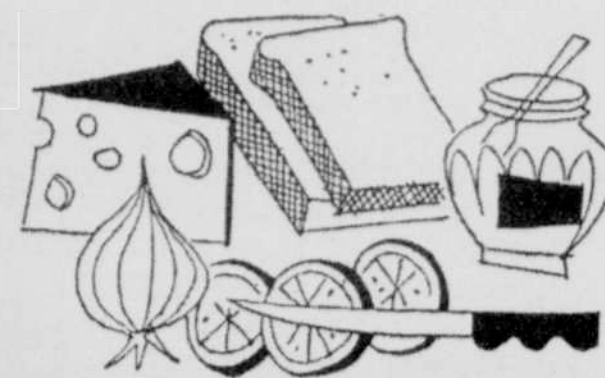


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TREAT
YOURSELF

epiqueerean

BY MICHAEL E BARRETT

The Last Sashimi

Japan's best export isn't cars or electronics, it's food! Portland plays host to a multitude of Japanese establishments, ready to tease your palate with a creative repertoire of traditional and fused dishes. Itadakimasu!

Madame Butterfly • 425 S.W. Stark St.

This downtown late-night eatery might not be the competition to Saucebox that it promised to be, but its menu boasts some lively interpretations of traditional Japanese fare. Sushi rolls abound, but don't let the titles intimidate you—the Godzilla, Loch Ness Monster and Caterpillar rolls taste nothing like they sound. My personal favorite is the Okinawa roll. Madame has introduced house-made mango sauce to complement this roll's tropical namesake. Care for a cocktail? You're in luck. Madame features an array of infusions and potions to satisfy the pickiest. For those who don't mind a tinge of sweetness, the Chiba Cooler is your best bet. Limoncello and Parfait Amour find harmony with vodka, lemon juice and green tea, presenting the tongue with a rainbow of flavors.

Bush Garden • 900 S.W. Morrison St.

The first time I set foot in Bush Garden, I thought I was back in Japan. This Portland institution is also the city's most authentic Japanese establishment, where the food, décor and staff are not lost in translation: This is the real thing. Forget sushi and tempura—those can be had just about anywhere. At Bush, you're better off enduring the discomfort of a traditional tatami room for a feast of sukiyaki or shabu shabu, two Japanese specialties for beef lovers. "Sha-bu! Sha-bu!" you utter as you swish the paper-thin slices of beef in boiling broth. Dip it in sesame sauce and your taste buds will be begging for more.

Sinju • 1022 N.W. Johnson St.

Grab your chopsticks and head to Sinju in the Pearl District, where even the prices are authentic—Japanese, that is. Sashimi lovers should treat themselves to a generous cut of blue fin tuna, when available. O-toro is the highest grade and, therefore, the fattiest. Avoid this if you don't like sashimi that tastes too "fishy"; instead, ask for the medium chutoro or the regular lean cut. Sinju's Las Vegas roll is one of the best I've ever tasted. Filled with spicy tuna, avocado, eel and cream cheese, this epicurean delight achieves its pizzazz with the tempura-dipped seaweed that embraces the colorful selection of ingredients.

MICHAEL E BARRETT (who, by the way, lived in Japan for more than three years) will pen Epiqueerean in the first issue of every month. MEG DALY will continue to write the column in the second issue of every month.



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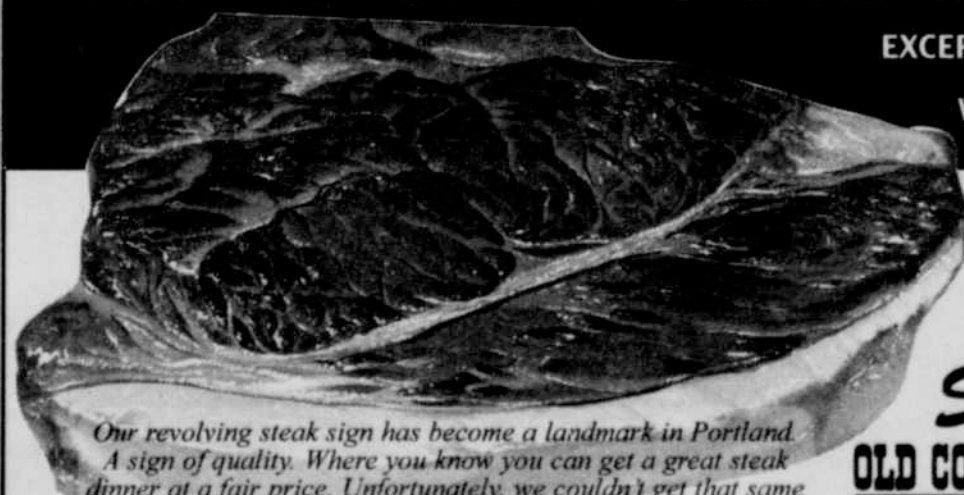
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