

Espresso Roma serves up unique atmosphere

■ The family-owned café is popular among students, faculty and community members near campus

By Danielle Gillespie
for the Emerald

Espresso Roma bustles with students ordering coffee, preparing for long hours of studying or just trying to make it through class after staying up too late the night before. The back patio is crowded on sunny days, and on rainy days, the crowd migrates inside to fill the seating area.

Located at 825 E. 13th Ave., Espresso Roma has been serving the Eugene area for the past 13 years. It is managed by Miguel and Maria Cortez, who also operate Café Siena. The café is a part of a chain of about 50 coffee houses on the West Coast owned by Sandy Boyd, whose corporate office is in Berkeley, Calif., Miguel Cortez said. Though all the coffeehouses are part of the same chain, only three are called Espresso Roma, Cortez said.

"The chain of coffeehouses began when Boyd built a café near (the University of California at Berkeley) in the late 1970s and saw the popularity for coffee among college students. He then decided to build coffeehouses near universities," Cortez said.

According to Cortez, the chain is relatively small compared to Starbucks, but this makes Espresso Roma more family-oriented. Operating cafés is a family affair; Maria Cortez has three brothers who operate coffeehouses in California and have been involved with Boyd's corporation since it began.

"I attempt to make people hap-



Adam Jones Emerald

Espresso Roma's patio is considered by many to be the most unique part of its ambience. The coffee shop, located at 825 E. 13th Ave., has been supplying coffee for 13 years.

py and establish personal relationships with all my customers. We have clientele that have been coming here for 10 years, especially from the hospital and professors from the University," Cortez said. "We really appreciate all of our customers and many professors hold their office hours here, which only helps the business."

Kate Downing, a senior psy-

chology major at the University, likes the personal atmosphere the owners have strived to create.

"The people are always friendly and know your face. The coffee is great, and it's not owned by Starbucks," Downing said. "I get sick of the cookie-cutter atmosphere of places like Starbucks. Espresso Roma provides something different and unique."

Espresso Roma has one advan-

tage that Miguel Cortez said he doubts any of the other coffeehouses in Boyd's chain have: a back patio. He said the patio helps business because it is a nice place for people to sit and relax on sunny days. Maria Cortez also developed the idea to sell pastries with coffee, and she bakes a majority of the pastries featured at the café.

Cortez attributes his business's

success to good service, reasonable prices and good coffee.

"I think that it is cheap and good," said Kellie Matecko, a junior journalism major at the University. "It is less expensive than other places, like Starbucks, and (it) is close to campus."

"I love it!"

Danielle Gillespie is a freelance reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

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Dining out offers options, good and bad

■ Students often prefer the convenience of eating out, despite the extra cost

By Brook Reinhard
Oregon Daily Emerald

Joey Sabado goes out to eat about 15 times a week. Sabado, a first-year student at Lane Community College, is one of many students living in Eugene who has to make a big decision several times a day: Eat out or cook in?

For students living off-campus, eating is no longer as simple as wandering down to Carson Hall and trading meal points for food. Buying groceries is less expensive than going to a restaurant, but then the dishes pile up. Even one of the most convenient meals eaten at home — delivery pizza — still leaves behind a greasy pizza box.

Eating out can be costly, but it can offer the benefit of convenience, as well.

A typical dinner at Mazzi's costs about \$15. The fettuccine Alfredo dinner, which comes with soup, salad, bread and Neapolitan ice cream, is \$14.75. However, the ingredients for that meal can be bought for \$4.67 at a grocery store, which in this case was PC Market of Choice. Similarly, a student could go to Cafe

Zenon and order the pan-roasted Pacific king salmon fillet for \$18.75. The meal would be about half that price if cooked at home: The tab comes to \$9.45 for the meal. Cost-conscious students may frequent Subway sandwiches. While a footlong turkey sandwich is \$4.90 there, it costs roughly \$3.60 for the same ingredients at the store.

*"I eat out twice a week...
There's a reason I have
a dishwasher."*

Ivan Gardzelewski
law student

Though it may cost more to go out for a meal, there are other factors to consider. "I go out to eat at least twice a week just to get away from the law school," said first-year law student Ivan Gardzelewski.

When you go out to eat, "It's real food," added Brad Langton, a freshman in pre-business.

Mazzi's manager Isaac Silva agreed. "80 to 90 percent of our customers have something good to say about the meal," he said.

"I eat out to try new stuff," Sabado said.

Also, restaurants often have access to ingredients consumers

don't. Local stores aren't stocking Pacific king salmon right now because of an over-abundance of coho salmon, according to meat manager Bert Fortner at PC Market of Choice. So Zenon may be the only place in town to serve that particular variety of fish.

There is also the dining experience to consider. "Mazzi's has a friendly, family atmosphere," said Silva. Convenience can also be key. "Subway offers a lot of variety and is open very late," said employee Jason McCormick.

And after going out to a restaurant, there is often enough food left over to tide students over for the next day or two. "About 25 percent of our customers take something home with them," Silva said.

Most students will end up finding some sort of balance between cooking in and eating out.

"I take about 5 minutes to make dinner," said Kyra Johnson, a shopper at PC Market of Choice. If she wants a more time-intensive dish, she just goes out to eat.

"I eat out twice a week," Gardzelewski said. He added that cooking at home isn't really much of a problem, either. "There's a reason I have a dishwasher."

Brook Reinhard is a community reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald. He can be reached at brookreinhard@dailyemerald.com.