

## WINDING DOWN



**W**HEN THE NEW MEXICAN SKY GATHERS ITS VIVID PINK AND INDIGO RIBBONS as it does at dusk over Santa Fe, one of the best places to pass an evening is in a warm, welcoming adobe built in 1835. Wind your way up past the fashionable art galleries toward the top of Canyon Road and you're likely to see motorcycles parked in front of "the City Different's" oldest restaurant and cantina—a neighborhood favorite since the birth and through the renaissance of the community. Classically Santa Fean with its mix of the elegant and the primitive, El Farol is unpretentious enough to keep the locals coming back, but loaded with the kind of regional color that scores a direct hit with tourists as well.

It's a draw as to which is the biggest lure—the food, the ambience, or the entertainment. The cozy adobe's small rooms and bar are home to folk paintings including vibrant frescoes by artist Alfred Morang, such as the 1948 flamenco *Lady in Red*, and those of Stan Nachez, whose *Band in Action* looks down from behind the stage where live bands perform nightly in a variety of styles, from rockabilly and folk, to R&B and jazz. The music and the atmosphere are great, but in the end it's the food that will make you long to return. Sit down to dinner in one of several intimate dining rooms or join the locals in the bar and enjoy mouth-watering entrées or El Farol's knock-out signature hot and cold tapas—small plates meant to be shared and enjoyed with a glass of wine, beer, or sherry. These flavorful bites stem from a tradition originated many years ago by bartenders in Spain that involved covering serving glasses with pieces of bread to keep fruit flies from dive bombing the wine or sherry. Bars ultimately competed to create enticing new glass covers—or tapas—and a new way of eating was born. The practice has been revived with a passion in the American Southwest, no place, perhaps, more creatively and deliciously than at El Farol, which claims to have introduced tapas to the Santa Fe dining scene.

Here, contemporary and traditional Spanish and New Mexican flavors and cooking techniques meld to create tastes so good they inspired a cookbook. If you find that you can't get enough of the soups, stews, grilled sandwiches called *Bocadillos*, and the distinctive hot and cold tapas, you'll enjoy more than 120 patrons' favorites—such as the crispy fried avocado called *Aguacatet*—in *The El Farol Cookbook* (Gibbs Smith, Publisher, [www.Gibbs-smith.com](http://www.Gibbs-smith.com)).

Executive chef James Campbell shares his secrets for using regional ingredients—such as chipotle chiles, smoked paprika, piquillo peppers, Manchego cheese—that flavor traditional and contemporary Spanish cuisine. Here, too, you'll find an extensive list of Spanish wines in addition to beer and well drinks. For a unique experience, return for the Flamenco dinner shows held every Wednesday—an extraordinary meal paired with a tradition of dance, music, and song originated by gypsies as early as the fifteenth century. Reserve a spot, because there are only forty bistro-style seats for this vibrant performance that will have you snapping your fingers, clapping your hands, and stomping your feet.

El Farol, 808 Canyon Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 505.983.9912, [www.elfarolsf.com](http://www.elfarolsf.com). 🍷



Photo courtesy of El Farol