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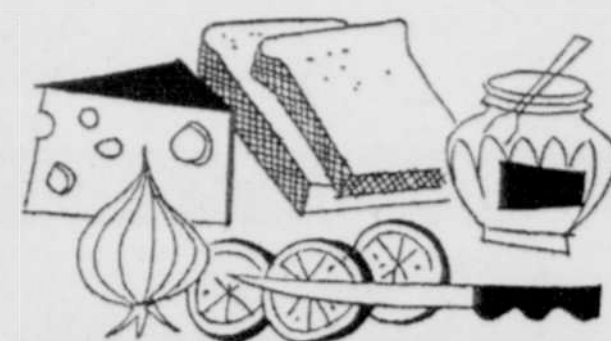


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BY MEG DALY

Le thin pancake

Chefs the world over have long employed the concept of wrapping savory or sweet foods in a thin, spongy pancake. French "crêpes" lends a refined air to what Americans have been known to call Pigs-in-a-Blanket.

Alas, my adventures in tracking down Portland crêperies have resulted in a wild goose chase. I searched high and low—high being Strohecker's Deli in the West Hills, which apparently used to have a crêperie stand but no longer; low being a "fast crêpes" cart downtown in front of the Guild Theater, where one could order a hot dog in a crêpe. I declined.

Readers, send news of secret gems serving up luscious fried batter. In the meantime, these few should satisfy your discerning palate.

Chez Machin •

3553 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

This charming crêperie with its red checked tablecloths, cute antique lamps and bright sunny walls makes you think, "Eiffel Tower!" Then the server places in front of you the lunch of your fantasies: a crêpe on steroids. Chez Machin serves French food in American-size portions. Each crêpe is made to order with fresh veggies, cheeses and meats. I tried a savory (made with buckwheat flour) filled with spinach, garlic, tomato, olives, avocado and feta cheese. Sound overwhelming? It was. My advice is to order one of the simpler offerings—like ham and cheese. And bring a friend. That way you can enjoy the Salade Exotique (greens with grapefruit, kiwi, olives and shrimp) and a sweet crêpe with Nutella or jam and custard for dessert.

Crêperie Twenty-Three •

Northwest 23rd Avenue between Irving and Johnson streets

Upscale fast food for an upscale shopping area: Crêperie Twenty-Three is run by Chez Machin's owner. I tell you, this Frenchman has us Americans down pat! This crêpe stand with a few small tables serves a selection of the same fare to be found at its Hawthorne sister. If you are just strolling by, I recommend a simple sweet crêpe with lemon and sugar. Try it with an espresso from the Italians down the street at Torrefazione. Who needs Europe?

Le Happy • 1011 N.W. 16th Ave.

How do I love thee, Le Happy? Let me count the ways. I love your wall of silk flower heads. I love your disco ball. I love your collection of board games from the '70s. I love your inexpensive yet outrageously good French wines. But more than anything, I love your crêpes. Never overpowering, never chewy and never dry. Your Demi-Vegan delights my tofu-inclined friends, Le Trash Blanc delights the heathens. My current favorite is your Champignon, a folded treasure of gorgonzola and fresh crimini mushrooms with half a steak on the side. And I pay homage to the luscious Pommes Chantilly (baked apples and hazelnuts). Le Happy, I kiss you fervently on each cheek!

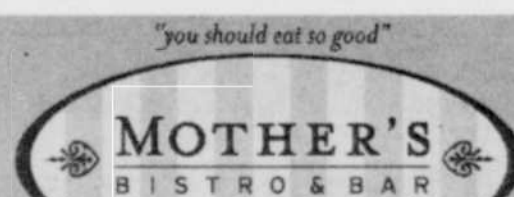
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