



Main Street, USA

A sold-out Bruce Springsteen concert... a summertime baseball game... a warm slice of apple pie... Vancouver, Wash.? Believe it or not, our neighbor to the north was named "All-America City" in 1957 and 1986. (The distinction recognizes "communities that are overcoming their challenges through innovative leadership and collaborative problem solving.") As proof of the city's all-American spirit, just take a stroll down Main Street, where you'll find a melting pot of cuisine to feed you morning, night and day.

Main Street Bakery • 1915 Main St., Vancouver, Wash.

Start your day off with an affordable fresh-baked French pastry to accompany your java. The apple galette has a flaky crust encasing the plentiful cinnamon and cardamom inside, and the blueberry pinwheel tastes as yummy as it is pretty. For the vegan on your shopping list, try the wheat-free Almond Raspberry Thumbprint cookies. The bakery is accepting Thanksgiving orders through Nov. 20 for all sorts of goodies, including multigrain rolls, holiday breads (Hefestollen, Pumpkin Spice, Chocolate Hazelnut Panettone) and sweet treats (pumpkin pie, pecan pie, decorated shortbread).

Dulin's Cafe & Espresso Bar • 1708 Main St., Vancouver, Wash.

The next stop on our itinerary is Ireland, courtesy of this friendly diner established in 1992. My lunch feast included the Blarney Steak Sandwich, featuring succulent slices of New York steak, green chili peppers and Tillamook cheddar on grilled sourdough bread with sour cream horseradish on the side. A stickler for consistency, I opted for the hot, hearty Irish stew to accompany my meal, and I washed it all down with a bottle of Harp Irish Lager. The breakfast menu also boasts several Irish dishes: The Dublin Potatoes are covered in house-roasted corned beef, sautéed onions, bell pepper and Swiss cheese, and the Killamey Special is a multinational concoction with spicy black beans, cheddar cheese, salsa fresca and sour cream. Now I know where I'll be heading every St. Patrick's Day. Erin go brag!

Café Al Dente • 907 Main St., Vancouver, Wash.

Final destination: Italy. My people. This warm, inviting restaurant has a wide range of options from antipasti (lobster risotto with onions, garlic and white wine) and soup (creamy tomato with fresh basil) to simple pasta (gnocchi, lasagna, tortellini) and fancy entrees (grilled swordfish steak with sautéed peppers and tomatoes). I sampled a fresh, seasonally appropriate gorgonzola salad with the magic combination of mixed greens, sliced pears, roasted Oregon hazelnuts, sweetened cranberries and a white balsamic vinaigrette, followed by a generous serving of linguine with sun-dried tomato pesto and grilled chicken breast. Café Al Dente is conveniently located just a block away from the old-school, art-deco Kiggins Theatre, making this the perfect destination for a romantic dinner before a night at the movies.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA is temporarily filling in for columnist Jenny Nguyen while she gets her stomach pumped.

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