

The search for alternative dining experiences

Because of the opening of the new complex near the College, "The Print" has decided to visit the restaurants around the area in order to find alternative food sources to the sometimes very crowded cafeteria. The restaurants we chose are all within 10 driving minutes of the College so we could find out if they would be fit to eat lunch at.

Amigo's

Amigo's Mexican Restaurant, located only about a mile south of the College on Molalla Avenue, appears to be an excellent place to go for lunch, even if you've only got an hour between classes. Since the word has not yet gotten out, Amigo's remains, even on Fridays, relatively uncrowded, and the service is fast and efficient.

We had heard that the food at the restaurant was less than average last year, but we certainly didn't find it that way. I had something called "Mexican Pizza," which was a medium-sized concoction of roast beef, cheese, olives and scallions on a large, soft flour taco. For only \$2.50, its quality was fine, and its quantity more than sufficient. My companion had a large meat and cheese salad for almost the same price and also felt satisfied.

The rest of the menu ranges in price from \$2.50 to \$4, and features a couple of complete dinners for under \$4, although the a la carte selection seems perfectly adequate. The nacho chips served as appetizers are homemade and hot and quite tasty; the salsa could have been hotter, but then, that's always a matter of taste (or lack of it).

For the price and the convenience of its location, and the extravagantly kitschy decor, Amigo's is hard to beat. Buen Apetito!

High Rocks

Hidden behind the Gladstone Safeway off of I-205, the High Rocks Pub probably would be missed by anyone who wasn't specifically looking for it. If you are lucky enough to find it, you'd better arrive before the lunch hour or be prepared for some exercise. Even if you do arrive during the peak lunch hour, when patrons' cars are likely to be spilling over into the parking lots of the surrounding businesses, don't let the line discourage you. You will find yourself seated and served with plenty of time to have a leisurely meal.

The atmosphere is permeated with sports. Pennants dot the walls, everything on the menu is named and described in terms of baseball, and in the lounge section a

wide-screen television is set up so that fans may enjoy a game during their meal. If sports is not among your major interests, don't worry, the sporty atmosphere is neither overpowering nor oppressive. During busy midday hours a healthy line may accumulate, but service is swift and you will find yourself moving up much more quickly than you may have anticipated. It does tend to get noisy, as a restaurant full of lunch hour patrons will, but it is not unbearable and the quick, efficient service and excellent food more than make up for the bustle.

The main portion of the menu is made up of various sandwiches. With each comes a trip to the salad bar, which is stocked with such essentials as raw cauliflower, sprouts, spinach greens mixed in with lettuce, and your choice of dressings, to name a few. Depending on how quick an eater you are, your sandwich should arrive about the time you're laying down your salad fork.

The ultimate sandwich on their menu is the "Grand Slam." I arrives cut in half, as the full sandwich is too long to fit on the plate.

If you are a lighter eater, you might find the "Club House" to your liking. It stands only about two inches in contrast to the "Grand Slam."

New China

Short on time, but want something just a little extravagant and different? The New China is a quick four or five minute shot down Molalla Avenue from the College.

The decor is basic, standard restaurants booths with a few Oriental pictures on the wall. It's simple, clean and bright, with a "family place" atmosphere, a good place for friendly conversations. I could have done without the KUPL muzak in the background.

Prices are about right for a restaurant of this type, \$5.50 a head for one of their larger dinners. We ordered the No. 5 Chinese dinner (American food also is available). The dinner consisted of sweet and sour spare ribs, fried rice, chow mein and shrimp. The waitresses happily substituted egg foo young for the rice.

The big plus for the New China is the service. Our waitress greeted us with a warm smile and was friendly and helpful. One can appreciate courteous service if you've ever had to withstand an obnoxious waiter or waitress. On a few occasions in the past I've been tempted to commit acts of horrible violence. (No hate mail please, we're not knocking everyone in the profession.)

The dinners arrived in a relatively short time. I was a little disappointed in the shrimp which appeared to be huge but were actually half breading. They did have a good picker, however. If you are a picky person you will notice that the food is just a touch too salty. The meal was not super fantastic, but pretty good and food portions were generous.

To wrap it up, the New China is not a bad place to go for lunch. It's close to the College, the food is good, and it is a subdued, restful kind of place.

Elmer's

The newest eatery in the College vicinity is Elmer's, which is part of the Fred Meyer complex that is nearing completion on Molalla Avenue.

Elmer's is a chain-restaurant which caters to a family clientele. It is a variation-on-a-theme, being very similar to the Sambos, Perkins, or Denny's chains. But Elmer's is a step above the others. The food is better in quality and quantity, the atmosphere clartier (though still a shade "plastic") and the service faster.

Elmer's, like the Sambo's, Denny's, Kopper Kitchen-type chains, serves breakfast all day long. It is their specialty. In comparison with other "pancake houses," it is a superior establishment. Elmer's doesn't skimp on the food either. Their "short stack" of pancakes usually comprises more food than Perkin's "large stack." The prices, however, are fairly comparable to the other chains.

The service is fast and courteous. On the other hand,

Elmer's will not inundate you in friendliness. Like all family-friendly chains, it is a culinary assembly line. The waitresses seat you, pour your coffee, take your order, serve you and give you the check, all with a noticeable lack of smiles or small talk.

To emphasize the point, "The Print" reviewer mentioned to the cashier that someone had left his lights on in the parking lot, and requested she page the owner. Her reply: "Oh well, they'll find out soon enough."

But if you're not looking to strike up a new friendship, the service is sufficiently fast and courteous.

All in all, Elmer's is a very fine restaurant. For cleanliness, speed and downright good food, "The Print" highly recommends Elmer's.

Harry's Mustache

For the money, Harry's Moustache and Eatery (622 Main St., Oregon City) is a wonderful place to eat a pleasant lunch. Only ten minutes away from the College, the atmosphere is nice and the food is good. The parking is...O.K., by that I mean that you can find a parking space easily enough...if you don't mind walking around the block from your car to the restaurant. Wheelchair access is no problem because there are no steps to climb except to the men's room, which is on the second level of the establishment.

When a friend and I visited there recently, we were surprised at how quickly we were seated—in about three minutes. In two more we had our orders taken, and in a couple more we were tasting our salads. The waitress must have been timing us as we ate, for just moments after we finished our salad she was there with our main dishes. The speed with which the customer is taken care of is wonderful. The waitresses and busboys were really hustling, just a-runnin' up and down the aisles.

The quality of the food was good, and we were given enough to fill us up for several hours afterward. I had Harry's Combo, which consisted of a plate of spaghetti with my choice of two sauces. I had their meat sauce and fresh mushrooms. It was not as good as Mom's, but it was real good for \$4.25. The salad was fresh although the modern restaurant salad only consists of chopped-up lettuce with different colors and a little dressing thrown on top. The main dish was, to say the least, colorful, appealing to the eye, and appetizing. My friend had the meatball sandwich, which cost \$3.25, and he liked it.

The ceiling had a set of Casablanca fans that slowly blew air around the dining room. The old-looking wood paneling on the walls gave the place a secure feeling, and cut out all outside noise, even though the restaurant is right on Main Street.

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