



Epiqueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

Meat and Two Veg

The name says it all. Here's an article dedicated to the massive girth of the city's taste buds, not to mention ethical dogma. From quasi-vegetarians and straight-edge vegans to flesh-devouring sapiens, here are some bits and pieces to feed your inner need.

Podnah's Pit BBQ • 1469 N.E. Prescott St.

This is one place where people actually line up to get boned. Succulent pork spare ribs are rubbed and smoked for six hours, gently spicy and steeped in authentic barbecue essence. The perfectly seared lamb ribs are a must-have: plump, juicy, magenta morsels of meat. The beef brisket is so tender it's freaky. Try it on a blimp-like bun or with the true-to-form pulled pork with Carolina-style sauce. Not only does Podnah present authentic techniques, rubs and sauces, it also does it with local meat-slingers Strawberry Mountain and Carlton Farms. Add tangy collard greens, fresh black-eyed peas and crumbly cornbread and it's no wonder this tiny corner spot has everyone getting porked.

Nutshell • 3808 N. Williams Ave. Suite C

Fresher than a slap on the ass, Nutshell is North Williams' newest culinary installment. The warehouse-like space is airy and comfortable, although the animated concrete cavern can get noisy. For eco-friendly diners, Nutshell is definitely concerned with our carbon footprint. An informative wine list focuses on vegan, organic and biodynamic wineries with easy-to-decipher icons per virtue (e.g., a car symbol for wineries that use only biodiesel for transportation). The salt and oil bar is both unique and classic, allowing guests to choose from a list of more than a dozen extra-virgin olive oils and varieties of salts from around the globe. The loco de venduras, an Argentine stew made of hominy and quinoa, is superb with deep, earthy richness heightened by the sweetness of fried plantains. The Nigerian akras (chickpea cakes) are fluffy and pungent with saffron and preserved lemon. Nutshell has perfected the use of spices, fresh herbs and ambrosial ingredients to take its food to another plane. Absolutely superb execution...oh, and did I mention that it is entirely vegan (except for the carnivorous plants on every table)? Don't worry, I asked at least 30 times. Believe it.

Vegetarian House • 22 N.W. Fourth Ave.

Located near the grand entrance to Old Town/Chinatown is this tiny gem of a food find. Bordering on so-so for a Chinese restaurant, things suddenly taste much better knowing that there is absolutely no meat, egg or MSG in anything. Its nice rendition of moo shoo beef is, under close inspection, surprisingly beefy. Fresh veggies not smothered in grease or overpowering sauces are refreshing, and the meat substitutes try less to be fauna fakes and become nice stand-alones. Surprisingly clean and well-kept, Vegetarian House is a godsend for omnivores with a taste for the Orient. 10

JENNY NGUYEN wants to hear your food for thought. Leftovers and table scraps can be sent to her at epiqueerean@comcast.net.

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