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BY JENNY NGUYEN

## Moseying Mississippi

A recent visit to the ReBuilding Center quickly turned into a full-fledged street adventure. From one shop to the next, the bustling hive entranced us. All this, plus good eats, embraced in a six-block stretch of North Mississippi has got the community abuzz. Let me bee your guide:

### Blue Gardenia • 3747 N. Mississippi Ave.

Nestled behind a state-of-the-art gutter/eco-pond is a cafe that offers sweet refuge from the hectic world. Inside you'll find fresh garden salads and homemade pastries to suit any palate. Try the popular Mississippie cookie; baked with raw cane sugar, oats and chocolate chunks, minus the key hippie ingredient, it's still doobie-rific. For the savory tooth, try the deviant cousin of the cinnamon roll filled with sun-dried tomatoes and pesto or ham and cheese. Posh merlot velvet stools offer a front-row seat to the outside, or you could opt for a cozy armchair in the reading nook.

### Equinox • 830 N. Shaver St.

Just past the sign-bearing corner is a dazzling little courtyard and restaurant. Ogle the menu at the gate if you must—just know that it is one of the most eclectic Portland menus under 20 bucks. Dine alfresco with an Equinox Lemonade (Jim Beam and blackberry puree), and you'll feel you're in Ecuador. The menu is worldly, so don't hesitate to ask the amiable wait staff what the hell's going on. Thankfully, the kitchen already knows; mango-marinated prawns with wasabi aioli or wild mushroom and Gorgonzola stuffed won tons make a definitive first course. Spinach with pulled pork and aged ricotta is a meat lover's salad. What's most appealing about Equinox is its unrestrained creativity; its disregard for the commonplace makes every plate a flavor experiment. How does bone-in pork stuffed with Brie and hazelnuts with a jalapeño-strawberry merlot demi sound? Oh, just you wait.

### Laughing Planet • 3765 N. Mississippi Ave.

Don't let the grinning Cyclops planet logo, Technicolor palette, grass lanterns, XXXL Zappa poster or crazy doll displays fool you. Food here is no laughing matter. One glance at the menu and you'll hardly believe you haven't left our planet for a more green-loving, Mickey D-hating world. Generally Tex-Mex, Laughing Planet is ultra Earth-conscious, where organic, vegan and low-carb options abound. Non-GMO tortilla chips grace the plate of Nacho Mama, shiitake barley-quinoa pilaf is the base of the Soylen Green bowl, and if you're feeling kinky with an Asian flare, the Thai-Me-Up burrito's for you. The Amaizin' Grace quesadilla with corn, cilantro pesto and jack cheese will own you, as will the one-eyed Saturn after you've been abducted by this extra-digestible hangout. **JN**

JENNY NGUYEN loves crab and loves apple juice, but not crab-apple juice. Send your comments to [jenny0080@hotmail.com](mailto:jenny0080@hotmail.com).

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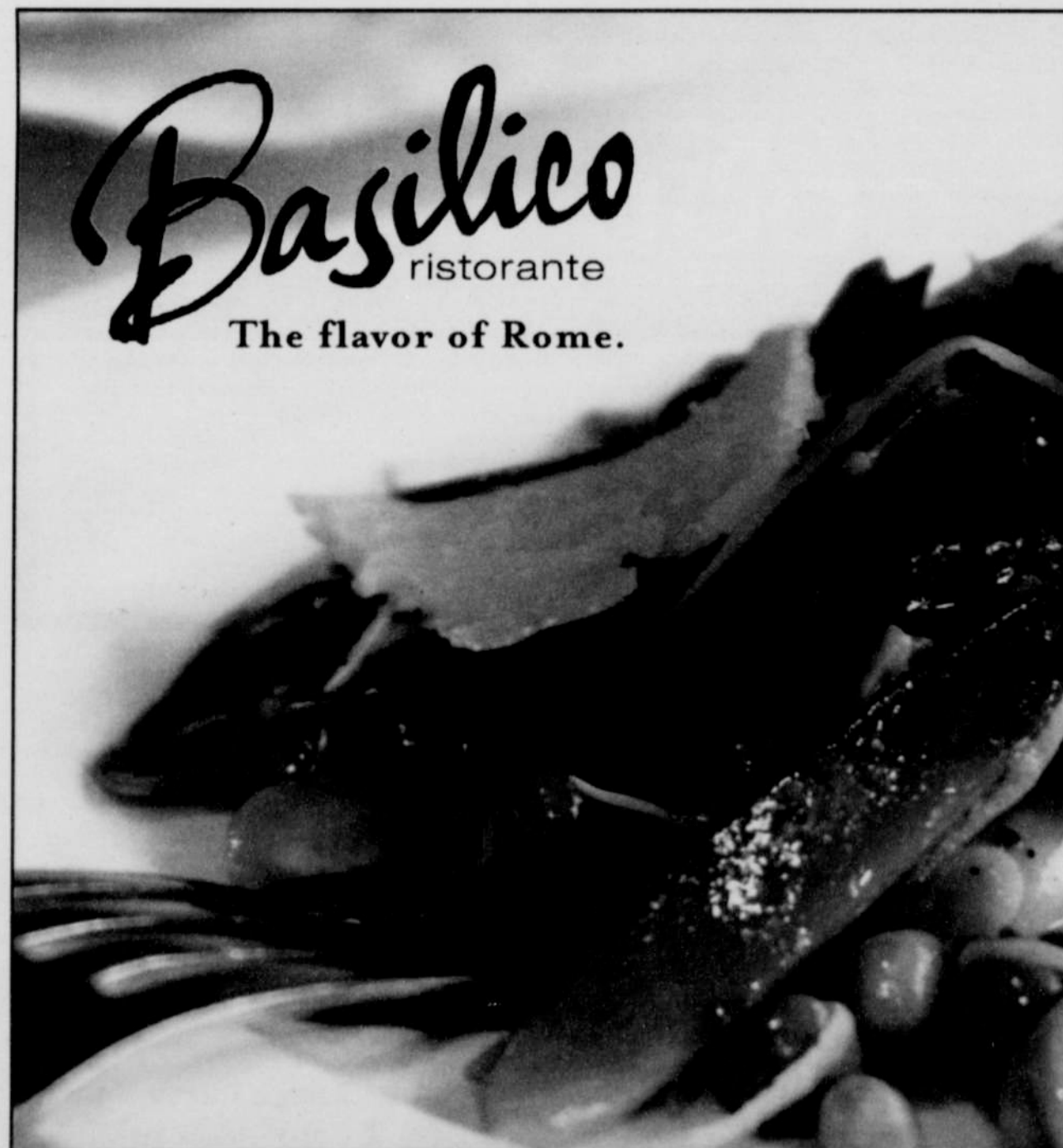
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