” space. The former National Biscuit Company headquarters was designed by E.J. Eckel and constructed in 1925. Arroyo’s redesign features seating that extends on brick floors to the street, white tile walls, a stainless steel exhibition kitchen and a glass facade.

“I have a history of doing things that don’t make sense until they work. Sometimes they don’t,” says Arroyo, referencing The Hillmont, his casual Los Feliz steakhouse that was ahead of its time in 2002.

Greg Bernhardt, who cooked for Arroyo at 750 ml and for Neal Fraser at Grace, is executive chef. Arroyo says, “We’re trying to do classic French bistro food, all the classics: steak frites, moules frites, oysters, chicken paillard.” A simple breakfast of omelets, pastries and coffee is designed to cultivate “casual, order-from-the-chef camaraderie.” Arroyo also takes pride in sourcing meat, fish and produce from “heritage points in the neighborhood” – the long-standing downtown fish and produce markets.

Arroyo says it took a community effort to transform the corner. “It wasn’t hot or special until we showed up...30 people, including our mayor, made it what it is today.”



CHURCH & STATE

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THE ROYAL CLAYTON’S

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