

The Flying Gourmet



With the price of just about everything going up much faster than our incomes, it is time to keep an eye open for bargains. Thank goodness there are places to stop for a meal while flying that are still affordable. One week day morning I decided to fly a friend to breakfast and go into work a little late. We had been planning this little adventure for some time but the weather just hadn't been

cooperating with the usual low morning clouds extending to the Altamont. Then finally it happened. The almost perfect morning and off we went. An Ahart flight instructor had mentioned to me that the Hangar Café at the Merced airport had good hamburgers so I thought we would try their morning menu. There wasn't much air traffic early in the morning which sure wasn't the case for those poor people down below stuck in their automobiles. When I was about twenty miles out I picked up the ASOS broadcast which gave me the active runway. When we arrived on the 45 for a left downwind entry into the pattern a large commuter turbo-prop was departing. We discovered later that she belonged to Great Lakes Airlines and makes a non-stop run from Merced to Ontario daily.

As we walked over to the cafe from transient parking it was obvious why it is called the Hangar Café. The building is made out of corrugated metal which could have come from a hangar or a Junkers JU 52. The airport web site listed the Hangar Café as open daily from 7 AM to 3 PM. When we arrived at 10 minutes before 7 AM there were already several vehicles in the parking lot. We discovered that the restaurant actually opens at 5 AM, which makes a lot of sense when you make a living frying eggs and hamburgers in the middle of the central valley. The Café is conveniently located right on the field, no more than 100 feet from transient parking. Besides a great breakfast Rosie also provides fresh, homemade preserves for your toast or English muffin. Boy was that an unexpected treat, on top of the reasonable price. At the check out counter you will find an assortment of preserves as well as fresh vegetable for sale, which makes Rosie's distinct among airport breakfast stops.

Update: As of spring 2009 the Hanger Café has been remodeled and reopened under new management. The homemade preserves are gone but the ambiance has been greatly improved. Breakfast is great and the prices still reasonable.

Merced (MCE) is located 65 nautical miles east of LVK just a few nautical miles south of Atwater, Castle (MER) the ex Air Force Base.