

LOCAL NEWS • News

Burglary doesn't deter San Jose restaurant's generosity

Elyse Restaurant plans a second meal giveaway this weekend in downtown San Jose



Elyse Restaurant in downtown San Jose gave away 1,000 meals of turkey wild rice soup and sides on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26, 2020.

By **SAL PIZARRO** | spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com | Bay Area News Group

PUBLISHED: December 3, 2020 at 11:59 a.m. | UPDATED: December 3, 2020 at 12:03



p.m.

Elyse Restaurant in downtown San Jose gave away 1,000 meals of turkey wild rice soup, along with pasta or turkey, mashed potatoes and a side of vegetables on Thanksgiving Day last week. Co-owner **Thach Namer** said it started out as an idea to feed the homeless downtown, but the plan got so much support, they opened it up to anyone in need of a meal.

The team prepped for more than a week, spending a whole day dicing 100 pounds of onions. Executive Chef **Bao-Ky Vo** deboned turkey after turkey, and a team of co-workers and friends created an assembly line to pack all the food into individual trays. On Thanksgiving Day, shelter volunteers arrived to pick up meals not only from San Jose but also from Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Redwood City, Union City and Fremont. It was a bright spot during the COVID-19 pandemic, for sure.

Then, unbelievably, a burglar broke into the restaurant on South Second Street before dawn Monday, stealing a couple of iPads, a few bottles of vodka and the speaker the chef uses to listen to music in the kitchen. "The burglar can break into our restaurant, but he can't break our spirit to help others," Namer said Wednesday.

And she means it, too. This Sunday, Elyse Restaurant will distribute 1,500 meals of chicken noodle soup and white rice, with a few extras on the side. (To maintain COVID protocols, pickups have to be arranged in advance by contacting the restaurant through its Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ElyseRestaurant, or its website, elyserestaurant.com.)

Despite an incredibly difficult year, which besides shutdowns due to COVID-19 restrictions included damage done during the May protests over the police killing of George Floyd, Namer has managed to keep a sense of humor about this latest bump. The burglar didn't get away with any cash, she pointed out, because the closed restaurant hasn't been collecting any. "In the video, he was so happy to have found the key to the cash register," she said. The drawer, of course, was empty.



'NUTCRACKER' PLANS CHANGE: Later this month, New Ballet had planned to livestream a trimmed down version of "The San Jose Nutcracker," its popular hometown twist on the classic holiday mainstay that's been filling the Hammer Theatre Center the past few years. Plans were even in place to rehearse the show outdoors at St. James Park, across the street from its studio on North Third Street.

But with COVID-19 cases spiking and new restrictions rolling out, New Ballet Director **Dalia Rawson** says the company's been forced to abandon plans to do a livestream show on Dec. 12. But you can still get your "San Jose Nutcracker" fix, as a recording of a past production — danced live to a full orchestra — will be available for streaming starting 7 p.m. Dec. 12 and available through Dec. 31. Tickets are being handled on a pay-what-you-can basis and are available at www.hammertheatre.com.

"I'm gutted that we can't do our livestream," Rawson said. "But with our numbers climbing, it got to the point where it didn't feel right. I'm proud that we kept our dancers employed and working through the entire fall and Nutcracker season, and we are making good on our commitment to pay artists for the production. We are also excited to share our past production, which we love so much."

PEAR THEATRE FOUNDER BRANCHES OFF: Diane Tasca, the founder and former artistic director of Mountain View's Pear Theatre, is moving to Westchester County, N.Y., with her husband, attorney **Norm Beamer**, this month. And while she plans to continue to serve on the Pear Theatre board of directors remotely, the move means she's stepping down as its president.

"When I and my group of theater friends founded this little theatre-that-could in 2002, I don't think any of us imagined we would be where we are today — in a brand-new, custom-built space, winning multiple awards, and bringing new voices to the stage," Tasca, who retired as artistic director in 2017, said in a release. "I'm so proud of what we started, proud that so many of our original group are still involved; and impressed with the next generation of theatre-makers that are already stepping up to continue on and expand this crucial work at a most challenging time."

While the Pear Theatre board selects a new president, **Darryl Compton** will step into the role of treasurer, and **Monica Cappuccini** and **Carolyn Compton** will serve as co-secretaries. Artistic Director **Sinjin Jones** says he wishes they could bid Tasca and Beamer farewell with a big party but will have something safe and appropriately distanced. "Obviously, this is not the preferred way to celebrate such a titan of Bay Area theatre, and someone who has been lovingly cultivating the theatre we all call home, but we hope it's somewhat equal to the task of communicating the high place Diane holds in our hearts," Jones said.



151 South 2nd Street in Downtown ...

[Report an error](#)

[Policies and Standards](#)

[Contact Us](#)

 **The Trust Project**

Tags: [Around Town](#), [News Columnists](#), [Nonprofits](#), [Restaurants](#), [Theater](#)

Sal Pizarro | San Jose metro columnist

Sal Pizarro has written the Around Town column for The Mercury News since 2005. His column covers the people and events surrounding the cultural scene in Silicon Valley. In addition, he writes Cocktail Chronicles, a feature column on Silicon Valley bars and nightclubs.

spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com

[Follow Sal Pizarro @spizarro](#)

SPONSORED CONTENT

Find a Crossover For Your Winter





Adventure: Check Out Mazda's Line of CUVs

By Mazda



If you're looking for a crossover that can elevate your state of being every

time you get behind the wheel, check...

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
ALL ACCESS DIGITAL OFFER FOR JUST 99 CENTS!

