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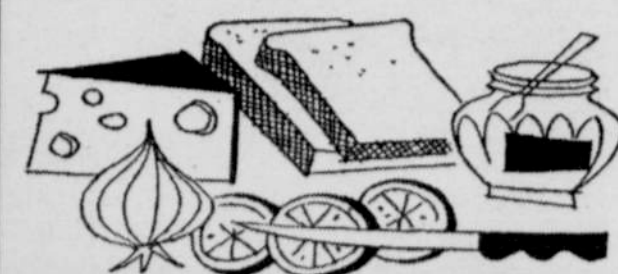
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## epiQueerean

BY JENNY NGUYEN

### The new fondue

It's a new year mantra—time to rekindle old flames, make impossible resolutions and, generally, begin fresh. These three things have managed to meander their way into the culinary world via molten cheese.

Yes, fondue has resurrected itself. The flame under the hot pot has been lit, the vow to cut calories has taken a back seat to chocolate-dipped cheesecake, and fondue itself has a brand new hip backdrop. Let's take a short jaunt to the past, present and future of fondue dining in Portland.

#### Fondue Past:

**Rheinlander • 5035 N.E. Sandy Blvd.**

Nothing says bier Swiss fondue like the gargantuan dark wood mecca of an interior like Rheinlander, the city's most distinctive German dining spot. Seated in the massive oak booths, we felt like Hanzellette and Gretel. Swiss cheese fondue served with assorted breads cost a mere \$7, but we opted for a sampling of everything we could dip into our fiery fondue, including bier sausage and warm Bavarian pretzels. The fondue was much thinner and more yeasty with booze than the other ones we'd tasted—but hands down the favorite. Rheinlander taught us that all you need is some good old-fashioned Swiss tossed together with some dark hefe for a most fantastic, unadulterated piece of cheese heaven.

#### Fondue Present:

**The Melting Pot • Southwest Sixth Avenue and Main Street**

Unless you've got a Benjamin burning a hole in your wallet, a safe bet for your Melting Pot excursion is happy hour from 4 to 6:30 p.m. weekdays in the bar. The Oktoberfest (regularly \$16) was a downright steal at 10 bones. Smokey cheddar cheese spiked with lager and garlic (all done tableside) served with a ménage à trois of meats, fresh Granny Smiths, vegetables and bread was perfect for two. But if you have the time and the money, I'd highly recommend this below-ground, above-the-norm eating experience.

#### Fondue Future:

**Urban Fondue • 2114 N.W. Glisan St.**

The newest restaurant to hit Northwest 21st is nothing short of stylish and luxurious. From the owners of Be Zinfel and Bartini, Urban Fondue has put melted cheese on the hipster hit list. Never before has the inquiry "Can I dip my sausage in your hot cheese?" been more chic. For starters, the housemade Italian sausage is divine smothered in caraway-studded Tillamook white cheddar. The Urban Yosenabe—a combination of chicken and clam broth with ginger, lemongrass and soy—paired with the fin and shellfish entree is not to be missed. Tofu, marinated tomatoes and sweet vegetables offer a vegetarian twist to an otherwise meaty menu. Either way, do not skip dessert. Bittersweet chocolate hazelnut fondue...need I say more? **JN**