

# A San Francisco secret

Restaurant also a mission to help people rebuilding lives

By MIM SWARTZ  
Special Contributor

SAN FRANCISCO — Ever since the 1849 Gold Rush, food has mattered in this city, where traipsing the hilly streets and breathing the bay's salt air can work up a person's appetite.

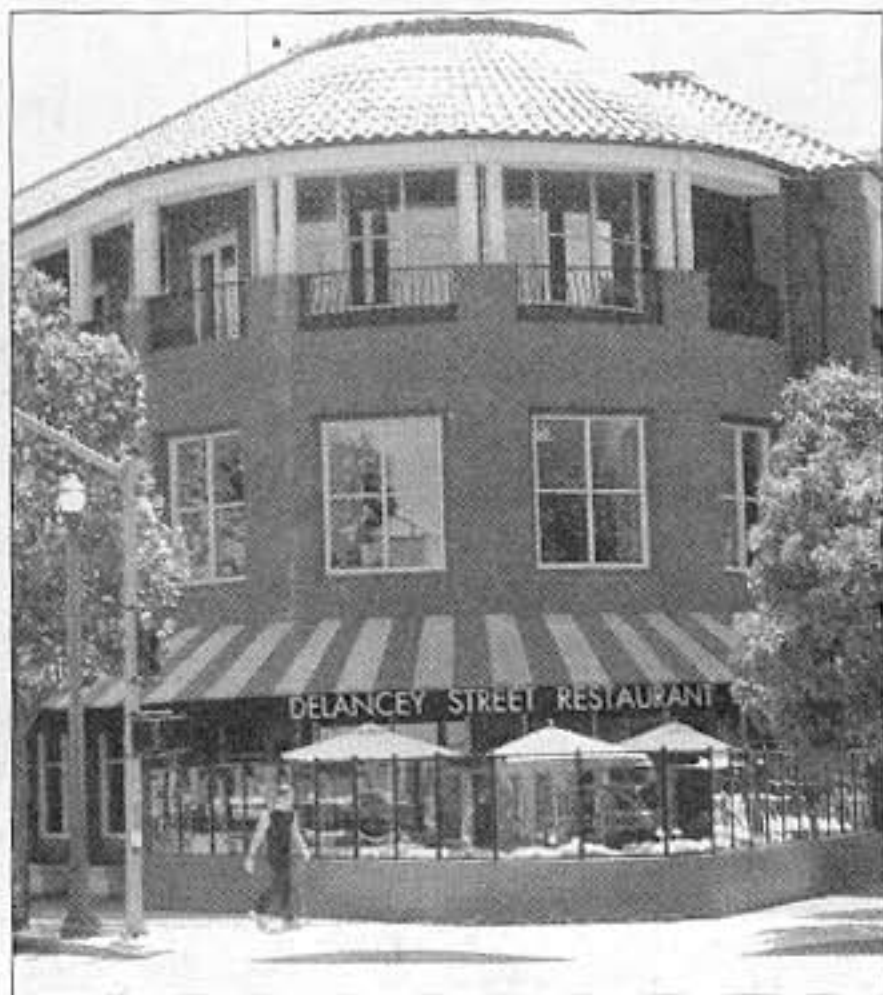
Regularly named among the top dining cities in America — San Francisco enjoys a healthy rivalry for that honor with New York — this food-trendy city of 776,000 boasts about 3,000 restaurants.

So how does a visitor know where to eat, other than heading for Fisherman's Wharf or trying big-name establishments?

Unless you're with a local, you probably wouldn't know about the popular Delancey Street Restaurant, a 185-seat eatery along the Embarcadero in the South Beach area.

Billed as "an ethnic American bistro," the restaurant serves very good down-to-earth food at great prices. It has an upscale atmosphere with wood, brass and copper decor, and linen-covered tables with fresh flowers; a bar that serves beer and wine; a noise level that makes conversation easy; eye-popping views of the Bay Bridge from the patio; convenient location on the Municipal Railway N line two blocks from SBC Park; and inexpensive valet parking (\$4).

Unless you knew the restaurant's background, you wouldn't guess that its clean-cut waiters, busboys and chefs are all ex-convicts, former drug addicts or alcoholics trying to turn their lives



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Residents in the Delancey Street program live in apartments above the restaurant. Foundation residents helped construct the building.

around.

The restaurant serves lunch Tuesday through Friday, dinner Tuesday through Sunday and brunch Saturday and Sunday. All money from the meals and tips (valet parking, too) goes back into the Delancey Street Foundation, which, with no government funding, helps those who have hit bottom climb to the top by teaching them marketable skills.

Five hundred residents live above the restaurant in a sprawling, four-story stucco apartment building that foundation residents helped construct. Those entering the rehabilitation program must stay two years, although the average stay is four. The foundation's name comes from the street on New York's Lower East Side where European immigrants settled after coming to America in the early 1900s to start new lives.

Among other enterprises the foundation operates in San Francisco are a cafe/bookstore, a moving company, a car service for executives coming into town and a huge Christmas tree lot. It also has operations in four other locations, including the San Juan Pueblo in northern New Mexico, where foundation residents make Southwestern-style furniture and pottery sold nationwide by mail.

And while some say the food tastes even better when you know you're helping a good cause, Delancey Street's cuisine can stand on its own.

*Delancey Street Restaurant, 600 Embarcadero (at Brannan Street). Reservations suggested: 415-512-5179. Open daily except Monday.*

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