

Ocean and Eating: The Way to Enjoy Cambria, CA.

Restaurant Review by Consuelo S. Meux, 10-07

One of the most breathtaking areas along the Coastal Hwy 1 in Central California and a town you can never get tired of visiting is Cambria. This coastal city is located between Morro Bay and Pismo Beach on the north, San Simeon, home of the famous Hearst Castle on the South, the growing Central Coast wine district to the east and the inspirational Pacific Ocean on the West. Cambria is easily one of the most beautiful sections of the San Simeon State Park System and is often called the best-kept secret in California.

With a population of almost 7,000, this town is only about 3 square miles long. The weather is surprisingly mellow with average, year-round temperature of between 50-70 degrees, a major reason tourism is one of its prime industries. Combine the weather, walking trails, fresh pine filled air and tourists, and Cambria is the perfect haven for local artists, galleries, crafts store, and many fine restaurants.

Cambria can be divided into three distinct sections. Food and wine, two of the main attractions of this inviting area can be found in all three sections.

The first section is Leffingwell Landing on Moonstone Beach that begins at Shamel Park. You can walk on the bluff trail that follows the coast on a scenic loop parallel to Highway 1. Take the stairs down to the beach and enjoy dramatic ocean views, sea birds, occasional sea otters, and, at times, migrating California Gray Whales. It is common to find driftwood and gemstones including jasper, jade, and the moonstone agates for which the beach is named.

Across the street are a variety of lodging, dining, and shopping options. When you are ready for a unique dining experience, try the The Moonstone Beach Café. This restaurant is the only one along this coastal drive to offer ocean-front outdoor patio dining. Have a front row to a uniquely exquisite view of the ocean as you enjoy a meal prepared with the finest ingredients. Fresh catch of the day, steaks, chicken, pork and pasta dishes are available. You won't have to worry about the weather turning cold. The patio has forced air heating, heaters under some tables, and wait staff offer huge, cozy blankets big enough to wrap two people to keep you warm. Prices for a full dinner range from \$15.95 to \$25.95 per plate, average for the area and reasonable considering the view and experience. Come in the afternoon or sit under the stars, watch the crashing waves, and smell the fresh ocean air while you dine.

The second section of Cambria is the town center also known as the East Village. Travel up Main Street to cross Burton Drive and Bridge Street about two miles from the coast. This section is filled with beautiful, old Victorians houses that date back to the 1870s. Many have been converted to art galleries, shops, boutiques, bookstores, fine restaurants and inns. Park and walk this area to really enjoy the offerings.

After your stroll drop in to the locally owned Linn's Bin where you will get to browse through a multi-paged menu of home-style American Cuisine. This family owned restaurant serves familiar comfort foods such as pot pies, polenta, fish and chips, and sandwiches. They are known for their famous Ollalieberry Pie, preserves, and bakery items such as huge, melt-in your mouth blueberry muffins. The atmosphere is warm and casual. Prices range from \$3.95 for appetizers to around \$18.95 for dinner. This makes Linn's Binn a favorite spot for the whole family. After your meal, browse the gift shop and take home some of the food items to recreate at home.

The third section of Cambria is the West Village located on Main Street, but closer to the ocean than the upper East Village. This is Cambria's business district and includes City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce. But even those buildings maintain the old-fashioned charm. Stop in and pick up visitor information about Cambria and the surrounding areas. Your selection of restaurants at this end includes a French Bakery with fresh soups, breads, and pastries. There is also a family style bar-b-que joint with an outdoor pit, a deli that piles ingredients on freshly baked breads or small pubs offering a full bar.

One of the favorite eating stops is the appropriately named West End Bar and Grill. If you are in Cambria on a Sunday afternoon, this is the place to be. Pick your seat when you walk in and be sure to get one facing one of the five available televisions with the sport of your choice. Then make your way to the barrel at the front of the bar and help yourself to all of the fresh roasted peanuts you can eat. The casual atmosphere is just perfect for the equally casual menu that sports such items as hamburgers, salads, and clam chowders. Specialties of the house are varieties of fish and chips. Try the halibut and chips for a meatier, twist to an old favorite. There is something for everyone here including special menu selections for the children and a full bar for the adults. Prices are modest ranging from 2.95 for an appetizer of Mozzarella Sticks and Dipping Sauce to about 20.95 for a Surf and Turf dinner plate. Plan to relax as everyone is a friend before leaving this place.

When you have finished your day, rest in one of the ocean-front motels located on Moonstone Beach drive. Most rooms have a fireplace and several have Jacuzzi tubs. Cambria will offer a wonderful, relaxing experience that you will want to try often.

MOONSTONE BEACH BAR & GRILL <http://www.moonstonebeach.com>
6550 Moonstone Beach Drive – (805) 927-3859

Breathtaking view of the ocean, dine inside or out. The food is deliciously prepared with all the finest ingredients. Seafood, steaks, chicken, pork and pasta. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Sunday Brunch 9 am-3 pm

WEST END BAR & GRILL
774 Main Street (805) 927 – 5521

Enjoy a casual, laid back atmosphere and watch football, basketball, golf or other sports on television while you dine. Hamburgers, clam chowder, fish and chips, halibut and

chips, calamari and chips. Children's menu available and a full bar. Open daily, 11 am – 12 midnight.

LINN'S BINN <http://www.linnsfruitbin.com>

2277 Main Street 805-927-0371,

This restaurant serves home-style American cuisine, fruit pies, preserves, and bakery items in a comfortable atmosphere. Specialties include Ollallieberry Pie, their famous pot pies, and seafood dishes. Open daily for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and Sunday brunch.

Visit the gift shop.