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Epiqueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

In Vitro Bistros

Never been to Europe? Wanna taste what the folks from across the Great Blue have been bragging about for centuries? Thanks to trends and culinary charlatans, we have the local solution to wanton appetites. Below you will find just three of the hundreds of restaurants Stumptown has to offer those with otherworldly inclinations.


Le Pigeon • 738 E. Burnside St.

Mourners of Colleen's will be pleased that such a great restaurant has filled its void. Chef Gabriel Rucker (from the now defunct Gotham Bldg. Tavern) provides the tiny one-man copper-clad kitchen with just the right amount of authentic French know-how and enough inspired innovation to create a captivating menu. The seared squab atop duck confit hash with pickled cherries is perfect. The liver pâté is undoubtedly potent, and the mesclun greens are a hint acidic, balancing the fatty blue cheese and robust caramelized pine nuts. I'd heard rumors that Rucker wanted to try his hand at desserts, and now I know why. The chocolate tart with anise liquor and mint was wholly divine, but it was the flakes of sea salt on top that prompted my salivatory salutation. Le Pigeon might be a bistro wrapped in a tiny package, but its culinary girth is surprisingly huge.


Olea • 1338 N.W. Hoyt St.

Just celebrating its first year, this sleek, industrial bistro is like visual music to your eyes. The open layout flows as the bar just hovers above the entryway and the general dining area expands inward with more private seating in the back and aloft. The restaurant touts itself as a Mediterranean bistro, but the ever-morphing menu draws inspiration from all parts of the world. The Basque-style pork belly dissolves on the tongue with essence of piquillo peppers and quince. Oysters on the half-shell are treated to the all-American concept of the BLT, while the lasagna Bolognese is a kickback to the wonderful landlocked Italian city of Bologna. The food can be outstanding at times, but the service is dependably rock solid and the atmosphere brilliant.

Carafe • 200 S.W. Market St.

This gleaming French bistro is a sight for downtown eyes. In the midst of concrete slabs, transients and transportation, Carafe puts a little bit of Paris in our humble town. The outdoor seating is marvelous, with all chairs set looking toward the street. (Paris-ites would be proud.) Indoors, merlot leather booths and antique advertisements lined in gold mimic French grandeur—and the menu is no different. Moules à la crème (mussels with crème fraîche) are silky and rich on crisp slices of baguette. Frisèe with mortadella is simplistic and fine. Seafood is done particularly well at Carafe: Pan-fried skate is a crowd-pleaser, and halibut is cooked perfectly opaque and moist. Vichyssoise and croque monsieur can be found alongside duck leg and hamburgers; what more can a Francophile ask for? 

JENNY NGUYEN wants your company. Write her at epiqueerean@comcast.com for more info.

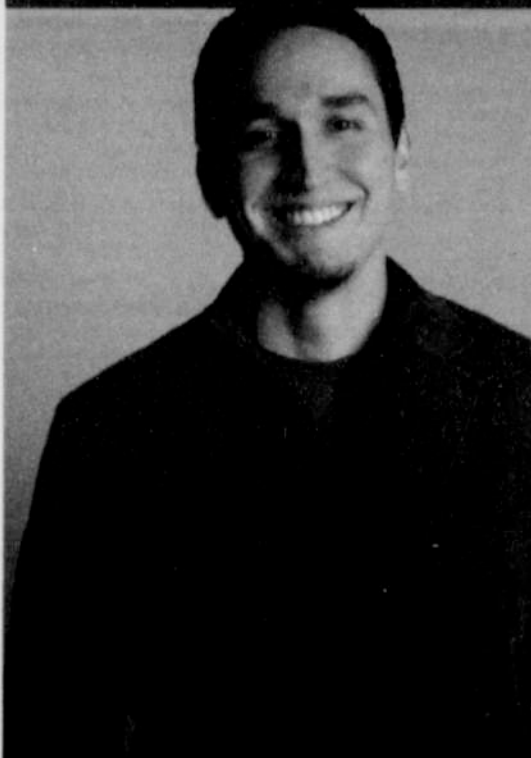


pour
wine bar & bistro

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but you should see our staff's!

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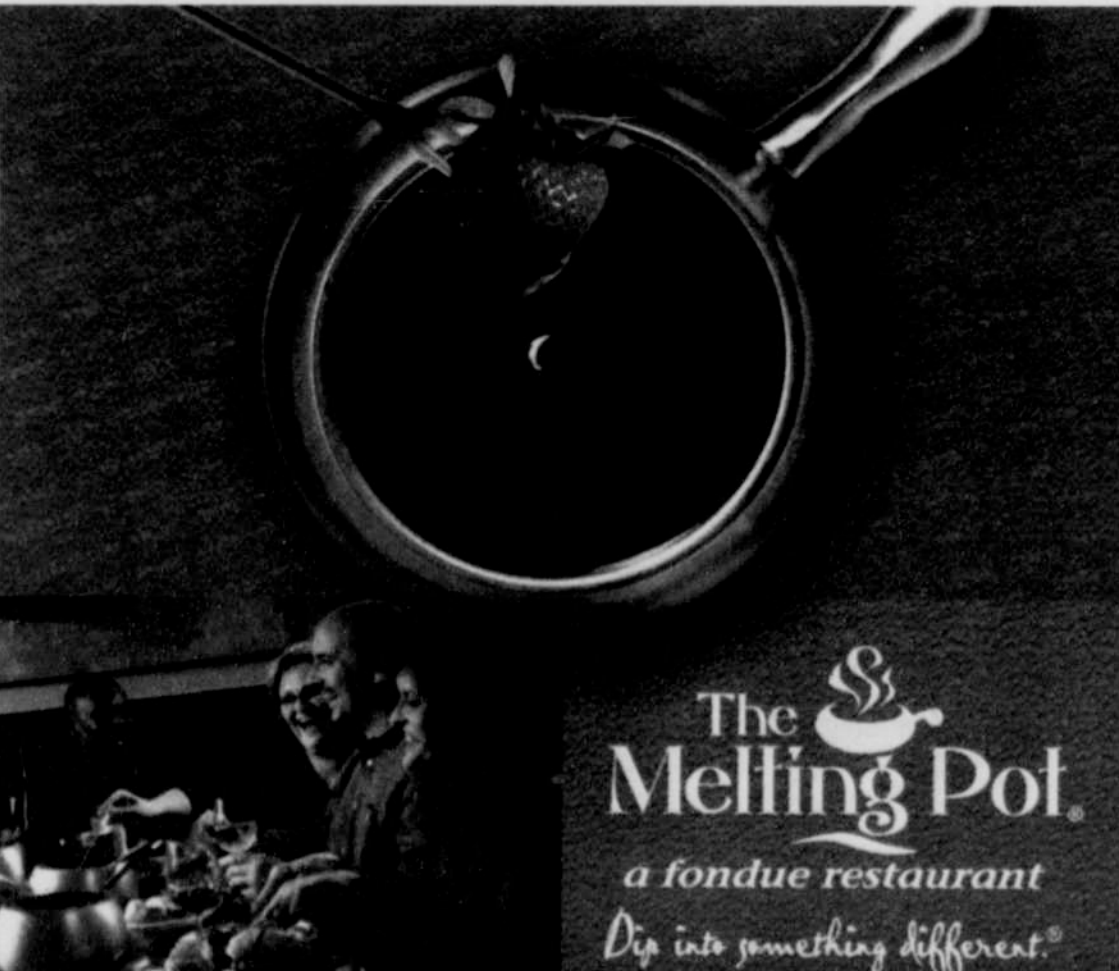
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