



The Diner

by David Kates

Customers who come to diners at night have their own subculture. They spend hours enjoying the abundant food and discussion. David Kates went to the Original Pantry Café in downtown Los Angeles to hear some stories as dark and quirky as the still night outside the diner's windows.

I take my cue from Don Alexander, a musician who talks while enjoying some meatloaf.

"It [frequenting diners] gives you a slice of life from different quarters from what you would normally experience during the daytime," he says.

I'm seeking to obtain that "slice of life."

Miranda Carnessale, a university student, loves breakfast at night (like many patrons).

"Breakfast food is, for some reason, really good at 2 a.m." she says simply.

Miranda's ex-boyfriend and she had such neurotic diner traditions that they were branded the "old married couple."

Manuel Gamiz, a veteran Pantry waiter, always gives the bill to wives rather than husbands.

"All the womans [sic] is a good tipper," he says.

While James Davis, a Pantry security guard, has to get involved in disputes between husbands and wives when one is caught cheating at the diner.

"We don't care what you do but just take that outside," he tells them.

I call diners like the Pantry "treasure troves." I literally walked in, introduced myself, turned on the recorder and listened in amazement.