

Breakfast Love

TRES MIL BORDER CAFE SERVES CLASSIC TEX-MEX FARE

BY JESLYN LEMKE



HUEVOS RANCHEROS



CHEF JOSH WESTON

Chef Josh Welton's hairy right forearm has a big tattoo of fried eggs and a side of bacon. "I really love breakfast. I'm not kidding," he laughs, patting flour off his black chef coat.

Welton opened Tres Mil Border Cafe a year ago inside 5th Street Market's food court. On a Sunday morning, he is busy behind the counter, serving up *huevos rancheros* with thick, house-made corn tortillas and generous spoonfuls of sour cream. A reasonable trickle of people stand in line to order breakfast.

Inside his tiny kitchen, Welton masterminds the restaurant's made-from-scratch biscuits, gravy, *horchata* and cinnamon buns. People love the sourdough cinnamon buns, made from his own dough that ferments in the back room.

The secret?

"I caught it in my backyard. It's a wild yeast," he says of the sourdough "mother" yeast, which he's been keeping alive and reusing for almost a year now.

Welton's specialty is breakfast. The Tres Mil menu features classic Tex-Mex fare: made-from-scratch tacos, breakfast burritos, pan-fried bread pudding, "The Three Alarm Scramble," (\$10) and, of course, house-made *horchata* for \$3 or \$4.

The best surprise of my meal comes when I order a side of mushrooms with the *huevos rancheros*. Not just any mushroom arrives next to my steaming pile of eggs over-easy. These are wild, yellow-foot chanterelles, their skinny charred stems steaming with olive oil and bits of garlic. Welton orders them twice a week from MycoLogical Natural Products because the demand is so high right now.

"They're in season," he says cheerfully.

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Welton grew up in Eugene and has been cooking now for 21 years, with jobs in Florida, Arizona, Portland and even a year in Ireland. About five years ago, he went to LCC for a culinary degree and started cooking breakfast and brunch for restaurants around Eugene, like Cafe Zenon, now closed.

A year ago, Welton decided to take the plunge and pursue breakfast. His philosophy is simple: Make really, really tasty fixings from regular produce.

"Take something humble and elevate it. Bring it to the level of sublime," he says. "It doesn't have to be an expensive heirloom potato."

Now that the restaurant is past its first year, Welton plans to incorporate more locally grown food, starting with his own tomato garden. A rich, smoky tomato sauce forms the base of the restaurant's most popular dish, the *huevos rancheros*. Welton wants to grow and can his own tomatoes for the sauce.

"It's going to be can-a-palooza coming soon," he says with a grin.

Tres Mil Border Cafe is located on the second floor of the 5th Street Market on East 5th Street and is open Monday through Saturday, 8 am to 7 pm and Sundays 8 am to 5 pm. Check out its Facebook page for more information.

PHOTOS BY TODD COOPER