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Steven Seav (left) and Stan Lin launched Syrup Desserts in the Historic Core last year. Photo by Gary Leonard.

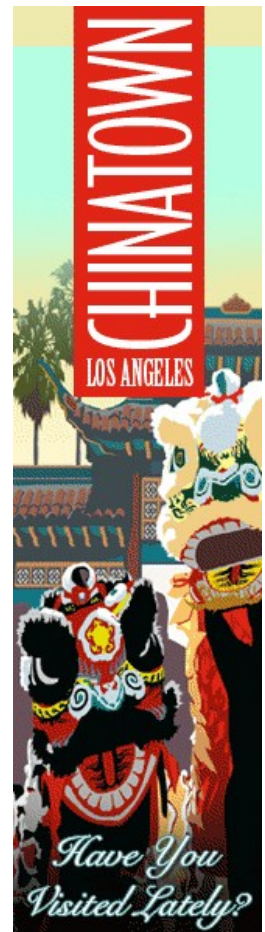


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Syrup Skips Lunch and Dinner and Goes Right to Dessert

by Richard Guzmán

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DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - When Steven Seav, Stan Lin and Tony Tee decided to open a food business in Downtown Los Angeles, they elected to skip breakfast, lunch and dinner. Instead, they decided to go straight to dessert.

With the goal of satisfying Downtown's sweet tooth, Syrup Desserts, at 611 S. Spring St., opened last summer. The 1,000-square-foot space offers a modern loft vibe with cement floors and brick walls. There are tables and chairs on the ground floor and a second level serves as a lounge with a sectional couch and a coffee table. It's a good place to hide from those who might look aghast as you devour your sweets.

"We wanted a place everyone can enjoy, where they can hang out and have fun," said Seav, the head baker at Syrup Desserts.

The trio picked a spot in the Historic Core to take advantage of the growing vibrancy in the neighborhood. They also have late hours, serving until midnight every day of the week. That allows them both to satisfy bar hoppers looking to hit their sweet spot, and to complement other establishments in the area, such as The Gorbals restaurant that stays open until 2 a.m. on the weekends, and L.A. Café, which is open 24 hours.

Naturally, there are plenty of sweet offerings at Syrup. Here are some of the standouts.

It's the Cheese: One of the most popular menu items is the raspberry grilled cheese sandwich (\$5.75), Seav said. It's served on a flaky croissant with raspberries, toasted almonds and Brie. It's not the only sweet grilled cheese option: There is also a version with bananas, cheddar cheese, agave and Nutella, an Italian hazelnut-based spread. "As strange as it may sound, all the flavors blend very well together," Seav said.

Isn't it Continental?: Crêpes, more common in Europe than the United States, are also a Downtown hit, said Seav. Like the sweet grilled cheeses, there are a variety of decadent combinations. One of the house favorites is the Crêpe Tiramisu (\$5.75), described as a tiramisu that has been converted to a crêpe with espresso ice cream, espresso-dipped ladyfingers, mascarpone cheese and topped with strawberries. Also noteworthy is the French Obsession (\$5.75). It's one of the more savory crêpes, and is made with apples, French vanilla ice cream, dark buckwheat honey and toasted walnuts. Brie is layered on the top and inside.

Ding Dong Daaang: Syrup's Ding Dongs (\$5.50) are not to be taken lightly. Each is the size of a Rubik's Cube, although they are a lot more fun than trying to solve a puzzle. They come in chocolate, espresso and red velvet flavors. With its bright red



top, the red velvet gets done quickly, Seav said. The espresso added, is "like an espresso meringue cake; the cream inside is almost tiramisu-ish in flavor, but a little bit light." They all have cream inside, and the chocolate and espresso versions are topped with icing, while the red velvet is capped with sprinkles.

O Say Can You Cheese: It may be simple, but it works. The Oreo cookie cheesecake (\$4.25) is creamy with bites of Oreo cookies inside. It comes in cheesecake form, with crushed bits of Oreo spread throughout the creamy interior.

Not Just for Breakfast: At Syrup, waffles are a favorite of the late night crowd. Seav and company offer Belgian waffles (\$5.25), which are light and crispy and are served with strawberries, bananas, a scoop of French vanilla ice cream, whipped cream and powdered sugar. The classic buttermilk waffle (\$4.25) is kept simple by Syrup standards. It is served with strawberries, bananas, maple syrup and whipped cream.

Customers can get creative with the Liege sugar waffles (\$2.50). These are sweeter, denser and chewier than regular Belgian waffles. They are served with whipped cream and powdered sugar and come in more than a dozen flavors, including cranberry, lemon drop blueberry, orange cranberry twist and the house recommendation, banana chocolate chips.

Cool Off: Those who prefer that their dessert come chilled also have plenty of options at Syrup. The Virgil's Frosty Root Beer Float (\$3.95) is made with Virgil's root beer and two scoops of ice cream. There are more than 20 flavors, including cookies and cream, Dutch chocolate, strawberry and cherry vanilla.

Drink Up: While dessert options power Syrup, they also offer a caffeine punch. The latte (\$2.95) and cappuccino (\$2.95) are complemented by the hazelnut latte (\$3.15), sweetened with Nutella, or the caramel macchiato (\$3.15), in which caramel is mixed into the drink.

Syrup Desserts is at 611 S. Spring St., (213) 488-5136.

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