

Relaxed, Tasty, and So Santa Barbara: Lunch at We Want the Funk

By Bridget Bommer



In a quiet corner of Santa Barbara’s spirited Funk Zone, where art galleries and tasting rooms intermingle with the scent of sea air, a 1970s revival is in full swing. We Want the Funk, a restaurant whose name doubles as a mantra, invites you to embrace a different kind of dining experience—one where laid-back charm pairs effortlessly with vibrant flavors.

The first thing that strikes you is the ambiance: a kaleidoscope of vibrant murals inside the building blends into the natural yet comforting feel of the outdoor seating. The decor feels like a love letter to an era of flower children and funkadelic grooves, but the energy is firmly rooted in the present. On a recent sunny afternoon, as the golden light bathed the outdoor patio, a young woman with a guitar serenaded the crowd with classics: “Fade Into You” by Mazzy Star, Tracy Chapman’s “Fast Car,” and Alanis Morissette’s “Ironie,” to name a few. Her voice carried a gentle, soulful grace, her presence unobtrusive, and her set list was perfectly curated for the mellow crowd—even taking the occasional request.



The menu, like the decor, has fun with its themes while delivering seriously good food. Take, for instance, the cauliflower tacos (\$14), a vegetarian marvel where charred florets are cloaked in a tangy, citrusy sauce, perfectly complemented by pickled onions. If you are a meat lover, the carnitas tacos (\$16) feature melt-in-your-mouth pork, rich with smoky undertones and brightened by a zesty kick of spice.

Flatbreads are a centerpiece here, and they deserve their acclaim. The P-Funk, a prosciutto and arugula flatbread (\$18), dazzles with its peppery greens and ribbons of cured meat, all atop a crisp yet airy crust brushed with hot chili oil. It is a dish that nods to the wood-fired artistry of Naples while embracing Santa Barbara's sunny, breezy attitude.

For sides, the parmesan truffle fries (\$8) arrive golden and impossibly crisp with parmesan evenly layered throughout—a testament to the kitchen's attention to detail. If you're craving a drink, the Hugo spritz (\$12), a refreshing herbal concoction, pairs beautifully with the tacos, while a glass of Sauvignon Blanc (\$14) complements the flatbread's bold flavors. For beer lovers, a pint of 805 (\$8) rounds out the offerings.



The service is friendly, helpful, and intentionally unobtrusive. The staff are quick to assist you when needed but otherwise stay out of the way, letting the relaxed atmosphere speak for itself. This is a place that feels intimate without being exclusive—a welcome antidote to the overly polished restaurants that dominate many beachside towns.

Santa Barbara's Funk Zone has no shortage of dining options, but We Want the Funk distinguishes itself by embracing its personality. It's a place where good food meets good vibes, where live music enhances rather than competes with conversation, and where nostalgia is more than just a gimmick—it's a way to bring people together.