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RESTAURANTS

November 3, 2009

Pizza, Porn, Tattoos, and Tacos

White Center's Got a Lot Going for It

by LAUREL MILLER



Do I want a "Two Meats" pizza with pepperoni and Italian sausage, or am I more in the mood for... *Transsexual Beef Cocks*? Decisions, decisions. I was in White Center to check out Proletariat Pizza (9622 16th Ave SW, 432-9765), the newest addition to the neighborhood's ethnically schizoid food scene. While the neighborhood is still rife with La Raza—decaled lowriders and do-rag-wearing Gs, it gets a bad rap (a store employee, when asked if he thought the area was scary, snorted, "Fremont is scary").

Proletariat ("By the people, for the people"), which opened in mid-September, is sandwiched cozily between Dzul Tattoo & Airbrush and Stan's Adult Superstore on the main drag. Dzul is the place for cholo-style ink as well as bilingual genital piercings (ever wonder how to say "inner labia" or "scrotum" *en español*?). Stan's, meanwhile, has a bit of a warehousey feel, but that's okay, because never have I seen such an outstanding assortment of inflatable farm animals or rubber extremities (feet, meet "Fist of Fury").

Appetite revved after previewing the DVD for *Anal Buffet*, I popped next door for a cheese slice and salad. Proletariat—named for its working-class surroundings rather than any Marxist tendencies—does possess a rather minimalist aesthetic. Aside from some works by local artists on the walls, there's only the institutional-ish open kitchen (the space is a former bakery), a cluster of wooden tables and bench seats, and a handwritten chalkboard menu. Slices are of the cheese or pepperoni variety (\$2–\$3); pies adorned with the usual suspects, as well as more bourgeois toppings like prosciutto and egg, will set you back \$10 to \$18. Beer ranges from plebe-friendly \$1.75 Olympia to imported \$4 Peroni. My salad—mixed greens, garbanzos, kalamata olives, Gorgonzola, and balsamic vinaigrette (\$4)—was better than your standard iceberg affair, but nothing spectacular. Alas, so was my pizza. The hand-mixed crust was New York—thin and pliable, nicely retaining its crispness. The sauce, however, was acidic and bland, the mozzarella flavorless and lacking any

Proletariat Pizza
 9622 16th Ave SW
 Seattle 98106
 (432) 9765
 Mon-Sat 5 pm-9 pm

Reader Rating
 Be the first to review this location!

Salvadorean Bakery
 1719 SW Roxbury St
 Seattle 98106
 (206) 762-4064

Reader Rating
 ★★★★★
 Based on 3 reviews
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Full Tilt Ice Cream
 9629 16th Ave SW
 Seattle 98106
 (206) 767-4811

redemptive elasticity or gooeyness. Still, the staff is sweet and competent, and Proletariat's desire to be a source of both sustenance and community is so genuine, it's worth a visit if you're nearby.

Reader Rating
 Be the first to review this location!

All

White Center may not yet boast destination-worthy pizza, but for cheap eats, it's hard to beat. People love Salvadorean Bakery (1719 SW Roxbury St, 762-4064), but I was underwhelmed by a *queso y loroco pupusa* and the signature quesadilla (a cheese-enriched, muffinlike thing). As for the two *cabeza* tacos I scored for a buck at La Fondita #2's tidy little roach coach (9811 15th Ave SW, 551-0529): tasty, with exceptionally good corn tortillas. Vegetarians or those seeking to amp up their arteriosclerosis should visit the adjacent *elote* stand for roasted ears of corn slathered with mayo and chili powder.

For revival from your lard coma, cross the street to the Vietnamese-owned Hung Long (insert Stan's joke here) Sieu Thi White Center Supermarket (9828 15th Ave SW, 768-8074). For two dollars, caffeinated orgasmic bliss can be yours with a glass of made-to-order *cà phê sũa nóng* (potent drip coffee with condensed milk) from the prepared-foods counter. Grab some deliciously squishy mung-bean sweets or the leaf-wrapped sticky-rice pyramids filled with sweetened bean paste and minced pork known as *banh u*.

For more substantial Asian eats, there's 88 Restaurant (9418 Delridge Way SW, 768-9767) down the street. This adorable little family-run Vietnamese joint has walls the color of mango, banana, and navel orange, which somehow has the effect of a hearty dose of Prozac. The enormous grilled pork rolls (\$4.95) encased in rice paper are refreshing (though the accompanying peanut sauce is gloppy and bland), but the pho (\$5.85-\$6.95) rocks. Mine was loaded with beefy bits of brisket, flank, and tendon, the broth perfectly seasoned and fragrant with star anise. Mr. 88 cooks, while the Mrs. and their two teenagers run the front of the house. Judging by the enthusiastic hellos from both Vietnamese and round-eye customers, locals love the place as much as I did.

If nothing else floats your boat in White Center, Full Tilt Ice Cream (9629 16th Ave SW, 767-4811) should. There's a new Columbia City location, but the original opened here in June 2008. Situated next to J & W Tavern, the day drinker's bar of choice, Full Tilt offers a mashup of family fun. Live music from the likes of Mexican-ska-punk local heroes Three Dead Whores, pinball, beer/ice-cream pairings, and dairy-free scoops for grumpy vegan types make this place kick ass, but it's really all about the ice cream. Co-owner Justin Cline makes 16 different flavors of artisanal deliciousness, some made with fruit grown in nearby backyards. Current seasonal faves are Memphis King (peanut butter, banana, and chocolate-covered bacon), bourbon caramel, *horchata*, and *ube* (purple yam), all \$2.75 a scoop. Come to think of it, Full Tilt is kind of like White Center in microcosm: multiethnic, a little boozy, very indie, affordable neighborhood wackiness. ★

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