

# The New York Times

## At the Happiest Hour, a Cheeseburger Does a Star Turn

**THE HAPPIEST HOUR** NYT Critic's Pick American \$\$ 121 West 10<sup>th</sup> St  
Greenwich Village 212-243-2827

### Hungry City

By JEFF GORDINIER JULY 2, 2015



### The Happiest Hour

Credit Emon Hassan for The New York Times

When I first heard about the burger at [the Happiest Hour](#), a cocktail bar in Greenwich Village where the décor is heavy on the palm fronds and the soundtrack is heavy on Tom Petty, it dislodged a memory.

I remembered a ritual from the early 1990s, when I worked as a music columnist at a daily newspaper in Santa Barbara, Calif. On Friday evenings, a colleague and I would cross Anacapa Street and cap off a week of deadlines with a simple meal: a juicy

burger and a discount martini at a quintessentially West Coast place called the [Paradise Cafe](#).

Early reports about the Happiest Hour tapped a specific hunger in me. I needed the salty-beefy-gooey satisfaction of that Cali-style burger, and I wanted it paired with the clear-as-glass, iceberg-frosty *ping* of a dry martini.

After a few visits, I wound up thinking that the people behind the Happiest Hour (veterans of [Acme](#) and [the Pegu Club](#)) must be in the grips of the same flavor myopia as mine.

Oh, that burger. There are several on the menu, but the \$12 Happiest Burger, a blatant homage to the California-born [In-N-Out](#) burger, is the showstopper. Double-pattied, expertly seasoned, dripping with American cheese, canyon-deep with flavor from onion confit and a sauce touched with mustard, the burger is so terrific that it makes you wonder whether the folks in the kitchen, led by the chef Thomas Lim, huddled one day and decided to dedicate every ounce of their energy to the pursuit of cheeseburger perfection.

The burger goes well with the cocktails, which are better than you'd expect from an establishment that might have hired Jimmy Buffett as its interior decorator.

The Gibson carries sour currents of the brine from pickled onions. The Link Ray tastes like what might happen if a mojito and a Bloody Mary had a baby and named her Celery.

There is a separate bar downstairs called Slowly Shirley, which looks like a Hollywood canteen where Bogart and Bacall might have met for a clandestine date in 1944. There, the burger finds its ideal companion: the cold, smooth FAF martini. Eureka!