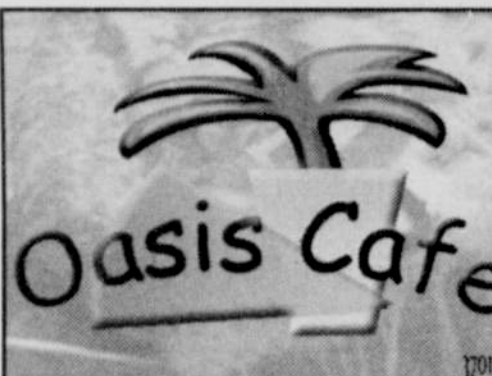
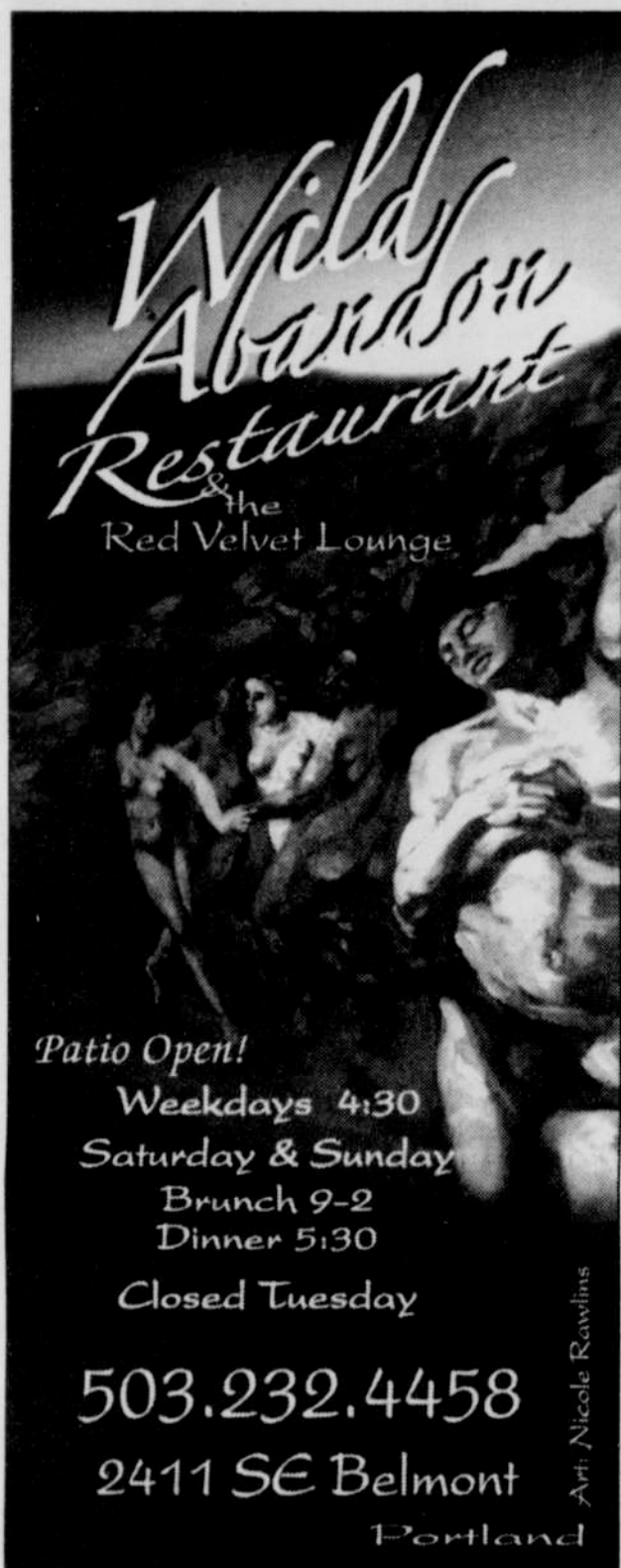




