

A Well-Placed Meal May Be All You Knead

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Not that it was anything unusual, but I was having a bad day a few months ago, and it was in the late, breezy afternoon when I blew over to Haight Street in search of something to eat. I looked around and found this laid-back looking shop front (which could describe about three-quarters of the businesses here), but this one had natural light pouring down through three high windows into a large dining area, with murals on the walls and wooden tables and booths and a menu that went on and on (just like this sentence).

So I locked up my bike and went inside.

The Haight Ashbury, as you may be aware, distinguishes itself as a gold mine for restaurants with good food made from natural (sometimes organic) ingredients, while not charging an arm, a leg and an Amtrak ticket to partake of the feast. The neighborhood itself has never lost the feel of the sixties Mecca it once was, except for the top of Haight at Stanyan, where McDonalds has dug in its lackluster arches, probably until the next ice age.

There are also still flower children along Haight Street. Only nowadays they really are children. The eclectic, if upscale boutiques and other shops along the row sell some really cool stuff, and some of it is not expensive at all, if you take the time to sniff around. You may even be offered a cup of jasmine tea while you browse.

But if you're hungry then you should follow me in my weary



tracks to a restaurant called All You Knead, on Haight between Ashbury and Masonic. Needless to say, you don't have to dress up for the occasion.

Legend has it that three women started the business as a café/bakery back in the heyday of this neighborhood. Unlike some

other megalithic, coast-to-coast enterprises that we all know (and frequent daily), All You Knead has never bred itself into a chain. There's only one, but it has endured the ravages of the topsyturvy economy and ever-changing demographics without forsak-

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ing any of its softer touches and down-home ways.

However, the bakery's gone. Nowadays All You Knead operates as a full service restaurant - open seven days, from eight in the morning until eleven at night (except Tuesdays, when they close at 6 p.m.) Owners Julia and Bruce bought the business a few months ago, and said not to expect any big changes. They won't be introducing hot dogs, Julia told me, but noted that pizza was the best selling item on the menu.

I didn't order pizza though. There's the linguini, lots of sandwiches, several high-end entrees (like sautéed prawns and a salmon dish) and of course, breakfast. The latter category alone occupied several pages of the menu. All manner of omelets and pancake combinations are available, supplemented by vegetarian fare like smoked tofu. In keeping with the internal clock of the neighborhood, you can order breakfast until 5 p.m. daily.

I ended up going with the chicken burrito. It arrived topped



with heaping spoonfuls of guacamole and sour cream, and one exquisitely shaped green pimento I decided I would hang on my key chain later. The tortilla itself was packed with a scrumptuous blend of black beans, rice, chicken, salsa



(not too hot) and cheese (not too much).

As delicious as all this was, the dish also came with a green leafy salad topped with shredded carrots, red cabbage and cucumber. I needed only to add a dab of the house cream vinaigrette, which allowed all that healthy fiber to slide effortless down the palate.

But we haven't talked about the murals. There are several creations, apparently a fusion of head-shop esthetic and something along the lines of an ashram. While not the stuff of Diego Rivera, the images are engaging enough to ponder for some time. There's an old Victorian house, with jagged tree branches set ominously in the background. This depiction butts up against a cable car and the Palace of Fine Arts. If you're a claustrophobic person, you'll wax in the comfort of so much painted blue sky surrounding all these images.

There's potted plants and cut flowers perched along the old homey-looking plaster walls, which for some reason made me think of the flats I used to live in

around San Francisco for about \$150 a month. Boy, those were the days. You could pay all your bills with a part-time job and enjoy many leisure hours hanging out in someone's living room, drinking wine, smoking pot and planning the next protest march.

If you happen to make a pit stop before departing All You Knead (up some stairs - not wheelchair accessible), you may find an oriental horoscope posted on the wall. As opposed to the more familiar Zodiac which covers the twelve months of a year, this one charts a 12-year cycle. Each year is represented by an animal, either wild or domestic, and depending on your birth year, your strengths, shortcomings, and lifelong struggles can be safely predicted.

I read the description for my animal and shuddered. That horoscope had pegged me to a tee.

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