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**GRAND OPENING
Party Weekend**

April 19, 20, & 21

Complimentary appetizers Thursday April 19

• **1/2 PRICE APPETIZERS - 3pm - 8pm**

• **Taco Tuesdays - \$4.75**

• **Karaoke Thursdays**

with Rocky Rhodes featuring Suzanne

• **Prime Rib Fridays - \$14.50**

• **Dancing Friday & Saturday**

with DJ Skullbie

Open daily for lunch, dinner, drinks and fun

Full Menu available 11am to 2:30 am

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Southern Exposure

An eye-opening spring break in Mexico

You'll come back a different person," friends kept telling me upon hearing that I was headed to Mexico for the first time.

I wasn't sure what to make of this warning: I'll return emaciated from all of the dysentery? I'll become addicted to telenovelas? What?

Now I get it. After nine days and eight nights on the beaches and in the city of Oaxaca, I see what all the fuss is about. But I'm still trying to put my finger on what exactly made this vacation so magical...

• **The language?** For a guy who thrives on communication, I found myself in the unusual position of having few words to express myself, other than familiar but useless phrases like *La isla bonita* and *Quién es esa niña?* (As a sharp-tongued pal observed, "You don't speak Spanish—you speak Madonna!") Fortunately, I had a fluent traveling companion, Jordi, who handled translation duties like a pro. This skill particularly came in handy when a hotel removed one of the beds from our room, having mistaken us for a hetero couple.

• **The acceptance?** The only queers I identified were a transvestite walking down the street in Oaxaca City and a group of four beautiful men frolicking on the nude beach of Zipolite (where I stayed in the sun too long, leading to the nickname "Langosta Radosta"). Although I didn't hit any gay bars, I briefly visited an empty queer cybercafe called B Proud. If we had more time, we would've visited the nearby town of Juchitán, where, according to the Immigration and Refugee

Board of Canada, "the population tends to be tolerant of male homosexuals, called *muxes* by the local population. They are seen as insurance for parents' old age, because they are not expected to marry and leave home.... Every year the town has a *muxe* festival, referred to as the Vigil of the True Fearless Danger Seekers.... The city's top officeholders (who for decades have been from leftist parties) take part in the celebration."

• **The progressives?** Last year a teachers' strike in Oaxaca City led to five months of unrest when activists seized the downtown, demanding the removal of Gov. Ulises Ruiz. Even though things are back to normal, tourism has been hurting ever since. Here in Portland, Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party presented an eyewitness report and roundtable discussion Jan. 30 to update locals on the movement's imminent comeback.

• **The food?** My last supper before leaving Portland was a cheese-drenched tamale at the bland restaurant Mazatlan, so it was refreshing to see that Mexicans have much better taste in their home country. The regional specialty is *mole negro*—a dark, spicy, slightly sweet sauce—but truly daring tourists try the *chapulines* (grasshoppers). Now that



Jim's Closet

BY JIM RADOSTA

I'm back, I can still sample Oaxacan cuisine at Nuestra Cocina, 2135 S.E. Division St.

• **The drink?** Central Oaxaca state is renowned for producing Mexico's best mezcal, a cousin of tequila. During a particularly festive night in the *zócalo* (town square), we spotted a crowd growing



Diving into my first plate of grasshoppers in the *zócalo* of Oaxaca City. High in protein!

around a marching band, which had smartly designated one generous fellow to provide free shots to the listeners.

• **The art?** I've long been drawn to the bold colors of Mexican folk art, so it was an added bonus that Oaxaca is one of the country's major handicrafts centers. Get yourself an eyeful without leaving town at gay-owned Onda Arte Latina, 2215 N.E. Alberta St.

• **The hospitality?** This is the factor that has stuck with me the most. It's hard to describe without coming across as condescending, but I've never experienced such courtesy in all my life. This came as a real jolt, considering I can't stand the "forced flair" found in the suburbs of America—not the "forced snarkiness" found among so many Portland servers. Everyone in Mexico—from the masseur in Mazunte who insisted on coating my sunburned skin with freshly cut aloe vera, to the bed-and-breakfast owner who doted on us every morning—seemed genuine in their offers of hospitality. This, more than anything, makes me miss Mexico already. ☺

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.