

Short History of Food at The Brig

Back in 2008 the Kogi BBQ truck started serving on what was then The Brig parking lot, a moment considered the birth of the gourmet food truck movement. Kogi's origin story was the inspiration for the movie Chef (Jon Favreau and Scarlett Johansson) that was filmed at The Brig. The food truck momentum continued when The Brig parked 8 trucks on the lot in the early days of First Fridays on AKB; The Brig continues to be a focal point of First Friday. Early in the temporary Al Fresco era Heavy Handed Burger, then operating out of a truck, exploded in popularity at The Brig. We continue to feature food trucks now in the loading zone of our outdoor patio area as well as on the street in front of The Brig. There is no lack of food, especially during The Brig's peak hours.

It is ironic that our neighbors complain that we don't have food when those same neighbors campaigned to end our food service. Our first attempt at temporary Al Fresco operation in 2020 was a fine dining restaurant under a canopy structure on the lot called Sincerely Yours, operated by Chef Vartan whose indoor restaurant Yours Truly across the street at 1600 AKBld did not have enough outdoor space to take advantage of the then-new Al Fresco rules. Sincerely Yours featured an elevated BBQ menu grilled on the lot over mesquite wood coals. We invited some of our Electric Ave neighbors to enjoy a free meal and a good time was had by all. A few weeks later one of those neighbors decided they didn't like the smoke and smell of the BBQ and got AQMD to conduct an investigation. We moved the grill to the front of the lot, and then moved it into a truck, but complaints continued. Starting a fine dining restaurant is very difficult, and when we finally had a busy Saturday night that neighbor paraded outside with a bullhorn shouting obscenities and insults to staff and shaming customers. The crowd vanished. The neighbor threatened that this would continue every weekend. AQMD ultimately found no violation and allowed us to continue, but Chef Vartan decided to pull the plug in the face of neighbor intimidation.

Later in 2021 when The Brig began operating under the Temporary Al Fresco rules we tried several food vendors to enhance the dining component. One such vendor was Uncle Paulies that did sell sandwiches out of the front window and inside for about a month. Another vendor generated a very successful business on the patio selling oysters and lobster rolls and obtained health dept permits for same. Our neighbors on Electric Ave got the health department to investigate this vendor and an obscure rule about delivery of shellfish forced that vendor to cease operating. This action by the neighbor had nothing to do with any negative impacts the neighbor might have experienced; there was no noise or smoke or smell generated by our shellfish vendor. This was motivated only by a hatred of The Brig and desire to inflict damage in any way possible. This is the second time the same Electric Ave neighbor shut down a quality dining option at The Brig. Now that neighbor complains to LUPC about the lack of food service at The Brig. BTW, a similarly venal attitude from that Electric Ave neighbor was displayed when they got DWP to investigate our power-washing vendor, who services The Brig and all of Abbot Kinney every month after First Friday. Of course, only The Brig was the target of the DWP complaint. The vendor was found to be in full compliance and continues operation to this day. Again, the power washing of the AKBld sidewalks 200 feet away would not seem to have any impact on the Electric Ave neighbor yet complaints were made, investigated and dismissed by the relevant City agency.