

Eats



Photos by Don James/ATM

A CASE OF THE BLUES

From tamale plates and giant Frito pies to cups of atole and bowls of posole, Tia Betty Blue's brings out the old-school New Mexican in all of us.

Breakfast dives always intrigued Daniel Boardman. On a business trip to Argentina, he became inspired to open an eatery of his own here in Albuquerque. But it wasn't Argentinean food that inspired him—it was Tango dancers.

Boardman spent most of his career working for a commercial real estate brokerage. After spotting the mesmerizing South American dancers, he returned to New Mexico and began dancing Tango himself. Eventually, his love for the art led

him to start the Albuquerque Tango Festival in 2010.

"Having that experience of basically throwing a party one weekend a year for 650 dancers, it's been very gratifying," Boardman says.

It was so gratifying, in fact, he wanted to serve more people, but in a more, as Boardman puts it, "in-your-face" fashion. After spotting the perfect location, renovating it, and tinkering with countless recipes, Boardman opened Tia Betty Blue's in May

2012. The casual restaurant offers a bit of 1940's nostalgia, with memorabilia and ol' fashioned, just-like-grandma-used-to-make-it cooking.

At "Tia B's," as Boardman affectionately calls it, the chile is hot, the coffee is fresh, and the style is vintage. The menu is loaded with New Mexican breakfast favorites (which are served all day) and a wide range of lunch options, including salads, sandwiches, and numerous types of specialty beverages.



Tia Betty Blue's building was built in 1993, and was originally home to a maid service company.



Tia Betty Blue's seats 15 guests upstairs, 20 downstairs, and 30 on an outdoor patio.



The green chile is a blend of two Hatch chiles: a late autumn roast and an extra, extra, extra hot regular green.



Boardman grew up in Northern New Mexico. "Twenty, 30 years ago, you'd go to a restaurant in Española and the chile was really hot," Boardman says. That's how it is at Tia Betty Blue's: hot.



"The red is extra, extra hot from Hatch," Boardman says. What gives it the kick, you ask? "We recycle the juice that comes from slow-cooking our carne adovada," Boardman says. The extra water is poured off and used as a base for the red chile.



Every month, Tia Betty Blue's churns through about 2,000 pounds of green chile and about 2,000 pounds of red chile.

