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FOOD BY LANCE SPARKS

Food in the City

Wine, donuts and civilization growing downtown.

I have seen the signs that — perhaps — Eugene might be growing up, becoming a city where people not only will want to visit the downtown but might even hope to live there. Which is what we really want in a CITY, not some hokey imitation of a mass-market mall.

In a real city — think New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland and especially Vancouver, B.C. — a certain symbiosis grows up between residents and businesses to create an environment that flourishes with activity and variety. A lively mix seems best: houses, apartments and even (gag) condos allows for a blend of ages and needs — young families with school-age children, singles and couples of all ages, mature and retired folk in the prime of their lives. Then a mix of workplaces that employ or service the residents and visitors — office complexes, nice hotels for visitors, small-scale production facilities, institutions such as schools and hospitals and libraries, good food stores, retail shops and boutiques, art galleries, restaurants (lots) and, and, and. Save plenty of parks and open spaces, preserving and even enhancing features of natural beauty where kids and adults can gather, play, walk or run, bike or roller-blade. Concentrated living works well for many (not all) human beings; the result of careful planning and cooperation can be a livable city.

Imagine such a fate for Eugene. Imagine people in the streets in the evening (not just lost kids, panhandlers and lurkers). Imagine gaping holes in city blocks filled with vigorous businesses and living spaces. Could happen. Some of the signs to watch for will include such places as City View Café (corner of 8th and Park) and Perugino (between 7th and 8th on Willamette).

City View is tiny, maybe a half-dozen tables including two outside for rainless

times. Most of their business is in specialty sandwiches and take-out lunches. But they also serve at least one item that is a distinctive mark of high civilization. I speak of New Orleans-style beignets; faintly related to donuts, these are fluffy rectangles of fried dough liberally sprinkled with powdered sugar. City View's version are cooked to order (3 for \$2.50), served hot, best with some of their good coffee or modified café-au-lait. Oh lor', dey some good.

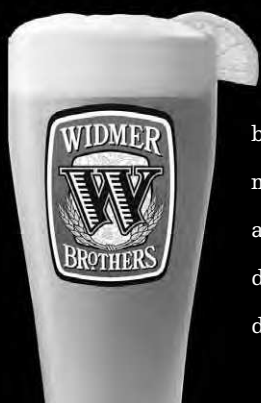
Perugino styles itself a coffee house, wine bar and gallery. They offer a wide range of desserts to go with an array of coffee drinks, plus a few sandwiches and "light plates," beers, teas, etc. But the exciting aspect of their repertoire, to my mind, lies in the infancy of the wine bar. Right now Perugino is pouring two sparklers, four whites, one rosé, five reds, two ports, and one sherry, but all are very carefully selected for top quality and value, all reasonably priced (\$4.25-\$6/glass, \$17-\$24/bottle).

This is a fine beginning and maybe about as much as can be expected for this market at this time, but in a glowing future of Eugene's increasing civilization (don't laugh, it could happen), wine lovers might look for a much wider range of tasting options, both for local wines (Perugino currently pours only one Oregon wine, Evesham Wood 2001 Pinot Noir, superb, but...) and examples of the rare and surprising (say, Argentine malbec or Hungarian tokay or Okanagan Valley ice wine). If Perugino can survive long enough for Eugene to grow up, maybe we can all look for a brighter future.

We have seen other such hopeful signs that the Emerald City might actually leave its Kansas-like doldrums, but our most civilized citizens will have to help. Get on your feet, folks, and get into town. **EW**



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Rob (right) finds the anaerobic bottling machine funny. Kurt, not so much.

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