

PORTLAND FOODIE FINDS

Spicing Up on a Budget

By Andrea Slonecker

Ethnic eateries are on the top of my list for the coming year. My quest for 2009 is to explore and write about the inexpensive food finds in Portland. I'm beginning with two Asian restaurants fueled with intoxicatingly delicious spices and heat—and a feast for \$15 per person or less.

At 10:00 p.m. Saturday night I pulled into a parking lot on SE 82nd just off Powell. The mission: to feast on the Vietnamese cuisine at Phở Hung, touted as some of the best in Portland. In store was a piping hot bowl of phở, the beef noodle soup regarded as the country's national dish. Served with a piled high plate of fresh bean sprouts, Thai basil, sliced fresh chiles, and lime, I was able to concoct my own potion. The fragrant broth steamed like a cauldron of beefy aromatherapy. At \$8.25 this meal was a bargain, and as satisfying as one from a trendy downtown restaurant, making my quest to the outskirts of town worthwhile. With a dash of hoisin sauce and squirt of sriracha for heat, I'm reminded of another enlightening food experience...

A few weeks before, I was sitting around the largest of a handful of tables lining the sparsely decorated dining room of Lucky Strike. 122nd and Powell is a long way to drive for dinner from downtown Portland, but the pay off would have been worth traveling to the Sichuan Province where this eatery's cuisine originated. Surrounded by six friends, all cooks from some of Portland's finest restaurants—Ten 01, Le Pigeon, and Sel Gris, I sat teary-eyed and sweating. We all were. Unable to consume the pigs' ears drenched in oily garlic chili sauce, Hot Pepper Chicken Bath, and MaPo Tofu fast enough, I was afraid to slow down and let the spice catch up to me. At once there were twelve plates circling the table. The scraping of porcelain across Formica, sniffing, and slurping replaced dinner conversation, as we savored these irresistibly hot dishes. I twirled the al dente noodles of the Sichuan dish called Dan Dan Mian around my chopsticks as if I was eating a plate of spaghetti Bolognese. It wasn't until the end of this ethereal dining experience that I realized the feast had cost just \$10 per person.

Phở Hung
3120 SE 82nd Ave
Portland, OR 97266
503-772-0089

Lucky Strike
12306 SE Powell Blvd
Portland, OR 97236
503-206-8292