

■ Last call



Aaron Hopps, bartender and longtime customer at Café Soriah, makes a Pura Vida Kahiki or "PVK" for one of the patrons Tuesday night.



TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTOGRAPHER

Café Soriah better suited for quiet dinner than for late-night drinks

The small lounge is overwhelmed by the crowd, but the bright dining room is perfect for an intimate meal

BY AMY LICHTY
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

Café Soriah is well-known in Eugene for its cozy, romantic atmosphere and its delectable Mediterranean-style dishes. It was voted the overall No. 1 restaurant in Eugene by the Eugene Weekly in 2003. But what I wanted to find out was how the scene at Soriah was after dinner stopped being served and the alcoholic drinks started flowing.

When my friends and I first walked into Café Soriah, at 384 W. 13th Ave., around 11:30 p.m. Friday, the first thing I noticed was how incredibly small and dark the front lounge was. It was standing room only in the front seating area, and loud noise — or what some might call music — was blaring over the gobs of people attempting to have conversations at the bar. I immediately felt terribly uncomfortable, so my boyfriend and I set off to find a place to sit.

The dining area was brightly lit and fantastically quiet. Although I could see the bar from my seat, the noise was gone and the mood had definitely changed. At first we didn't think we were allowed to sit back there, but the kind waiter went out of his way to ask the bartender if that would be all right. Since there were no open seats at the bar, they allowed my three companions and I to sit in the dining area although it had offi-

cially closed a half an hour prior to our arrival.

Gorgeous, framed art lined the pastel walls, and the tables were nicely set with beautiful dishware and glasses. It was a wonderful place to have a quiet, casual conversation over some drinks and would definitely be a great place to take a date. The three boys I was with split a pitcher of IPA, which they all agreed wasn't very tasty.

Café Soriah has a wide selection of wines, which range from \$4 to \$8 for a glass and anywhere from \$14 to \$125 for a bottle. There are also draft and bottled beers, such as Shiner Hefeweizen, MacTarnahan's Blackwatch Cream Porter and Czechvar Lager, available for \$2.50 to \$3.50.

The crowd seated in the bar looked like graduate students and young professionals. The bar area was so crowded groups of friends were outside deciding on whether to go in when we arrived and when we left.

My friends agreed it would have been a completely different experience had we not been allowed to sit in the dining room. I most likely

wouldn't have stuck around for too long if we would have had to stand or wait for a table, but being seated in the dining area allowed my group to take our time and relax while enjoying each other's company. Because of this, Café Soriah's proved to be a fun, pleasurable experience, but perhaps would have been better for a nice, casual dinner.

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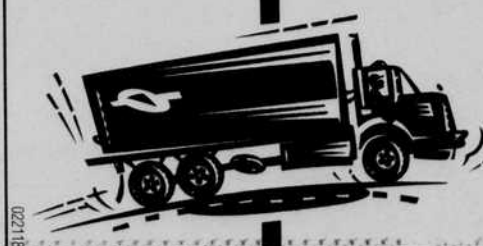
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