

Neighborhoods: Old Town Monrovia



Francine Orr / Los Angeles Times

Cheese, dried sour cherries, orange peels and almonds are served up at California Wine and Cheese in Monrovia, Calif.

A place to eat, drink and be Mayberry

By Joshua Lurie

March 24, 2009

Monrovia is often compared to Mayberry, the idyllic town from "The Andy Griffith Show," but don't let the "Old Town" tag fool you. Monrovia's main strip sits just 10 minutes east of Pasadena, at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, and it manages to blend its small-town charm with a bustling new energy that appeals to families and hip foodies alike.

Old to be new

The [Peach Café](http://www.thepeachcafe.com) (141 E. Colorado Blvd., [626] 599-9092, www.thepeachcafe.com) resides in a century-old brick garage with high ceilings, funky art and exposed wood beams. Nita Milstein specializes in Southern-tinged dishes like the Peach Café

Benedict: bacon-studded maple cornmeal waffles with salt-cured country ham and white cheddar sauce.

At [Café Massilia](#) (110 E. Lemon Ave., [626] 471-3588, www.cafemassilia.com), Chris Giovannelli and Philippe Laurentz serve southern French classics like black mussels with white wine and shallots, an all-French wine list and photos of their hometown, Marseille.

Friday night lights

From March to December, Myrtle Avenue shuts down north of Walnut on Friday nights from 5 to 9 p.m. to make way for the Family Festival Street Fair, a combination farmers market, food fair and crafts fair. There's a petting zoo where children can ride ponies.

Wine on the menu

Mike Mulhall and George Algarin opened [Merengue Bakery & Café](#) (110 E. Colorado Blvd., [626] 358-5650, www.merenguebakery.com) last summer, promising Cuban "food that'll make you dance," including *medianoche* sandwiches, sangria, daily specials like *ropa vieja* and limited-edition Merengue balls: breaded cream cheese balls filled with guava.

Tom Dugan was a federal agent for 33 years before opening [California Wine and Cheese](#) (115 W. Foothill Blvd., [626] 358-6500, www.cawineandcheese.com) with wife Janet in 2006. They specialize in 200 California varietals, farmstead cheeses and weekend wine tastings.

Take a hike

Five minutes north of Old Town, [Monrovia Canyon Park](#) features a trail system, including Ben Overturff Trail (1200 N. Canyon Road, www.monroviacanyonpark.org), named after a distinguished Angeleno who used to entertain guests at his mountain cabin in the early 20th century.