

Restaurant Snapshot

Baking genius rises with Huckleberry

by Merv Hecht

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GENERAL COMMENT: Zoe Nathan is one of the best pastry chefs in town. Her desserts at Rustic Canyon Wine Bar are terrific. And they look pretty good at the new Huckleberry on Wilshire Boulevard, but getting to them is another story. Keep reading.

WHERE: 1014 Wilshire Blvd. Telephone: (310) 451-2311.

WHEN: Currently Wednesday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It's best for breakfast.

BEST DISHES: The breads and the pastries are the reason to go there.

BEST FEATURE: The baked goods.

WORST FEATURE: It's almost impossible to get served in a timely way, and it's way too loud to eat inside. Maybe that will get better as the novelty of a new place wears off, but for now I recommend take out only — if you don't mind standing in line a long time. There seems to be only one person serving no matter how many people are in line, and each customer seems to have a dozen questions to ask before ordering.

WHAT TO DRINK: No beer, no wine, a good cup of coffee is \$3.50 to \$4.50, but it is good.

PRICES: Some items are really high. A small chocolate chip cookie is \$2.50. The blueberry tart I was eyeing was \$4. A beef sandwich is \$12.50. A turkey meatball is \$2 and you would want several to make a meal. Most of the customers I've seen are eating the salads, which are more reasonable. You can get a good sandwich or breakfast plate between \$8 to \$12, which is not bad.

BOTTOM LINE: At the moment it's a madhouse, but it could improve with time. It's a great place for breakfast, and Santa Monica needs that. But the hours are too short and we need them to open up every day, and stay open for my afternoon coffee break at 4:30 p.m.