

NW BUSINESS BRIEFS



Located in Ladd's Addition in inner SE Portland, Palio Dessert & Espresso House is an alternative to the typical street-side coffeeshop. Owner Rand Benfiet welcomes an array of customers, from locals to tourists and high-powered college students. Benfiet claims the spinach salad is one of the city's best.

Stumble Upon PALIO DESSERT & ESPRESSO HOUSE

Many have wandered into the labyrinth of Ladd's Addition in inner Southeast Portland and found themselves utterly mystified at how lost they've become. No direction makes perfect sense. Equilibriums feign control. It's with this kind of cover from the hustle and bustle that Palio Dessert and Espresso House (1996 SE Ladd Ave.) thrives, an alternative to the typical street-side coffeeshop.

"It's a great place to come and hide," admits owner Rand Benfiet. "If you're looking to have a rendezvous, Palio's the place."

Palio has been in business in Ladd's for 16 years, though Benfiet took over just 6 years ago. Along with the regular duties of running a busy dessert and java joint, Benfiet quickly learned that with Palio's reputation as a Portland institution, along with its location in a nationally revered neighborhood, came more responsibility, especially to tourists.

"We have an enormous amount of people come through on walking tours," explains Benfiet. "Tour buses come through all the time, so I accommodate everyone who comes from out of the area."

Benfiet shares that his niche customer-base includes a huge influx of high-powered college students—lawyers, medical students,

etc.—who frequent Palio during the academic year because of the free wi-fi and late closing time.

"They depend on me to be open," says Benfiet. "From all the beautiful letters I got this last Christmas, it makes me feel good."

Palio's menu pairs local staples such as Stumptown Coffee roasting with Black Sheep Bakery vittles, and Petite Provence pastries. Benfiet also beams at the inclusion of independent bakers' wares within his popular dessert case.

Rotating artists showcase their crafts in the Elm Room, affectionately dubbed "The Library" by the students who occupy it most of the time. And if you're hungry, cakes and pastries aren't the only options. Palio features a spinach salad, which Benfiet calls one of the best in the city, along with panini sandwiches, pasta salads, and Palio's biggest seller: the homemade ice cream sandwich.

"They're wrapped in wax paper, just like your grandma would make them," gushes Benfiet.

Palio Dessert and Espresso House is open 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, and 8 a.m.-11 p.m. on weekends. For more information, visit www.palio-in-ladds.com.

— Ryan J. Prado

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