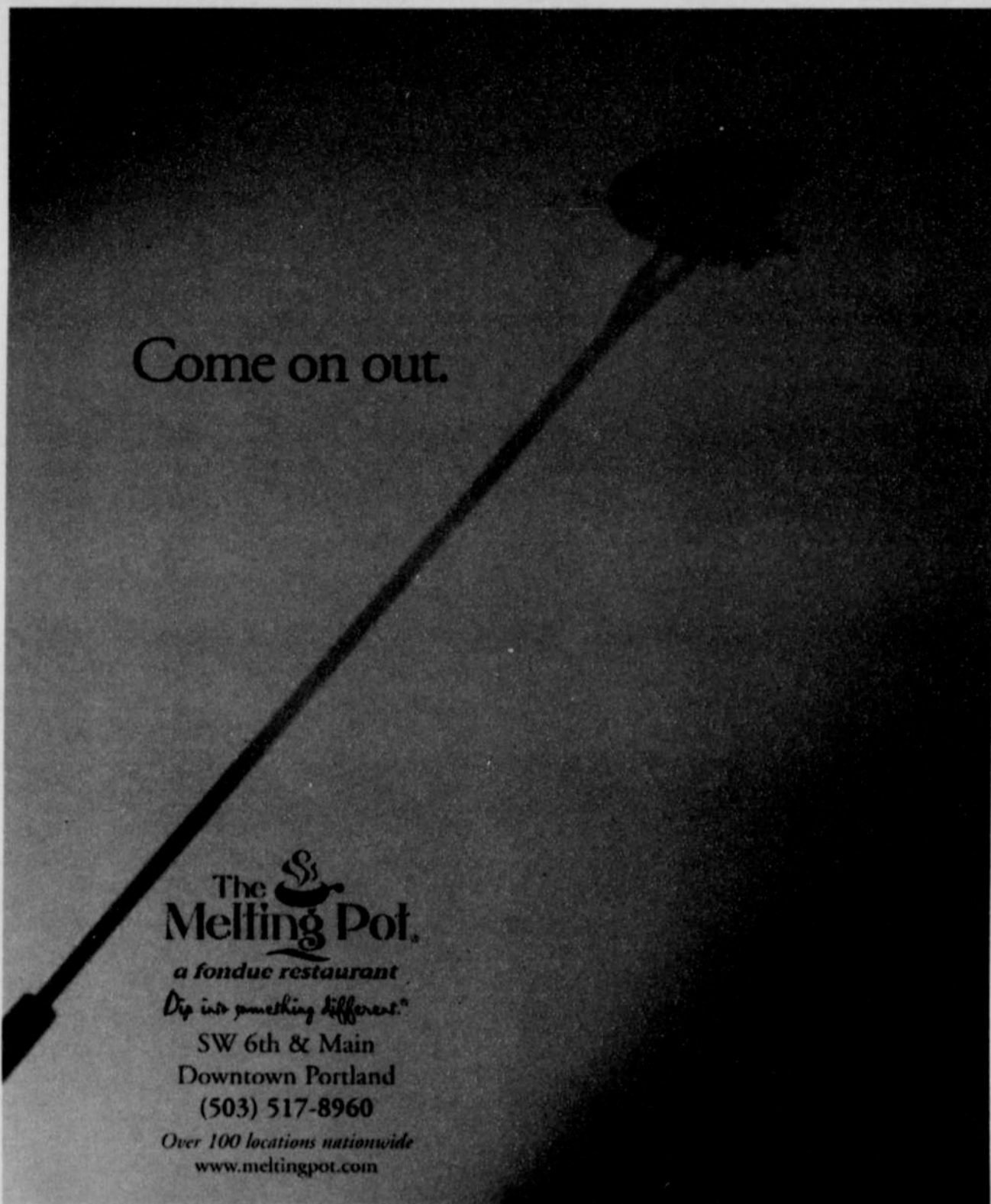


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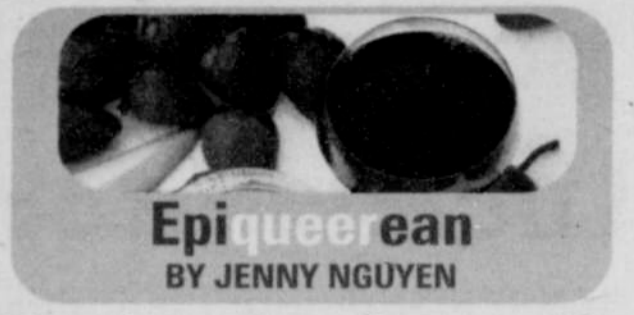
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**The Denver Scramble**

As anyone whose I-5 detour has traversed through the Kenton District in the past year already knows, North Denver is itching for some action. A slight jaunt off the well-traveled North Interstate Boulevard at Paul Bunyan (or the Dancin' Bare) lands you in the midst of a neighborhood with potential larger than the big guy's ax. Could it be the next hot hood?

**E-San Thai Cuisine • 8233 N. Denver Ave.**

Priding itself on continuing to be family-owned, E-San has now opened its third location. Though the restaurant seats quite a few and has a full-service bar area, it still lacks the atmosphere of its other locales. Awkwardly spacious, I felt like I was eating in a cafeteria, not a restaurant. The food is good, following suit with E-San's previous ventures, but the hit-and-miss menu can be like a shot in the dark. The pla duk pad phet, fried catfish stir fry, is fresh and delicious. The mee krop was like eating fried noodles coated in Heinz ketchup. Though the drinks made with Thai iced tea were ludicrously strong and tasty, the tom yum soup left much to be desired. Unfortunately, NoPo folks fill the stands not for stellar Thai cuisine but rather out of necessity. Sure, it's not some Greasy Lotus Dragon joint, but with expectations and rent on the rise, Denver can do better.

**Cup & Saucer • 8237 N. Denver Ave.**

Spanking new and coolly outfitted to meet Northies' hip demands, this C & S pays homage to the fact that bigger does not always mean better. Back when there was just the one on Hawthorne, there was a line to shovel heaping spoonfuls of vegan gravy into yer gullet; those were the days. Now you can get your fix anywhere, even here! Oh, how things change. Though there is less of a wait (there's still a line on weekends), the service is unresponsive, the food mediocre and the magic gone. A gorgeous corner spot in a newly constructed building in what could be Portland's last "untouched" area, Cup & Saucer will do the trick, but fer now, travel the distance elsewhere—it'll be worth it.

**Pizza Fino • 8225 N. Denver Ave.**

Hold onto yer hats: The pie here is gonna knock yer socks off. Amazingly quaint and trendy, this restaurant hides a full bar and full-size dining room behind its cover as a pizza bar. Step inside and you'll be floored by Portland artist Hi-iH's lanterns lining one wall and a fancy array of booze lining the other. The gourmet pizza is divine, and you can get it by the slice, too. The perfectly crisp crust and expertly assembled flavors will astound you. Sopresatta, pancetta, prosciutto and pork sausage are a few of the meat options that go to show Fino is not f'in around. Don't be fooled—it is first and foremost an Italian restaurant with pasta specials like fusilli al Fino and orchiette Bolognese, but God damn if the pizza ain't the best north o' Burnside! For truly amazing pie in a super-low-key setting, look no further. 10

JENNY NGUYEN is a freelance food writer with an oral fixation. Pacify her needs by commenting to [epiqueerean@comcast.net](mailto:epiqueerean@comcast.net).


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