

# Village Pantry dishes up satisfying comfort food

Los Altos institution specializes in hearty breakfast, lunch fare

**By Melinda Sacks**  
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If you've lived in Los Altos for more than a year, you know the Village Pantry. This cozy breakfast and lunch spot has been around forever and has resisted trends and fads, instead maintaining a hearty, home-cooked menu that exemplifies the perfect comfort meal.

## A QUICK BITE

From buttery soft scrambled eggs to golden crispy hash browns with a creamy center, and plate-sized pancakes delicately filled with your choice of mini semi-sweet chocolate chips or slivered fresh banana, this is old-style breakfast paradise.

And to my delight, breakfast is served all day.

Don't get me wrong, lunch is good too, with a wide array of traditional coffee shop fare — tuna melts, beef, veggie or turkey burgers, and "Tasty Salads" that include Cobb, crab, tuna and chef's.

You'll find the Village Pantry on a side street in charming downtown Los Altos, where it is nestled just off Main Street.

Paper photos of menu items fill the windows, which are framed by pink and green ruffled curtains. Photos of regulars (most of the customers are regulars) cover one wall.

A couple of sidewalk tables offer outdoor dining. But the ambience inside is worth experiencing.

Owner Julie Ogilvie will most likely greet you at the door. Her good cheer and warmth permeate the tiny dining room, with its counter and leather booths, and a back room accessed through a brick archway.

Village specials range from an English Light Breakfast (\$8.99) with two

### Village Pantry

184 Second St., Los Altos, www.thevillage-pantry.com

**Hours:** 7 a.m.-2 p.m. every day

**Types of food:** American comfort food for breakfast and lunch

**Average meal price:** Less than \$12 for breakfast or lunch

**Good choices:** Eggs with hash browns, pancakes

**Not recommended:** Look for fine wine elsewhere.

**Attitude:** Home-cooked food in a cozy neighborhood setting

**Amenities:** Super friendly service, homey atmosphere and comfort food

**Vegetarian options:** Eggs, salads, veggie burger

**Drinks:** Peet's coffee, juices, two beers and one house wine

**Eat in car:** You could gobble down a sandwich, but the atmosphere is the whole reason for going.

**Next-day edibility:** Best when eaten hot/fresh

**Who goes there:** Couples of all ages, locals, families with well behaved kids (it's a small space)

**Credit cards:** No, cash only

**Parking:** Free street and public lots

Restaurant reviews are conducted anonymously. The Mercury News pays for all meals.

poached eggs on a muffin with ham and fresh fruit, to a "Joe Special": a three-egg scramble with ground beef, onion, mushroom, spinach, and side hash browns and toast for \$9.99.

Or choose blueberry, banana or chocolate (chip) whole wheat pancakes (\$8.99 for two that are plate sized).

I loved my scramble, which I assembled from the "create your own" option with spinach, cherry tomatoes, avocado and red pepper (\$9.99).

My dad's Denver omelet with bell peppers, ham and onion, filled half the dish, perfectly folded and nestled beside those awesome hash browns (\$8.99).

If you aren't in a breakfast mood, consider a burger or a hot crab sandwich (\$8.99).

Burgers come in every shape and form, each served with tomatoes, pickles, onions, lettuce and a choice of french fries, soup or coleslaw.

Ground beef is \$7.49, a garden burger is \$7.99, or go all out and get the patty melt: a burger on grilled rye bread with melted Swiss and grilled onions (\$7.99).

A satisfying (but not low calorie!) tuna melt (\$7.99) melds spring-water tuna with sliced veggies, American cheese and mayo toasted on sourdough bread.

Homemade soup varies by the day. House salads are simple and generous (\$7.99 for a tuna salad, \$8.99 for a Cobb or imitation crab), all served in a large bowl that may be big enough for two.

Desserts are simple. Order one scoop of chocolate, vanilla or strawberry ice cream for \$1.99, or two for \$2.99. Milkshakes (yes, they also have soy milk) are \$3.99.

I'd recommend the fresh grapefruit juice for \$3.50 for a little zing if you are having breakfast.

Becks and Budweiser are each \$3.50 if you need a beer with your sandwich. A glass of house wine is \$2.99.

Espresso drinks are a deal at \$2.75 for a mocha and \$2.50 for a latte.

If you're looking for a place that makes you feel as if you are home, visit Village Pantry. It will make everything OK.