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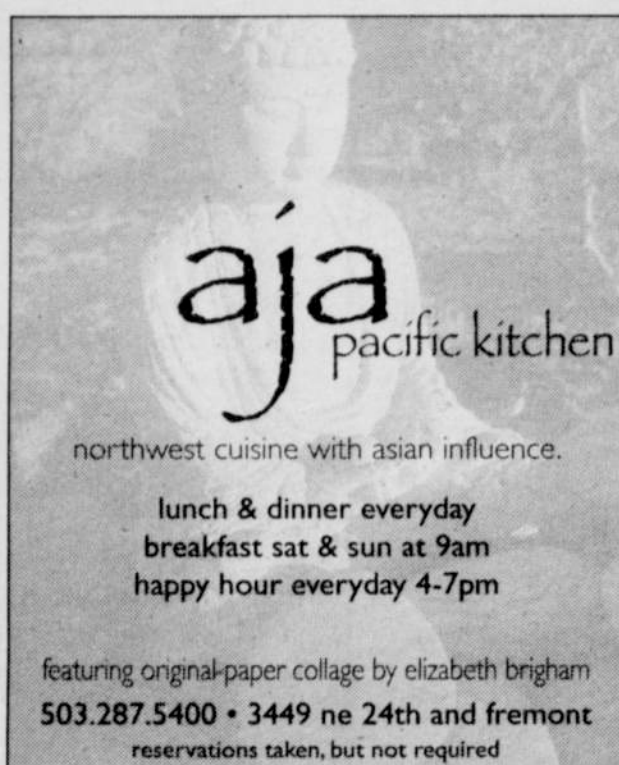


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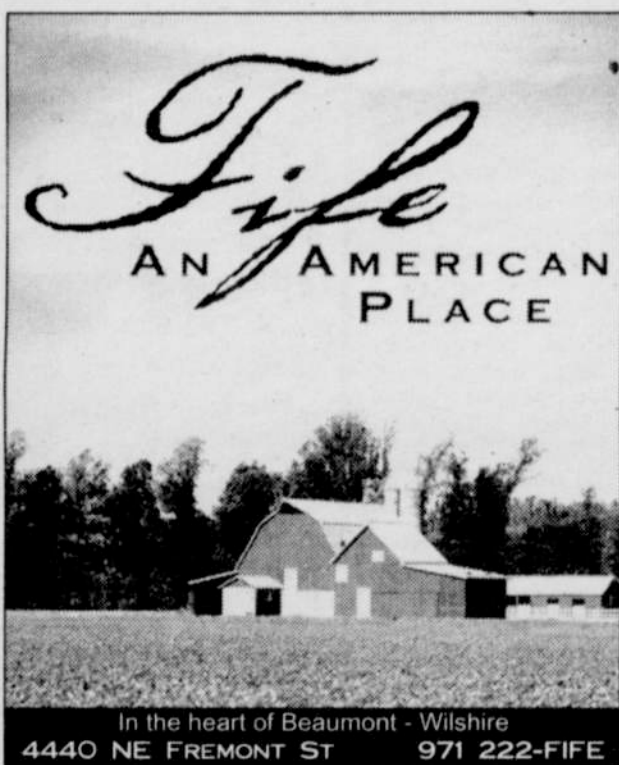


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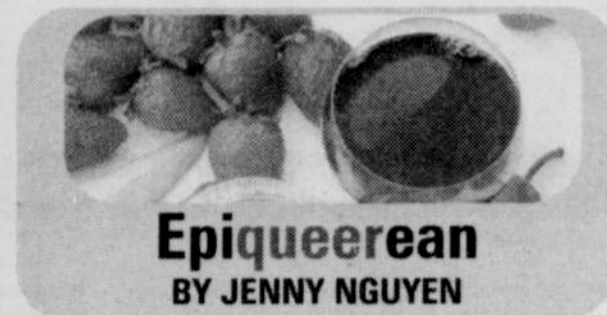
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Epiqueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

That's Amore!

