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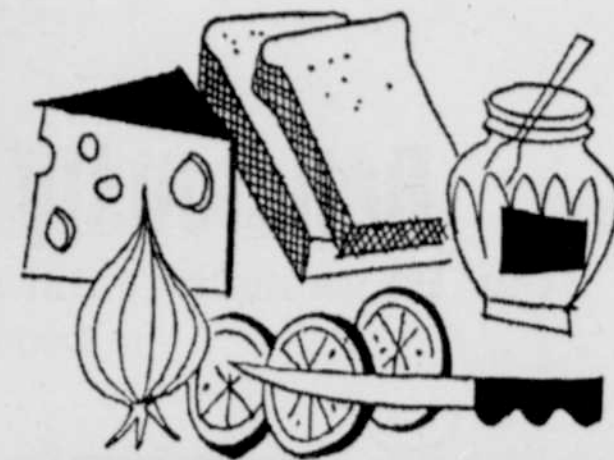
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BY MEG DALY

Sunday night special

When Sunday night rolls around, the last thing I feel like doing is cooking. Worn out from a day of hiking, reading the paper and napping, frankly, I just don't have the gumption to do much else besides watch *Six Feet Under*. A perfect solution is one of the neighborhood-y gourmet pastarias around town. They use a similar formula: inexpensive pastas with fancy-sounding sauces, a few gourmet sandwiches, cheap wine and a casual yet chic atmosphere. All of these eateries provide a great way to feel a little European for a few hours and say *arrivederci* to the weekend.

Justa Pasta • 1326 N.W. 19th Ave.

Don't judge a book by its cover! Tucked into an unassuming little nook near Les Schwab Tires and a freeway overpass, Justa Pasta tops the list of dazzling homemade pastas and sauces for penny-pinching prices. Their simple plate of spaghetti and marinara will have you swooning. Try the spinach salad with pine nuts and goat cheese as well as the many daily specials—lasagnas, raviolis and soups. The key factor here is they make their own pastas, which are available to take home and cook, too. Great wine selection and fabulous desserts.

Pastini • 1426 N.E. Broadway & 1506 N.W. 23rd Ave.

When this place opened, I was afraid it would be like eating at the mall. But it turns out this yuppie hangout is always mobbed for good reason. The food is delicious and varied, as are the wines. Service is always friendly, and you could show up with Grandma one night and a group of revelers the next. For more salad than you and your sweetheart can eat in one sitting, try the antipasto di verdure. For the pastas, try Pastini's version of a puttanesca sauce, "Siciliano," bursting with sun-dried tomatoes, capers and feta cheese. My grandma claims (I wasn't kidding before) the fettuccine alfredo here is the best she's ever had. And she's 81 years old!

La Buca • 40 N.E. 28th Ave. & 2309 N.W. Kearney St.

This Northeast joint consistently serves good, simple food in a relaxed, efficient manner. It's good for business lunches as well as romantic evenings out. The Northwest location faltered for a bit a few years ago, but since expanding (and getting suited up in fabulous light fixtures and art) it seems to have regained its reliability. Using delicious Grand Central bread for their panini sandwiches and inventive pasta sauces like pancetta, mushroom, cream and vermouth, La Buca is a good bet when you feel like being pampered but you don't want to take off your flip-flops.