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SMART MOUTH
Foodie Outposts Add Spice To Salt Lake City's Menu

By Jennifer Margulies
Special to The Washington Post
Sunday, November 16, 2008; Page P02

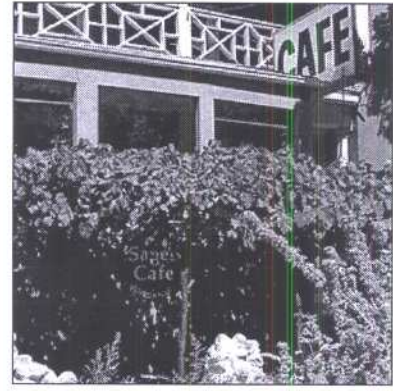
Salt Lake City usually makes you think of businessmen sporting short haircuts and long-skirted mothers herding their children like goslings. It has never been known for its culinary prowess. Ask a local, such as 25-year-old library assistant Patrick Hoecherl, what folks in Salt Lake City like to eat, and he'll tell you the dish of choice at every large gathering is green Jell-O with grated carrots, appropriately molded with scalloped edges.

But there's another side to Salt Lake City food: a foodie culture that includes offbeat and even New Age-y restaurants that are proving as popular as places serving home-style cooking.

Go to the award-winning *Red Iguana* (736 W. North Temple, 801-322-1489, <http://www.rediguana.com>) on a Friday or Saturday night and you'll find dozens of hungry souls milling around in the restaurant's parking lot, happily waiting up to two hours for a table. And the wait is worth it: A family-owned business that makes seven kinds of mole from scratch every morning, the Red Iguana is a hole-in-the-wall Mexican joint where you can forget enchiladas and burritos (though they do have those) and try instead the pumpkin-seed mole made with dried chiles, peanuts, onions and tomatoes and tossed with chicken; or any dish with the king of all sauces, mole negro, made with Mexican chocolate, raisins, walnuts and bananas.

One hundred percent vegan food artfully presented and served by waiters sporting colorful tattoos on their arms is what you'll find at *Sage's Cafe* (473 E. Broadway, 801-322-3790, <http://www.sagescafe.com>), which is owned by 33-year-old Ian Brandt, a Philadelphia native and *University of Utah* grad, who liked Salt Lake City so much he decided to stay and is a man on a mission to bring natural foods to the Mormon capital. (In January he plans to open a mostly organic wholesale food warehouse with produce from local farmers.) Don't expect your food right away when the place is crowded, but do expect to have your taste buds dazzled. Your preconception that vegan food can't be delicious will fly out the window after the first bite of the shiitake mushroom appetizer with carrot butter pâté (made with ground macadamia nuts) served on toasted baguette slices.

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Dining out in Salt Lake City? Sage's Cafe, left, disproves the notion that vegan food can't be delicious. The menu at the Tin Angel Cafe, above, includes sweet potato black truffle fish and wild-boar-and-beef-tip stew (Sage's Cafe)

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At *Tin Angel Cafe* (365 West 400 South, 801-328-4155, <http://www.thetinangel.com>), chef Jerry Liedtke dishes up seasonal, local foods in creative concoctions. On this ever-changing menu you'll find food you'd have a hard time ordering anywhere else, such as sweet potato black truffle flan and wild-boar-and-beef-tip stew.

And then there's the *One World Cafe* (41 South 300 East, 801-519-2002, <http://www.oneworldeverybodyeats.org>), a dining experience not to be missed. The brainchild of Denise Cerreta, a chiropractor turned entrepreneur, the nonprofit One World has a dozen or so organic dishes to choose from, with a menu that is neither fixed nor priced. (You pay what you like, and, yes, they've been in business for five years, and, no, we're not making this up.) Take as much or as little as you want of food such as lentil casserole, beet and carrot salad, baked fish, stir-fried beef and fresh fruit crumble, and then eat at one of the intimate tables. The cozy place, which gave birth to the One World Everybody Eats Foundation, is working to promote organic eats and ensure that everyone can have access to good local cooking. The menu always includes a free meal, usually brown rice and dal.

But what if you want to try green Jell-O with grated carrots? Most travelers will tell you that the stereotype of Utahans' being among the friendliest folks in America holds true. So get yourself invited to a family reunion.

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