

**AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT**

**CIAO! BELLA!**

**BEN LOMOND, CA**

**May 28, 2006**



Friday evening we drove down the road to experience Ciao! Bella! (goodbye, beautiful), a place where the owner, Tad Morgan, unabashedly lives out a dream. In its own words, the promotional material announces, "It's the most amazing restaurant in the redwoods, a feast for the palette and the senses; it's dinner and a show, the best bartenders ever, and a historically accurate recreation of the Decline and Fall of Western Civilization happening every night of the week!". Rather than steal more immortal words from the work of a

delightfully mad genius, stroll on over to <http://www.ciaobellabenlomond.com>.

The site has quicktime excerpts of the some of the tamer stage shows.



These pictures, taken the day after the dream of an evening there, barely scratch the surface of the outre decor on which Tad spent some fourteen hours per day for the past nine years. Bear in mind that everything is wildly lit up at night, including the rooftop flamingo, which glows.



The food is, surprisingly quite good, and easily measures up to any of the surf 'n turf four-stars down by the ocean. We had the pollo involunti and the Elvis Special. Our delightful waitron, who looked the spitting image of the bassist for The Donnas, went by the name of Elvis, so of course we just had to enjoy the Special, a light and faintly tangy prawns al Fredo. All of the staff bear Big Star monikers.



Although the owner is so out and gay as to define the way to be as an ideal, this is a kid-friendly place and everybody knows to behave with sophistication, friendliness and delicacy, which is also a nice surprise, given the overtly Punk look of all the heavily tattooed folks there and the outrageous kitsch splattering the ceiling and walls everywhere someone has not nailed an old LP of torch songs. One wall bears the bas relief of a woman's torso giving birth in quite graphic detail, for example. But then, we have always felt Punks to be ultimately the best people in any case. If you have uptight intolerances, just dont go. But if you love friendly, peaceful people, good food and amazing atmosphere that is out of the ordinary with great intention, then Ciao! Bella! is for you.



Joe Bob says, "Thumbs up!"

CALL 831-336-9221 FOR RESERVATIONS. A weekday visit off-the-cuff may mean a 90 minute wait. Weekends can mean two hours of sitting at the busy bar where you just might be dragooned into an impromptu "spatula slap game". Better get reservations. And even that process is typically a bit off the charts in weirdness and wonder. Go to Ciao! Bella! You will like it.

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