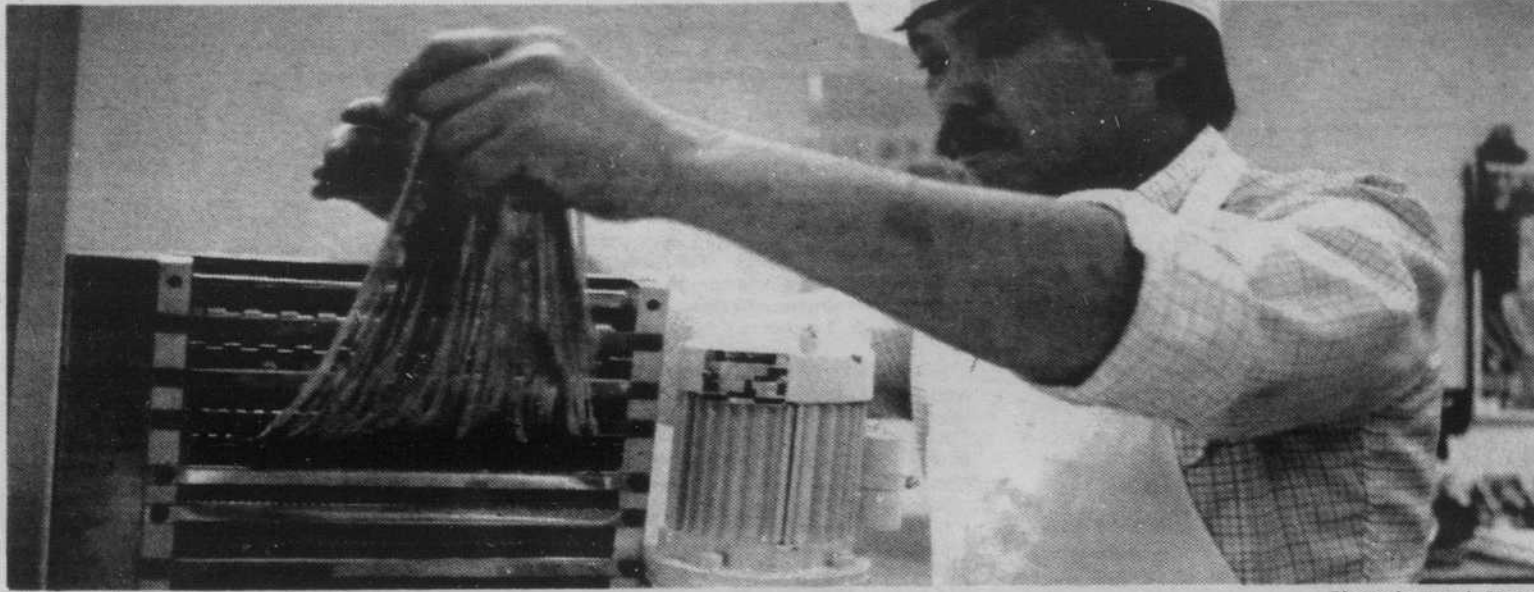




Dining out



Yasunobu Okito, co-owner of Pasta Plus, makes pasta from scratch. Photo by Mark Pynes

Out beyond the basic meatballs

It was like a terrific dream. Oodles of noodles flowing from machines in a clean, spacious room. White-aproned characters behind a windowed counter scuttled about taking and retrieving orders. A pasta lover's heaven.

This was no dream, however, but Eugene's "Pasta Plus," a local version of the latest take-out, fast-food, gourmet craze. This shop caters to the true connoisseur of pasta — no Spaghetti-O's for these folks.

Susan Jones, one of the shop's owners, says that since opening last year Pasta Plus has attracted working people who don't have a lot of time to cook. Several local restaurants, including Tino's, the Excelsior Cafe, the Cafe Central and Jo Federigo's, also feature pasta from the store.

Jones encourages students to take advantage of Pasta Plus's wares, which include six flavors of pasta (egg, whole wheat, spinach, tomato, beet and fresh herb); three kinds of sauces (marinara, mushroom cream and pesto); wine, beer and cheese.

"Pasta is a quick, inexpensive, gourmet meal," says Jones. A pound of the luscious noodles costs only \$2.05 and serves four people. Likewise the sauces can be bought in either 8- or 16-ounce quantities for less than \$5.

All this is very interesting you say, but you want to get into the act yourself? Never fear; you need not succumb to the fast-food trap.

Pasta-makers ranging in price from \$20 to \$45 are available in most kitchen departments and specialty stores. The devices require some patience but can be mastered with perseverance and a good pasta

cookbook. (The Sunset version is a winner).

If you're doing the cooking, keep in mind that there are many exceptions to Aunt Rosa's basic spaghetti and meatballs. Beaten raw egg is the secret success to Carbonara, a delicious sauce made with Italian sausage and parmesan cheese.

A gourmet treat that is a bit less complicated is Sauce Alfredo, a basic cream, butter and parmesan cheese conglomeration. It's simple to make but gastronomically delightful.

Despite all that has been said about serving pasta in the familiar surroundings of home, it should be mentioned that Eugene restaurants do offer some great pasta.

The Excelsior Cafe is featuring linguine with crab sauce during November. Tino's Spaghetti House offers a variety of pasta and sauces, allowing diners to put together their own dream meals. Tagliolini, a pasta dish with cheesy sauce and pine nuts is featured at the Cafe Central.

Some large and economical pasta deals can be found around town, in addition to simple items on a menu. An all-you-can-eat special every Thursday and Tuesday night is available at The Spagetti Warehouse. Jo Federigo's houses a "spaghetti bar," with eight kinds of sauce and several choices of pastas. It's a pasta-lover's version of a salad bar with many different options.

Pasta is delicious, substantive, and here in America to stay.

As the experts say, "To know pasta is to love pasta."

Kim Carlson

Tropics are a mere sip away

Who has the best pina colada in town? A dangerous, perhaps interminable assignment — one which only the most corrupt of journalists could possibly take lightly. After all, rum has played a significant role in the establishment of this country. Who can forget their third grade history lesson on the triangular trade route, that lurid tale of slavery, molasses and New England high finance?

In order to gain some perspective on the task, to find a place from which to gaze and brood, logic dictated the swanky Encore Room, high atop the Hilton Hotel overlooking beautiful, glimmering downtown Eugene. The feline waitress (back in her hot pants despite rough public relations way back when) smiled coquettishly and placed the first specimen on the table. It was a spectacular thing, this creamy slush in a bulging glass, poised delicately in the center of jet-black formica amid a swirl of reflected disco lights, with a bright, toxic cherry irradiating strangely beside a slice of pineapple curled over the lip of glass.

"Candy," the investigator's aid remarked. There was another long sip accompanied by an uncomfortable sensation of posing for a Caribbean travel poster. "It tastes like candy," she said again, a forlorn smile straightening to scientific exactitude. Candy maybe, but what's really in it?

The waitress was summoned. She didn't know exactly, and in a speedy, nylon swish, departed to consult the bartender.

She prefaced her list of ingredients by stating that they were mixed in a gallon container. Pause. And the ingredients were:

frozen orange juice, half and half, pineapple juice and a coco syrup used specifically for making pina coladas. Monarch rum was then added to the drink of mix, and it must be noted, Monarch is not commonly known to be the king of rums. **Continued on Page 8B**

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