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20 FOR \$20 | SAN FRANCISCO

Bargains by the bay

By ROSEMARY McCLURE >>> San Francisco has a way of grabbing hold of its visitors and taking them for an incredible ride, whether they're dangling off the side of a cable car or maneuvering the steep hillside curves of Lombard Street. ¶ But that doesn't mean they want to feel as though they've been flimflammed every time they get a restaurant check. Unfortunately, the stratospheric price of dining here is nearly as well-known as the city's iconic bridges. ¶ So we went to the people who know San Francisco's 3,500 restaurants best — its residents — and asked for suggestions on how to eat well on a budget. ¶ Our local experts include Gavin Newsom, the city's mayor; Jan Newberry, food and wine editor for San Francisco magazine; Patricia Unterman, restaurant critic and author; and Tannis Reinhertz, chair of the culinary arts program at City College of San Francisco. ¶ Their advice helped us develop this list, in no special order, of 20 great San Francisco meals for less than \$20, our fifth in an occasional series on getting the best value for your vacation dining dollar. ¶ Bon appétit.



ON THE WATERFRONT: It's the tourist go-to dish: clam chowder in a sourdough bowl, at Bistro Boudin on Fisherman's Wharf.

11 **Bistro Boudin**

Prices: \$7.95-\$32.95

Is this Fisherman's Wharf attraction a tourist trap? Yes, but much more pleasant than the other tourist traps in this beaten-track neighborhood.

Boudin Bakery produces San Francisco's signature sourdough bread; a few years ago the business — it refers to itself as the city's "original flour children" — took over a triangular-shaped piece of property and turned it into one of the most fragrant spots in town. Bread-making goes on at all hours, and wonderful smells emanate.

But that's not all. Tourists can stroll through a museum and tour the plant (\$3), visit a gift shop or get a meal at a takeout deli downstairs or a bistro upstairs.

Take the stairs to the top and ask for a table on the outside patio. For the price of a sourdough bread bowl full of thick, savory clam chowder (\$12.95), you'll have a first-class view of the bay. And you don't have to fight the crowds along the wharf.

We loved: the pleasant atmosphere amid the three-ring circus of the wharf.

We didn't love: having to pay for the museum and bread-making tour; it should be free.

Bistro Boudin, 160 Jefferson St. (near Pier 43½); (415) 351-5561, www.boudinbakery.com