



Epiqueer
BY JENNY NGUYEN

The Division of Our City

During these politically heated times—with the failing economy, the most important election of our lifetime and the changing climate—there are many divisions of thought surrounding us. Right here in our fair city, Division is not only a hot topic but a hot street commodity. Here are three places that won't help you check which box for what, but will allow you to vote for yourself.

Matchbox Lounge

3203 S.E. Division St., 503-234-7844,
www.matchboxlounge.com

Quickly becoming a neighborhood fave for late-night meals, terrific happy hour specials and finely executed mixology, Matchbox lights it up. Genuinely well-thought-out dishes are paired with an old-fashioned bar menu where the tried-and-true classics are spot-on. The Strawberry Mountain beef burger with blue cheese is simple and perfect with homemade pickles and crisp baby butterleaf. A brilliantly spicy watercress salad is graced with three generous logs of chevre rolled in walnuts and tossed with parsley and mint. The fish tacos and Carlton pork quesadillas are also delightful and delicious. Matchbox's bright artwork and open space create an airy and inviting atmosphere. Upon closer inspection you'll find the jukebox—a nice barys addition to the boutique-esque eatery.

Bar Avignon

2138 S.E. Division St., 503-517-0808,
www.baravignon.com

Beautifully warm and unpretentious, this new addition to Division's eating district is like finding a sparkling gold nugget in a silver mine. Portlanders have many options, especially on the east side, but Avignon does what only a few others have successfully accomplished: An encompassing, creative and affordable wine list is well-matched with options like Alto Adige speck and Pierre Robert triple cream. Mix 'n' match your meat and cheese board, and dabble in specials handwritten in chalk on the wall of the open kitchen. The perfect ambiance makes for cool convos, and the amiable wait staff is eager to help decipher the numerous delectable small plates to be enjoyed. Come for the nibbles or the vino; stay for the pure enjoyment of dining out.

Haven Coffeeshop

3551 S.E. Division St., 503-236-6890,
www.havencoffee.com

As its namesake states, this dyke-owned neighborhood java joint has been a haven for cafe dwellers for years. Cozy, quiet, locally centered and completely inviting, Haven is not just a gay-friendly hangout but a general meeting place to join together and discuss thoughts, political issues and, most importantly, different points of view. Sweet options abound alongside plenty of vegan choices, with an abundance of choices for non-dairy espresso and teas. The reads aren't just *Just Out* mags, but *The New York Times*, house books and other small press materials. Drink, discuss, let the caffeine buzz inspire you. This is Haven. 

Write to JENNY NGUYEN at jenny0080@hotmail.com for suggestions on the art of eating.

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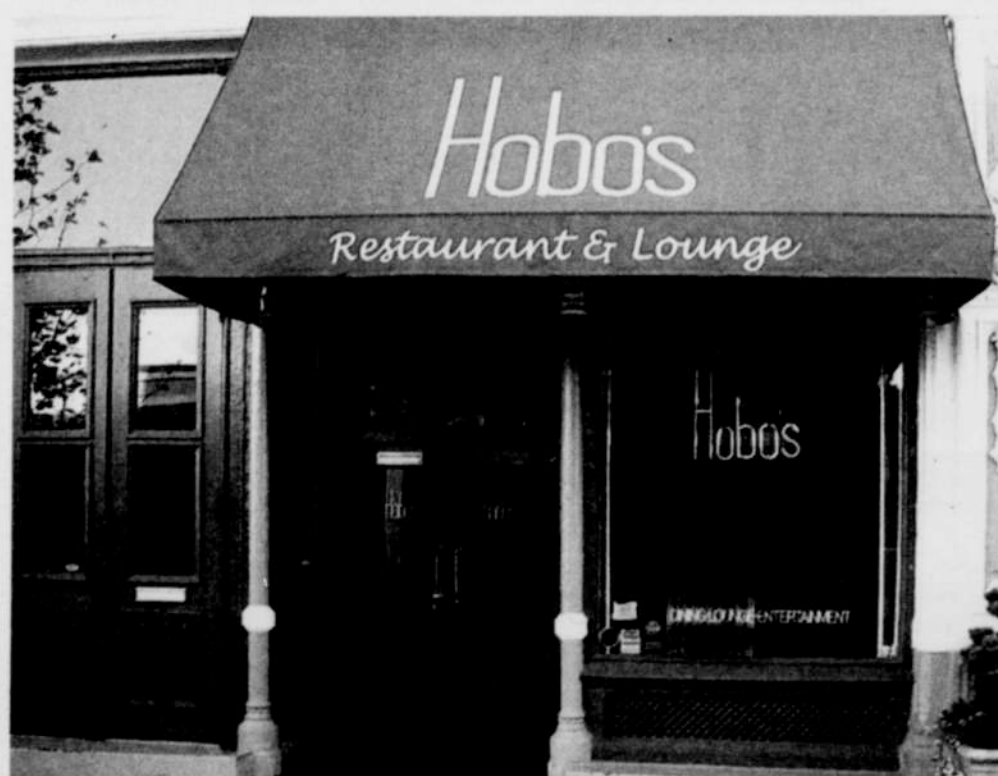
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