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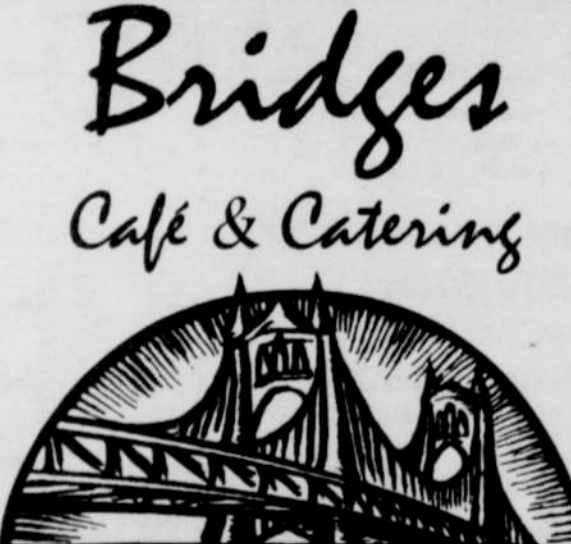
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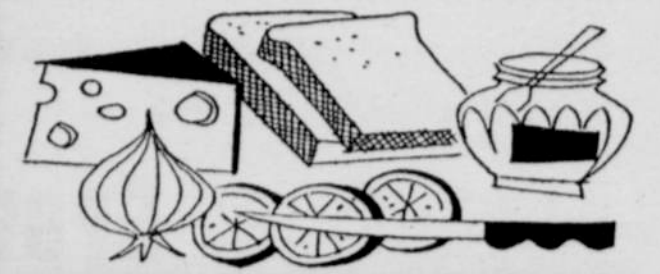
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epiQueerean

BY JENNY NGUYEN

Pho you. Eat Mi.

Four years ago I witnessed Emeril Lagasse host a show on making *pho* (pronounced "fuh"), the traditional beef noodle soup of Vietnam. Since then I've seen *pho* on the cover of *Sunset* and *Living* magazines, and in 2003 *Pho Van* in the Pearl put Vietnamese cuisine on the Portland foodie map. The humble breakfast dish of my country has reached epic status.

Alas, there's more to Vietnamese food than just *pho*. Some of the best cuisine in town can be found on one street, Sandy Boulevard. So to ring in June, I'm bringing Saigon to you with a few Sandy shorts for your summer fun.

Thien Hong •
6749 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

For family-style dining and rice, Thien Hong is a must. A restaurant that keeps expanding to meet a growing clientele, this hot spot has been a landmark for decades. The extensive menu features exquisite classical Vietnamese dishes along with old world Chinese items. The peppery deep-fried calamari is sensational, a dish not a table in the house should be without. The hot and sour seafood soup is off the hook; the tangy tamarind, potent lemongrass, ass-kickin' chilies and tender catfish are immensely flavorful and exotic. Finish off with the popular three-color *cha* dessert, but be prepared for a unique mouth party. (This ain't your grandma's bubble tea.)

Zien Hong •
5314 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

There's a sister dish to *pho* that is oh-so-less popular, but just as worthy, called *mi* (pronounced "me"). Basically a soup made with thin egg noodles in an insatiably salty broth, it is a must-try. *Mi do bien* is a seafood version that can have prawns, scallops, crab, fish cakes, fish balls, you name it. No one in town makes *mi* like Zien Hong, and even if you don't feel experimental, nearly everything on the menu is tried and true. Just don't act surprised when you walk in and they're picking green beans at a table.

Pho Oregon •
6236 N.E. Sandy Blvd.

People are always asking me where the best *pho* in town is. The truth is that palates are like fingerprints; everyone's is different. Disclaimer aside, Pho Oregon is the best *pho* I have had here. So what if it's in a green pagoda with fluorescent lighting? One whiff and it won't matter. The beef broth is an aroma bomb of star anise, black cardamom and hours of bone-on-bone cooking. This is *pho* pared down to its roots—no fluff or fancy. To my Vietnamese peeps: I'm sorry for letting the pussy out of the sack, but I had to break it for the good of all the lovely must-have-*pho*-ers out there. **JM**

Hate my reviews? Tell me about it! Write JENNY NGUYEN at jenny0080@hotmail.com.