

FULL-FLAVORED FUSION

Bon Mi has pun us over BY SHANNON FINNELL

There's a lot to love in Bon Mi's little menu. The newly opened sandwich and soup shop on Pearl and Broadway is cultivating a following after a month in business.

Owner Yoon Bigot wanted to stress simplicity when she planned Bon Mi's fare, but that doesn't mean that creating it wasn't a labor of love — emphasis on the "labor." While Bigot and her husband, an architect, remodeled the former Hawthorne Deli location, they also worked to design a menu. "We had to work for three months to make it and taste it and see what comes up," Bigot says.

What came up is a medley of Vietnamese and French-inspired sandwiches, soups and salads, plus some breakfast on the side. Bon Mi's bahn mi sandwiches, with five protein options and a pickled vegetable topping, are fresh and filling for just a little more than a fancy coffee. Bigot cooks the meat and makes the pho herself. Pork lovers can choose between thinly sliced grilled pork marinated in lemongrass or red chili sauce. She says the key to her tofu is flavoring it with garlic and lemongrass.

On the French side of the menu, Bon Mi features some seriously simple sandwiches. Bigot says that some dishes out there contain so many ingredients that the taste gets lost. That's why the grilled chicken sandwich has just fresh avocado, tomato and whole-grain mustard on top. "Simple is easy and tasty, and you can taste simply chicken and mustard," she says.

Bon Mi's fresh ingredients come from Sunrise Asian Market, Bigot says, and she tries to buy local items. That's why the bread is an anomaly; it comes from Safeway. "Is that good to say or not?" Bigot asks, stifling a laugh. Before the restaurant opened, she brought the sort of baguette she wanted from Portland to Eugene and asked local bakeries if they could replicate it. "They don't know how to make it or they don't have the same equipment or they don't know how to make the texture," she says. Now she has a standing order for 120 fresh-baked baguettes every morning, and they've sold out every day.

While Bon Mi has started out as a lunch-focused restaurant, the breakfast menu features a breakfast sandwich, berry waffles and a breakfast special. It's neither Vietnamese or French-inspired, Bigot says, just different. She says she hopes the quick service will build a morning clientele to complement the lunch crowd.

Next on the list is ratcheting up dinner and adding specials to the menu, Bigot says. She's thinking a bahn mi-style rice bowl will be a hit, but she says she's glad Bon Mi started out focusing on lunch to establish a workflow. "Otherwise, we'd go crazy!"

Bigot, who moved to the U.S. from Korea when she was 19, says she's always loved Vietnamese food. After living in Eugene, she and her husband moved to California for eight years, where they lived in a neighborhood that she estimates was "80 percent Vietnamese and only 1 percent Korean."

That neighborhood was a culinary paradise for Bigot and her husband. "You just walk out, and there's a lot of Vietnamese — all the Vietnamese soups, every block is a Vietnamese restaurant, and we loved it," she says. Her goal of making fast, delicious food fits right in with her hope that she can be part of that sort of environment in downtown Eugene. "Because I love downtown, I want downtown to grow," she says. ■

Bon Mi is located at 153 E. Broadway, 505-9349, and the website is bonmieugene.com



YOON BIGOT

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