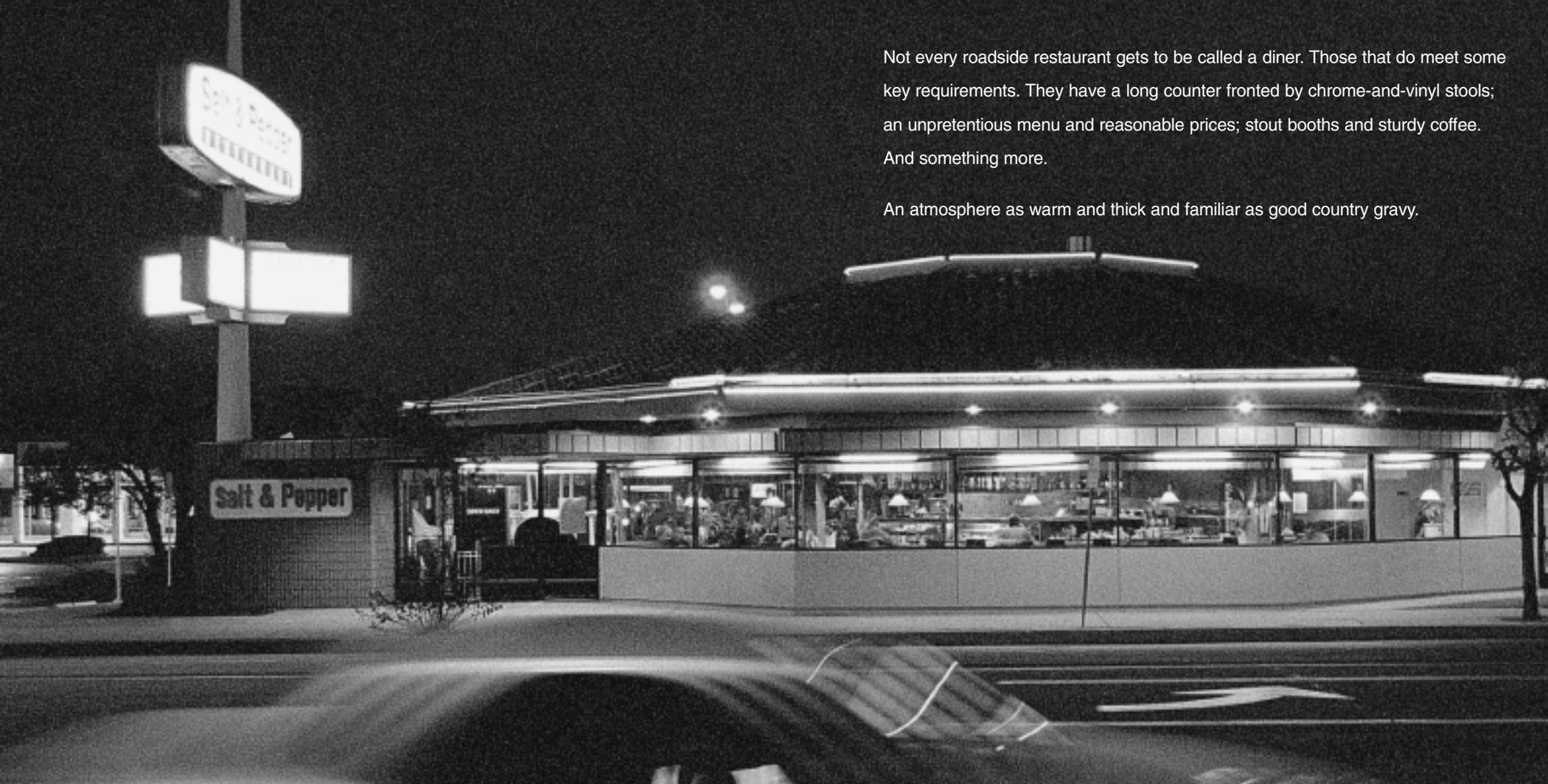


A series of booklets published by Asplandesign

small wonders





Not every roadside restaurant gets to be called a diner. Those that do meet some key requirements. They have a long counter fronted by chrome-and-vinyl stools; an unpretentious menu and reasonable prices; stout booths and sturdy coffee. And something more.

An atmosphere as warm and thick and familiar as good country gravy.

Five days a week, Judy Croom watches the sun rise over the low-slung buildings of Orangethorpe Avenue through the picture windows of Salt & Pepper in Fullerton, California. By dawn, her customers have already basked in the warmth of Judy's smile and service for close to an hour. She takes the early-risers and the all-nighters from the darkness to the light. They greet her with a wave, a hug or just a knowing glance, then share stories, photos and other slices of their lives, knowing they'll always get genuine interest in return. They order food from the menu or often from memory, but for many of them, Judy is the real sustenance. The eggs, hash browns and toast are all just on the side.