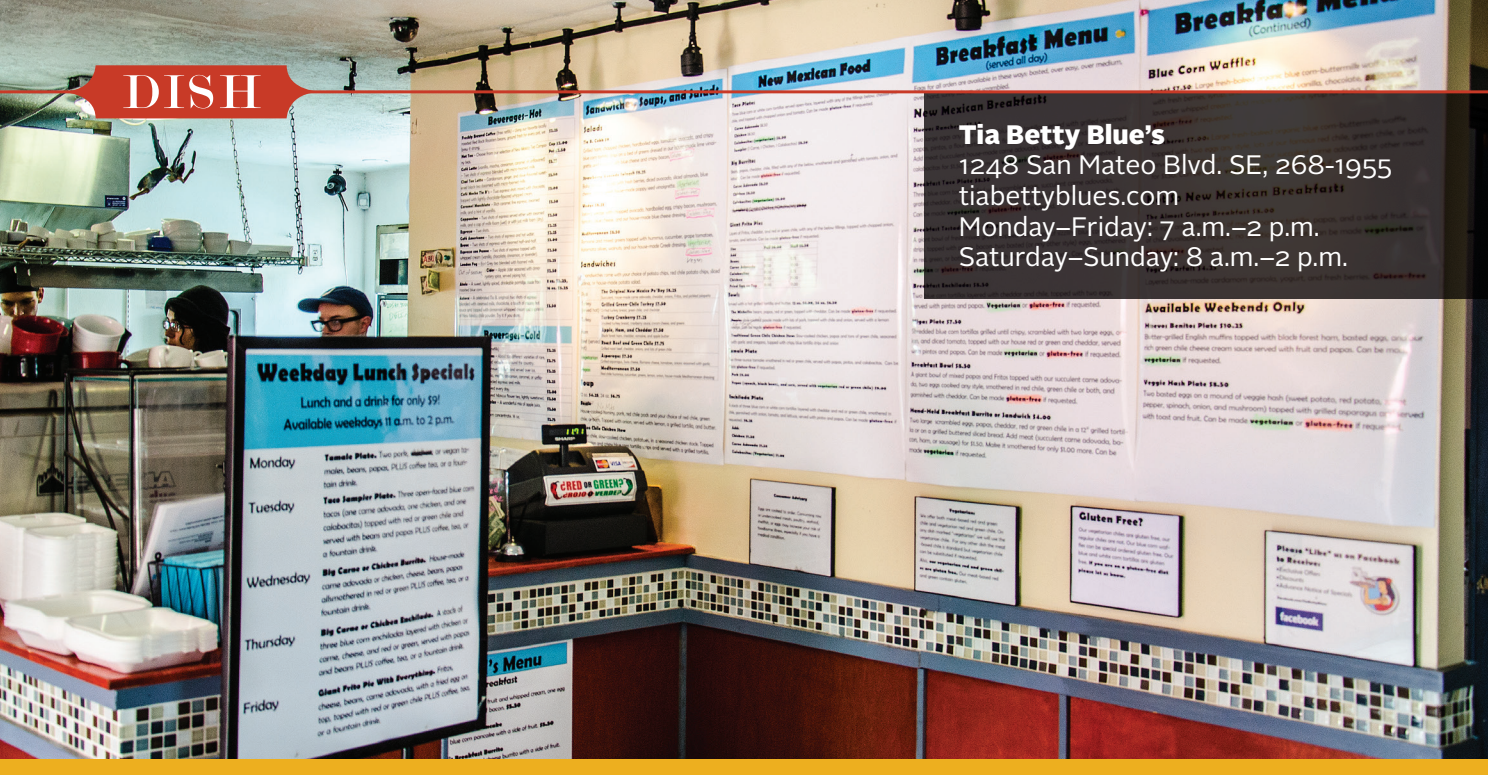


The kitchenware used to make their gluten free-items is *only* used to make gluten-free items—from measuring cups to pots and pans.



The menu indicates all the items—and there are *many*—that can be made gluten-free or vegetarian.





Tia Betty Blue's
 1248 San Mateo Blvd. SE, 268-1955
 tiabettyblues.com
 Monday–Friday: 7 a.m.–2 p.m.
 Saturday–Sunday: 8 a.m.–2 p.m.



For gluten-free breakfast burritos, the restaurant uses three blue corn tortillas instead of one large flour tortilla. They're eaten with a knife and fork, rather than being handheld.



"We accommodate vegetarians and those with a gluten-free diet," Boardman says. "So we try to do authentic chile, but we also have a vegetarian version—both red and green—that's made without meat and gluten-free."



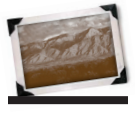
One of the most popular items, Boardman says, is the rancheros blue corn waffle: eggs, red or green chile, and carne adovada (vegetarian or gluten-free, upon request).



Why Tia Betty Blue? It combines Spanish and English like the patois "Spanglish," which is so often used in New Mexico. Who's Betty? "You don't meet many girls today named Betty, right?" Boardman says. "That's from the '30s or the '40s."



Boardman evokes the feeling of the 1940s throughout the restaurant. "When you look at menus and food from then, they were very simple," he says. "There wasn't any processed food." He does the same with his menu: no processed foods are used, and he sources locally as often as possible.



Old photos of Northern New Mexico landscapes line the walls and rest under the glass tabletops throughout the restaurant. Many photos are from the Library of Congress.



Old maps, decades-old menus, and "love notes" also rest under the glass tabletops.



The "love notes" started when the restaurant ran out of feedback forms. One patron decided to leave a napkin note, sliding it under the glass. Many others continue to follow suit.



Two 1940s stoves reside inside the restaurant. They don't work anymore, but they do make great decorations.



More than 100 glass-bottle specialty sodas rest in a refrigerator near the order counter. Many are vintage or small-market brands, such as Faygo.



The coffee is a custom blend from Red Rock Roasters in Albuquerque. It's not roasted until it's ordered. It's not grinded until it's brewed.



The Azteca hot beverage is a "Tia B." original, and one of many specialty beverages on the menu. It has two shots of espresso, steamed milk, a touch of creamy hot sauce, cinnamon whipped cream, and a bit of New Mexico chile powder.



Every day of the week, the restaurant features a different special that isn't on the menu. — ADAM R. BACA

MENU SAMPLER

A FEW OTHER DISHES YOU'LL FIND ON THE MENU AT TIA BETTY BLUE'S

THE NEW MEXICO ORIGINAL PO' BOY SANDWICH, \$8.25

House-made carne adovada, cheddar, onions, Fritos, and pickled jalapeños—served with a choice of potato chips, red chile potato chips, sliced jicama, or house-made potato salad.

STRAWBERRY AVOCADO SPINACH SALAD, \$8.25

Baby spinach topped with fresh berries, diced avocado, sliced almonds, blue cheese, and house-made poppy seed vinaigrette.

BREAKFAST ENCHILADAS, \$8.50

Two blue corn tortillas layered with cheddar and chile, topped with two eggs, served with pintos and papas.

HUEVOS BENITOS PLATE (AVAILABLE ON WEEKENDS ONLY), \$10.25

Butter-grilled English muffins topped with black forest ham, baked eggs, and rich green-chile cheese cream sauce. Served with fruit and papas.