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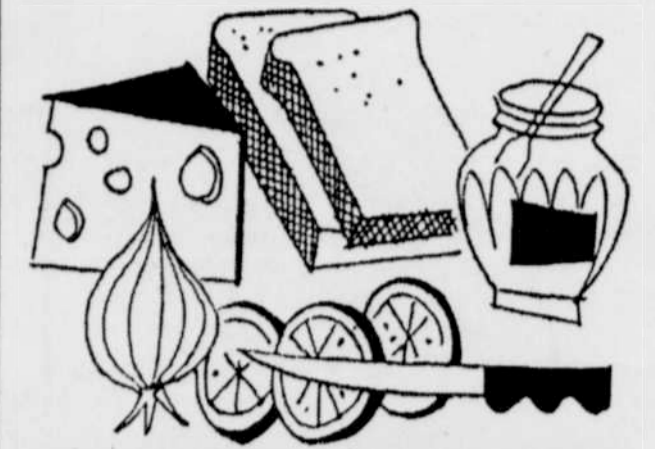
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BY CATHERINE SAMEH

¿Que pasa?

On Cinco de Mayo skip the waterfront madness and pay homage to the Mexican Revolution by checking out one of these Portland tesoros.

La Calaca Comelona • 2304 S.E. Belmont St.
 Why spend your time trying to pronounce it when you can just go there? It's bigger, better and easier to find in its new-ish location on Belmont, across from Wild Abandon. But if you're looking for a burrito, don't bother. Burritos, according to LCC, are an invention of the border region, not Mexico. Instead, this place serves up quesadillas, tacos, salads and lots of specialty items. Try the mole with blackberries, served with chicken, rice, pear and tortillas, or the grilled pork loin and mushrooms with black chile sauce, almonds, rice and tortillas. Wash either down with a Spicy Vampire—tequila, spicy sangria and lime juice—or a Chaay Can (Green Snake)—gin, avocado, lime juice and mint with a rim of sugar. It's a little pricier than most Mexican joints, but with food and drinks as original as these, it's money well spent.

La Sirenita • 2817 N.E. Alberta St.
 The most remarkable feature of this Alberta Street fixture is that you can get a lot of food for less than \$5. A lot. The soft tostada here is really like a giant burrito: an oversized flour tortilla stuffed with pinto beans, rice, lettuce, tomato and cheese. Smother it with La Sirenita's homemade red sauce and you'll be full for the rest of your life. The tacos are authentic, small corn tortillas topped with meat, onions and fresh lime, and there are always good homemade soups on hand. If you're on a tight budget but don't want to settle for a less-than-decent meal, stop off at this bustling hole in the wall. It's always packed with workers, students, hipsters and anyone else looking for good, cheap, homemade food.

Taqueria Nueve • 28 N.E. 28th Ave.
 Don't be fooled by the upscale renovations: The bigger, more beautiful Taqueria Nueve is as marvelous and inexpensive as it was when it seated only 20 at a time. Everything is fresh and original here. The Caesar salad with ceviche is so good, you'll want it every time, and the tacos are simple but delicious. The beef soup with corn dumplings and the mole enchiladas pack mouthfuls of flavor, and the stuffed chile pepper never disappoints. In fact, nothing disappoints here, and everyone knows it: You will always wait. But it's worth it when you're waiting for the best Mexican food in town. Order the freshest squeezed, most delicious margarita you'll ever taste while you're waiting. You're in for quite a treat.

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