

New Hillsdale food cart court offers burgers, waffles and veggie-laden dishes

By Jillian Daley
The Southwest Portland Post

Three new dining options cropped up this fall in Hillsdale in a snug little spot at Southwest Capitol Highway and Sunset Boulevard.

The food cart court, which opened in mid-September, features Violetta's juicy burgers and crispy fries; Smaaken Waffles' all-day-long breakfast treats with sweet and savory toppings; and Radiant Life's vegetarian and vegan sandwiches, wraps and bowls.

Though neighbors frequent the three carts, Radiant Life manager Lori Dickerson said the new dining locale, which abuts Wilson High School, has become a special place for students.

"I think they're really excited to have a place to call their own besides the school," Dickerson said.

Developer Richard Stein said the idea behind opening his food cart court was to create not only a community hub for neighbors but also a place where the students had access to healthful, reasonably priced meals.

Stein's new venture is a non-smoking area. Amenities include portable toilets behind a wooden screen.

Stein put in a large, white tent to protect customers who dine during chilly weather, and he plans to install heaters to keep the students and other diners warm. In January or February, he wants to add a cart featuring Middle Eastern food and one with Asian food, possibly bento.

Area residents are giving his new development rave reviews, he said.

"The food is really good, and it's developing a reputation in the neighborhood, and that's just what I was hoping for," he said.

Wilson High School principal Brian Chatard said he loves the Smaaken Waffles' waffle sandwich with roast turkey, bacon and honey Dijon mustard (\$6.95). Chatard also enjoys Violetta.

"If you want to get a nice burger

you don't have to drive anywhere," he said. "You just have to walk across the parking lot, and there it is."

Chatard said the food carts offer nutritious options, besides cafeteria food, for the students and staff. Freshmen are not normally allowed to leave during school hours, but Chatard gives them permission to step a few feet off campus to visit the three eateries.

Radiant Life abounds with healthy offerings, but the other carts have healthy options as well. Violetta's hamburger meat is hormone free and organic, and wholegrain buns and veggie burgers also are available. Smaaken Waffles has the Smaafu, a waffle filled with fried tofu, cheddar cheese and spinach (\$6.25).

As for affordability, Violetta and Radiant Life give students special deals. Violetta provides free French fries – a choice of sweet potatoes, Yukon gold potatoes and russets – to students with the purchase of a burger (\$6.50-\$7.75, depending on toppings).

Radiant Life offers gluten-free tortilla chips at no cost with the purchase of a bowl, which includes the Beans and Rice bowl (\$3).

The three food carts also hold special hours for students, staying open during Wilson High football games, which can run until about 10 p.m.

Smaaken Waffles employee Molly Bradley said she and the other employees enjoy the student dynamic, which can create friendly peer pressure during menu orders.

"A group of girls will come in, and one girl will look at something and say 'that's too sweet,' and they'll all get something savory," Bradley said. "Another day, one will be like: 'I want some chocolate,' and they'll all get something sweet."

Violetta employee Jessica Leffers said the students are polite and joke around with the staff.

"They put up with Brendan" (Lavery), Leffers said, teasing a co-worker during a brief lull in business last month. Lavery smiled and ducked



Violetta employees Brittany Plymell and Brendan Lavery adjusted the look of the sign that adorned their food cart during a lull in business on Oct. 19. Violetta is one of three food carts that opened in mid-September next to Wilson High School. (Post photo by Jillian Daley)

his head.

According to their Facebook pages: Smaaken Waffles is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily; Radiant Life is open 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 4:30 to 7 p.m. Monday to Friday as well as 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. Violetta is open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Portland Officer Brian Hughes said police have received no reports of incidents at the food court park.

Hughes said he and other officers have visited somewhat regularly on account of the food, however.

Hughes recommends the Grazing Goat (\$7) at Radiant Life, a wrap or sandwich of Dave's Killer Bread filled with goat cheese, avocado and roasted red peppers. "It was very good, and the people that sold it to me were very nice," Hughes said.

It's the most wonderful time of the year...

**Don't forget to advertise
in our December
Holiday Guide!**

Meet the Merchants Special:
1/16V (2.35" x 4") color ad
includes everything for \$147!

Holiday Guide Special: Mention
this offer and save 20% off the open
rate of any standard size display ad
1/8 page or larger. Includes space,
design, color, and position.



Call Don or Harry at
(503) 244-6933 or
e-mail: ads@multnomahpost.com
for details

Deadline is November 20

The Southwest
Portland Post

www.SWPortlandPost.com

**SAVE
20%**

**SEND
BOUQUETS
FOR ANY
OCCASION**
anniversary | birthday | just because

ProFlowers®

Hurry! Order now for unbelievable low prices, with flowers from \$19.99^{+/s/h}
Visit www.ProFlowers.com/heart or call 877.805.9951

Join Over 12 Million People Who Have Found a Better Way to Send Flowers

*20% off discount will appear upon checkout. Minimum purchase of \$29.00. Does not apply to gift cards or certificates, same-day or international delivery, shipping and handling, taxes, or third-party hosted products (e.g. wine) and cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Discounts not valid on bulk or corporate purchases of 10 units or more. Offer expires: 12/31/12.