

SAN FRANCISCO



55

EAT + DRINK

## 55 The Soda Jerks

Housemade pop for high-fructose haters.

BY SARA DESERAN

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AT ROOM ARTISAN BURGERS, MANAGER FIONN ENJOYS A PRICKLY PEAR SODA. 1785 UNION ST., 415-440-7638, ROOMBURGERS.COM

## The Soda Jerks

Local restaurants are now serving their own take on the bubbly.

**J**ust as Coke heads are going into withdrawal from the soda ban on city property that took effect last spring, restaurants around town have started serving up healthy alternatives—house-made sodas. Made without the dreaded corn syrup, these sodas are chosen enough to give Gavin a platform to stand on.

Room Artisan Burgers, which calls its menu “mindful,” greatly sweetens its sodas with agave nectar and makes a caramelized pineapple flavor that’s so refreshing, it demands beachfront property. At Local Mission Eatery—which has experimented with everything from tangelo cream soda to blackberry-rhyme—owner Yaron Milgrom says, “Most of our sodas

have an ingredient list like this: fruit, herb, water, sugar.” (Sugar as final ingredient, dutifully noted.) They charge their sodas in the soda siphon for every lunch service and dispense them directly.

Over in South Park at The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen, the lines might be for the fromage, but the sodas are the next biggest seller. They evolved out of something that had been brewing even before the restaurant came to be, says Nate Pollak of his co-owner’s concoctions. “Heidi [Gibson] was preparing a plan to launch her own line of artisanal cocktail mixers for bars, made of fresh seasonal fruits, herbs and spices. Those are now our soda syrups.” To go with your sandwich, choose from

**Without the corn syrup, these sodas are chaste enough to give Gavin a platform to stand on.**

flavors such as grapefruit-pink peppercorn or spiced pomegranate—something that sounds perfect for meeting a sharp cheddar and bacon-filled Moussetop head-on.

Perhaps the healthiest alternative, though, would be from Eatwell Farms, which is selling what it calls “soffers”: lacto-fermented, natural sodas that contain living probiotics. In the old tradition of sodas, Eatwell’s Lorraine Ottens, fiancée to former Nigel Walker, is making them herself in flavors such as lavender, lemon verbena and rosemary, using herbs from the farm. If I didn’t think they’d have a Coca-Cola lawsuit on their hands, I’d suggest to Ottens that her slogan be “Have a Softer and a Smile.” —SARA DESERAN

WHERE TO DRINK: Local Mission Eatery, 301 24th St., 415-220-7575, localmissioneatery.com; The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen, 1500 South Park Ave., 415-240-0027, theamericangrilledcheese.com; Eatwell Farms, Forty-Five Farms Market, Sausalito

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