When the holidays have you scramblin' round for family, presents and other sanity-stretching exercise, there's nothing like the simplicity and ease of pizza. So 'tis the season to give, receive and rejoice in your very own slice of the pie. Here are three variant pie holes to feed your, well, pie hole.

Bella Faccia Pizzeria • 2934 N.E. Alberta St.

Feeling unfairly seduced by the cleavage/pizza-bearing siren on the sign outside? Than you'll be downright orally harassed by the outstanding pizza party awaiting your mouth inside this artsy dish dive. Ultra-thin crusts hedge a multitude of finely seasoned toppings, from eggplant to tempeh. Each pie is so delicately orchestrated with flavor combinations and subtlety, it's hard to fathom a better slice. But to be fair, these savory tarts can be a little greasy, not that it's at all a bad thing. If you're anything like me, you'll need some herbage to cut the guilt of a pizza feast. Luckily, Bella has a gourmet spinach salad with whole roasted garlic and pine nuts to settle your conscience. Then appease the lil' devil in you with a gut-bustin' Congo Bar. That's what I call a happy ending.

Escape from New York Pizza • 622 N.W. 23rd Ave.

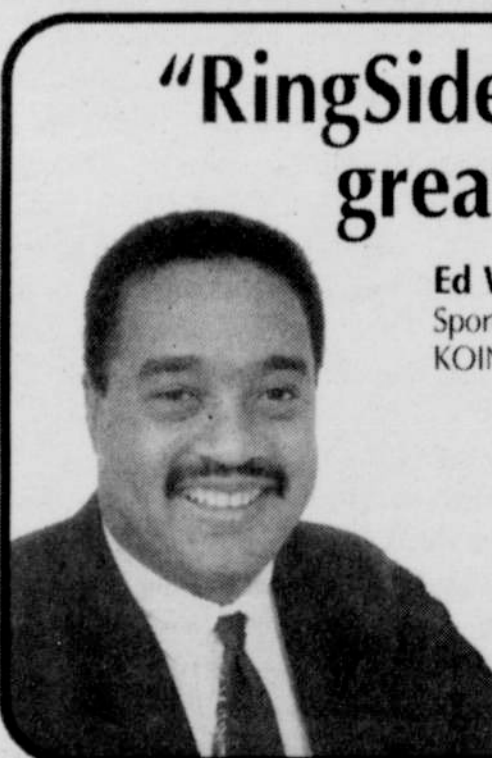
A direct kickback to Brooklyn, this pie hole should be renamed Escape from Trendy-Third Pizza. Stickers, photos and other propaganda make the atmosphere transparent and warm. For years, friendly and unpretentious pies and people have attracted slice-mongers from all over, and it's no wonder. Hand-tossed shells fly in a flurry of flour at the door. Pepperoni, cheese, mushroom and olive abound. In the New World era of pizza overextravagance, Escape does what its name proclaims—and succeeds. As for bona fide NYC style? Shouts, swishes and strident conversation are how this pizzeria hums, and what's more authentic than dat?

Nostrana • 1401 S.E. Morrison St.

Speaking of overextravagance, the newest venture from Cathy Whims (of Genoa fame) has got pizza people talking. A fantastical space of an exhibition kitchen, towering top shelf and chopped wood make deciphering Nostrana difficult, but enlightenment arrives with the menu. Antipasti plates explode with complexity and flavorful abundance. Salads are simple yet exquisite. Venetian squab stew is unmatched in satiation and refinement. A tidy and precise wine list makes navigation easy, and wood-fired pizza doesn't get any simpler than crushed tomato, basil and buffalo mozzarella...but, truth be told, go for everything but the pizza. This restaurant should be sought after as an Italian mecca, not a pizzeria. 10

JENNY NGUYEN would love some feedback. Pretty please with a cherry on top? Write her at jenny0080@hotmail.com.

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