JUDY





VISA

To our valued guests

To our valued guests



To say that Judy has waited tables for 43 years misses the point by a bit, since it's not the tables that have made a world of difference in her life. The people she serves "have paid my bills and raised my four kids, and I love every one of 'em," Judy says. "Even the grumpy ones." She has served countless local dignitaries and assorted celebrities, including Barry Goldwater, who once ordered iced tea and then left her a \$27 tip. But Judy's favorite story is of the little boy who sat down at the counter one day and asked, "How much for a scoop of vanilla ice cream?" When he was told, he asked, "How much with chocolate syrup?" He settled for the plain scoop, and when it came, he wolfed it down and paid his bill. Then, next to his bowl, he left a quarter, which would have paid for the chocolate syrup. "That boy," Judy says, "is why I never judge people by the size of their tip."

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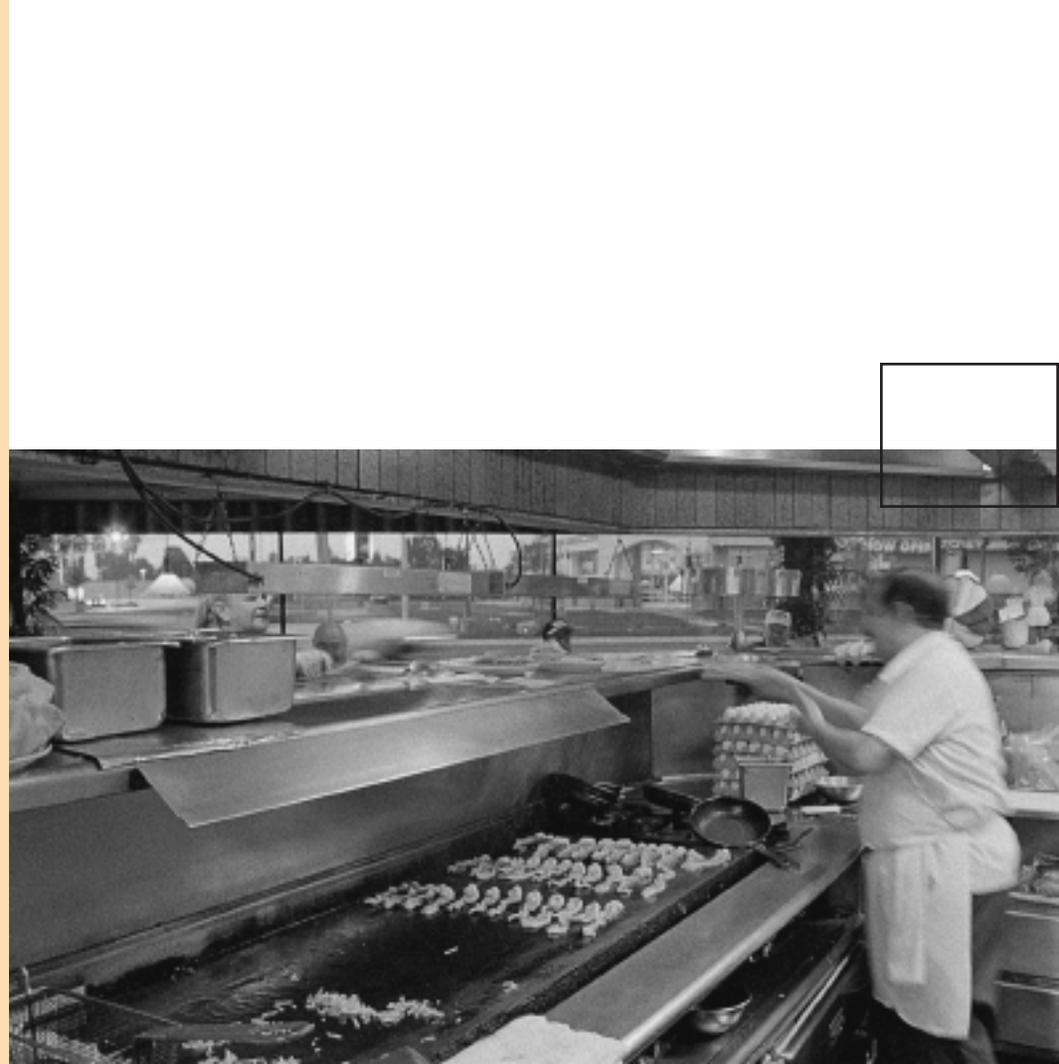
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There's Larry, who calls Judy "young lady" and likes his bacon extra crisp. And Jimmy, the ice skating coach who wears his hat cocked sideways and brings in newspaper clippings of the aspiring Olympians he instructs. Sue from Disneyland loves to talk and is always on a diet; Lupe just likes to sit and read her Bible. These are but a few of the regulars who seek out Judy's station almost every morning of their lives, and she's there to cater to their every need and idiosyncrasy. She knows their "usuals" by heart, and she worries about them when they're gone. "My customers are like family," she says. "They know they're supposed to tell me when they're going on vacation."







“ Sometimes Judy wakes in the morning to find her own kitchen table set for two, complete with milk glasses filled to the brim. Sleepwalking is one thing, but sleep-waitressing? Some people might take that as a sign that they’ve been working far too long at a job, that the daily 4 a.m. alarms and countless hours on the go have finally exacted a toll. More than one of Judy’s colleagues has sprinted out the back door “screaming like a maniac” because of the stress, she says. For Judy, however, the milk glass runneth over. “I like to think I waitress in my sleep because I love it so much,” Judy says. “Work is still where I go to get my fun for the day. I can’t imagine myself doing anything else.”



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