

The Flying Gourmet

By Jim Jellison

El Jardin, Columbia, CA



According to a recent "Flying" magazine's article by Lane Wallace: "Airport cafes are hurting all across the country." In the first 11 months of 2007, 17 new airport restaurants opened nationwide.

During that same period of time 143 closed their doors! Maybe airport restaurants are a bellwether for the economy in general?

If the airport restaurants are closing then that only leaves us with the alternative of summoning a taxi for a ride to town. There use to be something known as an airport car but the closest I ever got to that was when I borrowed a car in Mendocino from the FBO for \$20.00. Of course with the price of gasoline climbing, it isn't cheap to get a taxi ride anymore and in order to save money restaurants have also changed their hours. So, if you thought that they were only closed on Mondays, you better think again.

Plenty of small town airports don't have taxi service and the airport is too far away from town to walk. A few that come to mind are Georgetown, Calaveras, and Mariposa. The only way to town is the Blanch Dubois (of "Streetcar Named Desire" fame) method, "I have often relied upon the kindness of strangers". Of course, this can have its negative side but I have been lucky so far and have found some great local eateries this way.

If you are familiar at all with my column you know how much I like the "Gold Country". I like it for a number of reasons: it's close (45 to 60 minutes away by air), the airfields are well maintained (most are used by the California Forestry Service for aerial fire fighting) and for their history. I especially like Columbia, California. During dry weather you can walk through the woods, about a quarter of a mile, to town and there you will find, along Parrott's Ferry Road, the little Mexican restaurant called **El Jardin**. I have always visited during warm



weather and so I always sit outside on the covered porch. My

favorite meal is Carnitas and the last time I ordered it the chief had spiced it up a bit and it was better than ever. The portions are such that you are going to over eat (you won't be able to help yourself) and the chips are fresh and served warm!

I have read the restaurant reviews on this place and they are all four star and for the price you just can't beat the quality and quantity of food that you will get at El Jardin.

The Columbia airport was fenced a couple of years ago and this was a great safety enhancement since the deer are rather plentiful during the warm summer evenings. Departure after dark requires some concentration since you will be flying into a black hole for the first few minutes of climb out.