

September 13, 2016

Dear Friends of Snack Bar,

Our seven year anniversary is on Sunday, October 30th. We will be throwing a grandiose shindig (TBA) to celebrate, not only because it is our birthday, but it is also our “end” day. Snack Bar is closing permanently so the new owners and managers of Austin Motel and it’s Fine Foods Diner can debut their renovations synchronously.* In lieu of shuttering suddenly, we are giving the public six weeks notice so that we have time to share our love and appreciation.

Snack Bar has been a second home for so many locals and home base for countless tourists. We have hosted 300+ Austin Eats Food Tours, weekly Sunday crosswords, daily regulars (we love you Wesley), marriage proposals, wedding ceremonies, political meet and greets, community fundraisers, winemaker and brewer dinners, local musician residencies, television and movie filmings, photo shoots, 70+ celebrities and hardcore staff karaoke parties. We have supported dozens of local producers, farmers and artisans along the way, composted and recycled since day one, and never wavered from our strict, humanely-raised only, meats policy. A third of our outstanding employees have worked for us over three years. We are a family, we are Team Snack Bar.



Between handwritten comment cards, direct texts (my number is on every table), social media, food bloggers, online review sites and local media, we have received thousands of touching compliments and stellar recognitions. My prized trophy is the coatrack Jack White brought us after having a short banter with me over brunch in January 2015. My prized media review is in the 2014 Austin Chronicle Food Issue where Kate Thornberry wrote that Snack Bar is the “most Austin-y of Austin eateries.” That is exactly what we aspired to be. We are one of the dwindling number of DIY mom & pop restaurants that keep Austin weird.** Considering “pop” and I had virtually no restaurant or management experience seven years ago, we feel incredibly lucky, deeply grateful and well-educated today.

No matter how difficult and emotionally charged this decision has been, the timing of our closure was ultimately our choice. We were encouraged by the new owners to finish out the remainder of our lease with no option to renew. Do we close now, knowing we can take care of our whole team OR do we hang on two more years in a growing city where the restaurant scene is tumultuous at best? In the last year alone, five new restaurants are on South Congress and dozens have opened within a mile’s radius. We chose the right thing to do for us personally and our Snack Bar family. We can confidently close knowing that we successfully fulfilled our mission statement : *to cultivate community and camaraderie by providing a truly hospitable environment and serving accessible, ethical foods.*

Please catch up with us in these last days! Savor a glass of wine, a local craft beer or a pot of tea while pondering life’s whims or writing your novel. If you haven’t tried a Tamago Yoko (our version of okonomiyaki), you really should.

Thank you!

Bethany Andrée & Karl Gilkey | owners + life partners

* In May, Greenfield Partners LLC, a private equity real estate investment company based in Connecticut, purchased Austin Motel and it’s surrounding properties, from Heritage Boots to Snack Bar. Greenfield also owns Hotel San José and other properties in the South Congress area. To protect these other investments, it made sense for them to buy the motel and preserve the history and character of the block. Any other corporate buyer would most likely raze everything and build a mixed-use project or high-rise. Thankfully, Greenfield assures us that they have no plans of demolition and the motel’s iconic sign, erected in 1938, will remain. The motel and, soon to be, restaurant is now managed by New York-based Standard International Management LLC and its sister company Bunkhouse Group. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/hotelier-standard-strikes-a-rare-deal-1436888810>

** Independent mom & pop businesses are dwindling due to the dramatic increase in rents, property values and, subsequently, property taxes. Getting “priced out” is unfortunately in the evolution of revitalization. It is happening all over central Austin, including South Congress. Dottye Dean, the woman who gave this former front desk clerk the opportunity to open a restaurant, inherited Austin Motel from her parents when South Congress was a street of drugs and prostitution. She played a huge role in revitalizing the Avenue and nurturing local businesses on the block for over 20 years, until her death in 2011. Her son inherited and sold it all exactly five years later for millions upon millions of dollars. The only way the mom & pop businesses, who made South Congress unique to begin with, can afford to stay here is if they 1) own their building 2) their landlord can/will control rents, or 3) if they are able to inflate their prices on whatever products or services they offer to make ends meet. One thing is for certain, no small independent business can survive without the support of their community. **Buy mom & pop local.** Let’s keep Austin Austin-y.

I WISH YOU WERE HERE

1224 South Congress Avenue | Austin, Texas 78704 | 512 • 445 • 2626 | **Snack Bar Austin • com**