



QUIRKY AND DELICIOUS

Portland, Oregon's vibrant food scene is equal parts eclectic, homegrown and tasty.

FROM CASUAL TACOS at *¿Por Qué No?* (as good as any I've had in Texas) to an intimate, in-kitchen dining experience, the Portland, Ore., food scene excelled every time I opened my mouth during a recent visit. Travel Portland organized a dine around starting at Tasty n Daughters, where we sipped local and Spanish wines paired to match the deliciousness crafted before our eyes by renowned Chef John Gorham, who has seven distinct, lauded restaurants across Portland. Situated around the prep counter in Gorham's kitchen, we learned about and feasted upon local oysters and percebes (gooseneck barnacles, a pricey Iberian delicacy), *jamón ibérico* and black truffle pasta ("The truffles are very ripe this year—they have a very good nose," Gorham explained). It was all the more special that we were the first group to experience this exclusive setting and service.

Thoroughly stuffed, we made our way

to Oui! Wine Bar + Restaurant at the Southeast Wine Collective—a place at which vintners can make and cellar small-batch wine, and groups of 20 or so can easily buy out the whole space. Because our bellies hadn't yet literally popped, we then headed over to Pinolo Gelato, where founder Sandro Paolini served up prosecco and lemon sorbet floats and encouraged us to sample his dozen-plus delicious, homemade flavors (the Sicilian pistachio gelato alone justifies humanity).

On the darkened bus back to the hotel, exhausted and sated, someone joked that Portland dine arounds should be sweat-pants affairs—for comfort, "You know, like loosening your pants from a Thanksgiving dinner."

"Are you saying every day is Thanksgiving in Portland?" I shoot back to the voice.

"Yes! Oh my god!"

While I'd expected to encounter cultur-

ally curious scenes in Portland, stumbling upon a treasure trove of Hollywood relics on display in an unassuming video rental store wasn't a consideration until I entered Movie Madness in the city's southeast. Once you walk past the more than 80,000 meticulously organized DVDs and VHS tapes, you're suddenly in a motion picture history museum. A screen-used knife from *Psycho* (spoiler: it's actually made of wood), one of the Fu Dog statues from *Citizen Kane's* Xanadu, a full-sized alien from *Mars Attacks*, Marvin's corpse from *Pulp Fiction* (he's the guy John Travolta's character accidentally shoots while in the backseat of a car), the wizard's pants from *The Wizard of Oz*, a mugwump from *Naked Lunch* and on and on.

When Movie Madness' founder announced plans to retire—which involved selling the prop collection and shuttering the shop—Portland's historic Hollywood

While
you're
here...



The **Oregon Convention Center** completed a US\$40 million renovation—the facility's first such project since opening in 1990—late last year that updated and expanded public spaces, including an outdoor plaza. This largest convention center in the Pacific Northwest boasts 255,000 square feet of event space. A new connector between the different halves of the center eases foot traffic and is a fine metaphor for overcoming space and bringing people together.

Opened immediately after that renovation, the \$224 million **Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center** offers 600-plus rooms right in front of the center's light-rail station. That means the airport is a \$2.50, direct train ride away. The iconic Powell's City of Books (and most of Portland) is similarly accessible via a short, inexpensive train ride.



For a metaphorical taste of the weird, stop by **Paxton Gate Portland** to explore fossils, gems and a large selection of creative taxidermy. This high-class oddity shop on N. Mississippi Ave. in North Portland is flush with natural light, so nothing feels especially creepy or macabre. After ogling the eternally adorable costumed mice or the massive, counter-top, two-faced calf (only \$30,000!), enjoy one of this hip neighborhood's numerous cafes, bars and restaurants.



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Theatre launched a Kickstarter campaign, quickly raising enough capital to purchase the entirety of Movie Madness and safeguard it under the theater's non-profit umbrella. The crowdfunding campaign was so successful that a stretch goal funded the Movie Madness Miniplex, a "micro-cinema"/screening room suitable for up to 18 that opened last year. Boasting large, comfy chairs, laser projection and Dolby Atmos surround sound, the Miniplex has free showings of rare and cult films every day but is also available for private events. Groups requiring a larger cinematic space can head over to the 94-year-old Hollywood Theatre, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Prior to landing at that unexpected

movie mecca, I stumbled into the Freaky-but-true Peculiarium, a Portland oddity since 1967. If your bucket list includes being closed in a special-effects-laden mock coffin to experience the sensation of being buried alive or posing with a life-sized Krampus, look no further. By relocating to a larger venue in the city's southeast early this year, the Peculiarium is growing from a cramped 1,700-square-foot collection to more than 6,000 square feet of fun ridiculousness. This expansion will permit the exhibition of even more quirky and confounding weirdness but will also make the interactive museum/art exhibit/novelty shop a viable event space.

—MICHAEL PINCHERA