



Epiqueerean
BY JENNY NGUYEN

"Thanks a Latte!"

I can't even remember where I was when I heard this one-liner shouted out by a middle-aged man who otherwise looked much too decent to say a phony cliché of a statement such as that.

Now I've taken it one step further and put the disgracefully poor faux pas to print. In my defense I've placed three locations where I would never, ever be inclined to shout that epitaph but rather enjoy my coffee and settle for just a kind, sincere "thank you."

Paradise Café & Espresso Bar • 1304 Main St., Vancouver, Wash.

Quite possibly the best pulls on this side of the river, Paradise is like a venti macchiato of pure gold in an otherwise bitter, Starbucks-riddled 'Couv. Using strictly 49th Parallel Coffee (located in Vancouver, British Columbia), the flavors are supremely decadent, dark and creamy. Tongue masochists must try the homemade spiced mocha that tingles with cayenne, then burns its sweet way down your begging gullet...hot damn! The list of loose-leaf teas abound here, along with terrific selections of fresh goods from Main Street Bakery. Come on Thursdays and pick up a Voodoo Doughnut fresh off the press or a fluffy breakfast sandwich with ham, sun-dried tomato pesto and Swiss. One visit to Paradise and you'll be reeling from a double shot of love.

Albina Press • 4637 N. Albina Ave.

Sure, there are a plethora of coffeehouses Portland has to offer, each equipped with its own respective worshippers. Drive past this crowded hideaway and you'll begin to wonder what you're missing. In fact, you might be missing out on everything coffee—in all its subtle beauty—has to offer. Undress your typical everyday "coffee" by stripping away sugar, cream and flavorings and discover the naked, opaque brown beauty. Perfectly ground beans make for a sediment-free French press that'll send you to space. Gorgeous foam art, pulling technique and an overall utter respect for everything coffee put Albina Press at the top of my coffeehouse experiences. Put down the paper, close the notebook, stop eyeballing the hottie with the tortoise-shell glasses, and savor what you have in your hand. You will not regret it.

Common Grounds Coffee House • 4321 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.

This beautiful, open space on the eastern edge is a refuge from the hubbub happening just a few blocks west. What you'll find here is plenty of variety, from the teas and espressos to the snacks and menu items. Pearl Bakery supplies much of the sweet stuff along with the ever-queer Voodoo Doughnuts. Try a delish salad or a fresh grilled panino. Using Caffè Umbria (from Seattle), the beans make a smooth, creamy product; although thinner and lighter in flavor than I prefer, it's still a nice bean. But the atmosphere is great: From the local artists on the walls to the comfy couches and the marble top bar overlooking the street, Common Grounds is like a cappuccino—popular, comfortable and simple. ☺

JENNY NGUYEN is suffering from caffeine withdrawals. Pull me a shot or write me a line at epiqueerean@comcast.net.

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