



# LANEY TOWER



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## NEWS

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TRACY TATE/TOWER

The "A-Team" brought their A game to the front of the house during Laney Bistro opening on March 24, 2010. From left to right are culinary students, Thomas Romero, Zairaca Ellis, Wilfredo Tajtaj, "Lala" Christina Harrison and Antoinette Walker.

## Campus dining goes upscale

### New bistro offers affordable fare served with flair

By Tracey Tate  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Oakland is becoming quite the destination for "foodies." The Temescal district along Telegraph Avenue has become acclaimed for often-reviewed eateries like Doña Tomas and Pizzaiolo. Zagat-rated Pican, sushi bar Ozumo and Luka's Tap Room have Broadway burgeoning with business. Now, Laney College can enter the ranks of Foodie Nation.

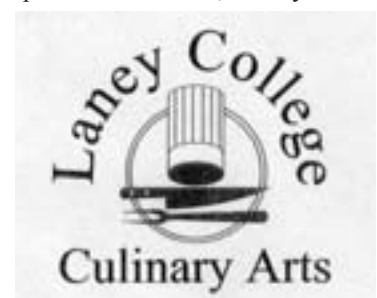
Award winning designed (Award of Honor, Community College Facility Coalition 2009), Laney Bistro opened its doors to the public March 23. With world themed cuisine and bistro fare that's reasonably priced, Laney Bistro should be a campus hit.

I dined there on March 24 and was pleasantly surprised. I'm a regular at the cafeteria, also run by Culinary Arts students and I was expecting mediocrity. I couldn't have been more wrong.

My dining companion and I entered the light-filled, airy bistro which faces the Estuary, near the end of the service time. Nonetheless, we were seated by Dining

Room Instructor April Buckhead, at a butcher-paper-covered table adorned with fresh flowers, and treated to class-A service by our server, Christina Harrison.

Fortunately for this foodie, there was one order of Croquetas de Jambon Serrano left, a ham filled croquette, which I quickly snapped up. Christine Will, Laney math



instructor looked pretty happy eating, and her plate delectable. She told me they were sweet potato fries (which didn't look at all like fries) and added that they "had great texture and were delicious," so I ordered up a serving.

Every two weeks the menu changes to reflect the part of the world the students are studying. You may have the pleasure of "dining" in Korea or Southeast Asia on a visit. We happened to experience Spanish flavors.

My Croquetas de Jambon Serrano arrived simply plated, resembling a dish from an Iron Chef competition. The croquetas were slightly crunchy on the outside, while the filling was well seasoned and just melted in my mouth. The variation in texture was delightful. The sweet potato fries were unexpectedly fluffy and light with a hint of crispiness.

The most expensive item on the menu was the paella, at \$8.25. However, it featured saffron rice with lobster, shrimp, clams, mussels, chicken, rabbit and spicy sausage—well worth the price. If your taste is more toward the basic, you can order a Niman Ranch cheese burger served with sweet potato fries for \$6.50. Grilled salmon fillet at \$6.95 and braised beef short ribs at \$7.50 were also available. Most items on the menu were in the \$3 to \$5 range.

David Jones, a Culinary Arts instructor in his fifth year at Laney, said that the students learn more than just cooking and technique. The curriculum also includes learning sanitation, food and beverage laws and controls, and how to run the front of the house.

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Harrison, our server, not only excelled with service, but as a fourth-semester student, she was full of knowledge about the program.

The students are divided into groups, which rotate various duties in kitchen and on the floor. With 4-5 students per group, they experience the grill station, sauté, pantry, sous chef and the floor as part of their education and experience.

Harrison and her group, called the "A-Team," handled the front of the house. That's culinary jargon for the dining room floor and all that goes with it.

Dressed in all black and sporting colorful ties, they looked as if they were working in an upscale establishment. More importantly, they carried themselves in like manner.

Much to our delight, we were comped two beautiful desserts at the end of our meal—Chocolate Mousse Teardrop and Sicilian Pistachio Cake. Both were outstanding and priced at only \$3 and were comparable to desserts for which I have paid twice as much.

Overall, our dining experience was way above average. I give Laney Bistro 3 out of 5 stars. Service was excellent and the food was absolutely yummy. I stop at three stars as I have only eaten there once and my experience was on opening day, so I'm sure they were presenting their best game. We will see what the future holds.

Apparently the Culinary Arts program at Laney is a great place to start an education in the food industry. Harrison has plans to transfer to Culinary Institute of America in New York, majoring in culinary arts and restaurant management.

If you are a looking for great food at a great price, sit down service, and a bit of ambiance, check out Laney Bistro.

Laney Bistro, formerly known as Beginners Inn, is located on the first floor of the E Building. Hours of operation for the spring semester are Tuesday-Thursday, 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.