

A Never-Ending value for a finite budget

■ Olive Garden's all-you-can-eat offerings can fill you up without emptying out your wallet

By Monica Hande
Oregon Daily Emerald

School's been back in session for nearly two weeks now, and you're starting to notice that the hamburger casserole served in the residence halls tastes an awful lot like last week's fish sticks. 7-11's already getting older than the hot dogs in its rotisserie. And it didn't

CHEAP
date

take long before Domino's Pizza had your "usual" on file.

Not only are you in need of some variety, face it: Slurpees and dorm food aren't going to impress a date.

But you struggle to find ways of treating that special person to a special meal on that "special" college-student budget. But, despite what you may think, it is possible to spend less than 20 bucks on a dinner for two at a place a bit classier than Deb's, Lyon's or Shari's.

Be sure not to overlook Olive Garden. Sure, it's not the cheapest of the "Cheap Dates," but by ordering the right meals, you won't spend more than \$20 for the two of you.

Olive Garden is renowned throughout the country for its delicious all-you-can-eat salad and breadsticks. And for less than \$6 each, you and your date can enjoy that for lunch along with as much soup as you want.

At dinnertime, the price jumps up to \$8.25. A little too high for your pocketbook? Don't fret. Through the middle of October, Olive Garden is offering its Never-Ending Pasta Bowl. For only \$7.95, you get all the breadsticks and salad or soup you

can eat in addition to as many helpings of savory pasta you want. You can choose from six pastas — spaghetti, fettuccini, linguini, angel hair, farfalle and penne — and five sauces — meat sauce, marinara, tomato, alfredo and bolognese.

So many options, what if you can't decide? Try a variety. Maybe you want something creamy yet spicy. You could try a linguini with alfredo and bolognese sauces — side by side, that is. And of course, there's always the option of seconds, as long as there's room in your stomach. Who says you have to order the same thing the second time around, or even the third?

But long before you even get your pasta — unless you go during off-peak hours when your main course will reach your table in no time — you get to indulge in bread and soup or salad. The breadsticks are magnificent, as long as they're hot and soft, which I have found to be rather rare, to be honest. But nothing compares to the wonderful creamy Italian house dressing. Just keep in mind that if you're not an Italian-dressing fan, mention so ahead of time, otherwise your salad will be drenched in oily goodness.

Now, if your goal is to spend no more than \$20 for dinner, you may have to settle for water with your



Kevin Calame Emerald

Olive Garden Italian Restaurant, at 1077 Valley River Dr., is offering an all-you-can-eat special, a best bet for a not-too-casual date when on a not-too-extravagant budget.

meal, considering two pasta dishes with a 15 percent tip of \$2.40 would come out to \$18.30. Although, you could share a soft drink, which costs a whopping \$1.75. But if it's a first date, that's certainly not recommended.

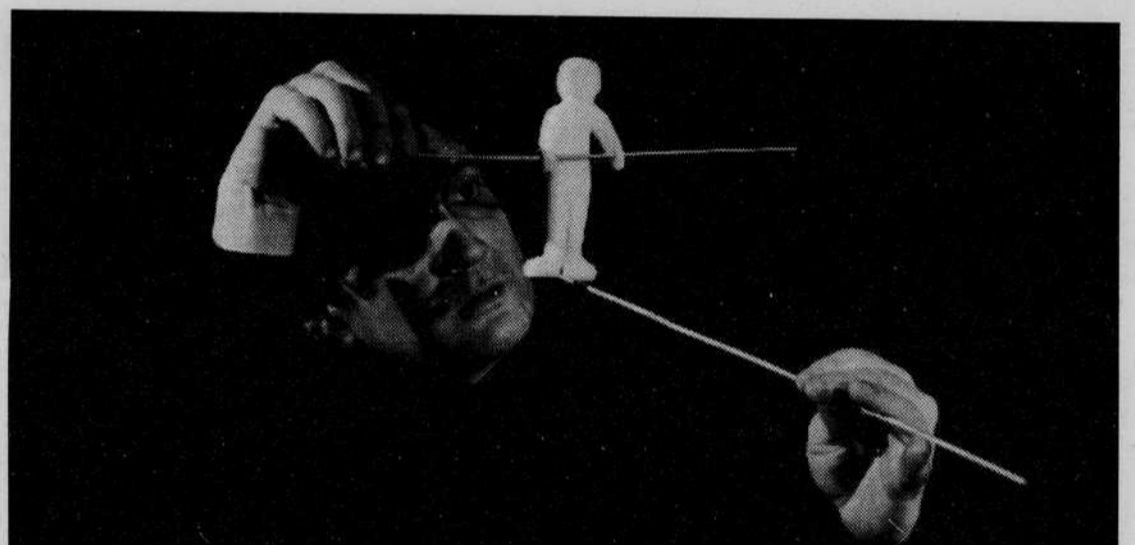
But what about dessert? Don't

worry. The pasta, salad and breadsticks will fill you both up so much, neither you nor your date will even want to think about Tiramisu.

And the best part: You'll almost definitely have leftovers to take home for your next meal, an even cheaper date!

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Gabriel Ponti uses unique lighting and tools to showcase his puppets, adding a surreal element to his performances.

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Pulling strings for the sake of art

■ Puppeteer Gabriel Ponti brings his show, 'Cartoon,' to the Robinson Theatre

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

Controlling a puppet has a certain magic about it, said Jerry Williams, who until last year was the puppet teacher in the University's theater department.

"It's a kind of human phenomenon," he said, "to play with an imaginary world."

Williams also said that we all have played with puppets at some time. Even children's dolls and action figures are types of puppets.

"They are a kind of virtual reality for kids," he said.

For puppeteer Gabriel Ponti, playing with toys never stopped. His fascination with the cartoons of his childhood from the 1940s is his inspiration for the show he will be performing Saturday in the Robinson Theatre.

Ponti has performed this show, "Cartoon," since he created it in 1994. This performance will be a sort of homecoming for Ponti. He has spent the majority of the last 19 years out of the country performing, teaching and creating. But Ponti spent time studying at the Univer-

sity, and from 1978 to 1980, he lived in Eugene.

Joseph Gilg, development director for the University Theatre, arranged this performance with Ponti during the last year.

"Something we like to do in the department is to spotlight students who have gone out and made a career in the theater," Gilg said.

To help students benefit more from

It's kind of magical because it's so simple. You're so intrigued to find out what's happening.

Joseph Gilg
University Theatre
development director

Ponti's experience, he will host an open workshop Friday at 4 p.m. in Villard Hall's Pocket Playhouse.

Williams said that playing with puppets is more than just playing. "Speaking through a puppet is a way of accessing one's self," he said.

In last year's movie "Being John Malkovich," some of these underlying themes were explored.

"Malkovich' can tell you how the puppeteer can be a little like God,"

Williams said.

People attending the performance should not expect the level of complexity displayed in the movie. Williams said that most of those scenes involved more than one puppeteer, and at times the addition of computer graphics.

But Gilg maintains that Ponti's art isn't any less entertaining.

"It's kind of magical because it's so simple," he said. "You're so intrigued to find out what's happening."

Sparky Roberts, founder of the NewMime Circus, has worked with Ponti and has developed a continued correspondence with him during his stay in Europe.

"What strikes me about his work is how original it is," Roberts said.

As testament to his originality, all of Ponti's creations are made of recycled materials. Ponti does not only make puppets, but also experiments with masks and various other types of costumes.

"He's unconstrained by any normal notions of puppetry," Roberts said.

"Cartoon" will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday at Robinson Theatre. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased in the EMU ticket office or on the day of the performance at the theater box office.