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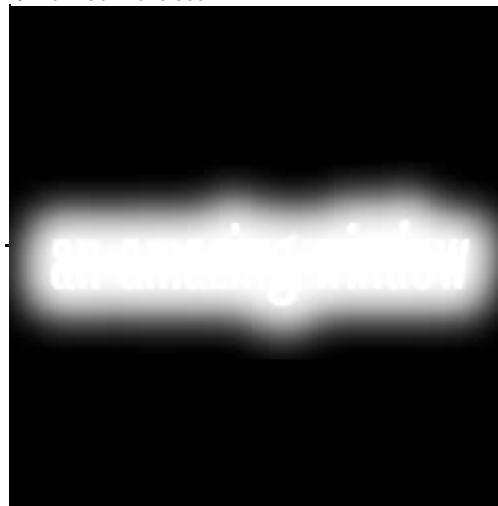
Friday, January 07, 2005

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Eleni's Philoxenia This Pearl District offshoot of Eleni Touhouliotis' popular Sellwood restaurant focuses on the unique dishes of the isle of Crete, with a tapas-style menu of small plates that lets you create your own series of interesting light bites. Main dish portions are so extreme they leave you feeling weighed down, but less-filling pasta options abound. Servers aren't particularly sharp so far, and they may make you feel like a dummy if you mispronounce any of the complicated dish names. 112 N.W. Ninth Ave.; 503-227-2158. (Originally reviewed Dec. 24) -- Grant Butler



Criollo Bakery This lush Beaumont sweet spot, run by former Bluehour pastry chef Melissa McKinney, makes some delicious and strikingly high-style pastries and desserts. It's a lively spot for lunch, too, with a smart menu of simple, well-turned pleasures, from croque-monsieur to quiche Lorraine. The space, which flows through a big interior opening into the Java Man coffee shop next door, invites relaxing. 4727 N.E. Fremont St.; 503-335-9331. (Dec. 10) -- Bob Hicks

Vitis Enoteca With an offbeat location, this Italian wine bar and bistro is easy to overlook. But it's worth seeking out for its worthy light bites and an impressive by-the-glass wine list. The menu is mostly small plates, with the kitchen showing a particularly sure hand with the deep fryer. Baccala fritters of dried

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salt cod are light and crunchy. Even the fried walnut popover dessert shows a lot of sizzle. 535 N.W. 16th Ave.; 503-241-0355. (Dec. 3) -- Grant Butler

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Meriwether's The one-time home to the acclaimed L'Auberge re-emerges as an inviting neighborhood restaurant with three distinct spaces: a cozy bar that's busy on game nights; a quiet main dining room; and a year-round outdoor garden. The menu is largely meat and potatoes fare, but the executions are solid, with the kitchen offering some good options at the start of the day, including cured gravlax and light buttermilk biscuits. 2601 N.W. Vaughn St.; 503-228-1250. (Nov. 12) -- Grant Butler

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OUR AFFI



Slow Bar Higgins meets Satyricon at this bar of intriguing contrasts. An ambitious collection of old-school punk/new wave blasts from a corner juke while the kitchen gets in a groove with subtly sophisticated Northwest/Italian bar food amped by farm-fresh produce. Top-shelf liquors sit alongside Hamm's tall boys, and the high-low design scheme includes gigantic circular diner-style booths and a chic little nook of milky-white armless chairs. Soak it all in (along with the cigarette smoke) while taking in a serious burger on a brioche bun, homemade ravioli topped with things like braised lamb shoulder and tomato sauce, some rockin' sevice and a bittersweet panna cotta to seal the deal. They pump up the volume here, so make sure you like your food good and your music loud. 533 S.E. Grand Ave.; 503-230-7767 (Nov. 5) -- Karen Brooks

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