

Fine dining has no 'limits'

BY GERRY BELTZ
Restaurant critic

The weather is nice, your stomach is empty, and you want to go for a drive, but you've eaten at every café and restaurant in the city.

No problem. Just head out of the city limits to find some very fine dining opportunities.

Mamasitas, 605 Monroe, in Bennet (about a 20-minute drive southeast of City Campus; take Highway 2 to Highway 43, then turn right), serves excellent Mexican food at a reasonable price, and it's all homemade! The chips, salsa, everything is made from scratch, said owner Dennis Gardner. When you go into Mamasitas, the chips are already waiting at the table for you, and you're given a choice of hot or mild salsa. (A word of warning: I like spicy Mexican food and hot sauce as much as the next person, but this hot sauce just about pickled my giblets permanently!)

I ordered the combination platter #2 (taco, enchilada and chile relleno, with rice and beans) and an iced tea and dinner salad and still paid less than 10 bucks for a VERY filling and tasty meal. Dennis came over and chatted with me for a while, passing on some of the history behind Mamasitas, which will celebrate its seventh birthday in November. Also, I sampled the mole (pronounced moe-lay) sauce, which is a mild Mexican sauce with a chocolate base.

Mamasitas also offers both domestic and Mexican beers and margaritas made "only with Jose Cuervo Gold tequila," Gardner boasts.

Overall grade: A-

Not in the mood for burritos? Well, then, head west to ...

Merle's Food and Drink (8250 West O St., about 10 minutes due west of City Campus) isn't very

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fancy, but again, the food is absolutely scrumptious. To celebrate payday, I opted for the Merle's Special (12 oz. ribeye steak with potato, salad, bread and tea for \$10.95) and could barely finish the meal. Homemade bread definitely added to the experience, along with a well-cooked steak. Merle's also offers prime rib, seafood and pork, as well as both on- and off-sale alcoholic beverages. A wide variety of appetizers, including breaded veggies and buffalo wings, are also on the menu.

The menus are very cool as well - just chock full of information about both Merle's (which once housed Emerald's second post office) and the town of Emerald.

Overall grade: B+

Still haven't worked the driving out of your system? Well, about seven minutes due south of Emerald is...

Denton's Daily Double Steakhouse (about 20 minutes southwest of Lincoln at 7230 Lancaster) not only features fine food, but loads of keno and pickle cards as well! I grabbed the club-

house steak special (only \$8.95 for steak, pile of potato wedges, salad, roll and drink) and was pleasantly pleased with the cut and size of steak I received. The menu here had a wider variety of dinner selections available, but the prices weren't that different. The staff members were very helpful; they even walked me through my first keno entry (which I lost, naturally). Weekly specials include prime rib and margaritas.

Overall grade: A-

Obviously, there are more places to eat than the few listed above. Also recommended is the **Branched Oak Inn** (about 15 minutes northwest of Lincoln at Branched Oak Lake), or - for the truly adventurous - you can make the 90-minute trek to Hastings (due west on I-80) and visit the O.K. Café for one of the world's best hot roast beef sandwiches.

The one common factor I have found throughout all of these visits is that while there may be little difference among the prices of restaurants in and outside of Lincoln, the food is almost always homemade and tastier outside, thus making the journey much more worthwhile.

Now go forth and munch!



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

Stage is set for 1997-98 theater performances

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Theater

The old and the new will share the stage this year during the UNL theater department's 1997-98 season.

"As always, our goal is to provide positive professional training for actors and technicians and provide a wide range of experiences," said Juliana Hagemeyer, theater manager for the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. "People have the opportunity to do and see a wide variety, from classical repertory to contemporary work."

The diverse Main Stage season begins in October with George Bernard Shaw's "Misalliance." The show is a witty conversation between two families brought together by their engaged-to-be-married children. The play takes place on the country estate of a man made rich by selling underwear. The plot thickens as a female Polish acrobat, a pilot and a would-be murderer enter the scene. Directed by Tice Miller, the play will be in the Howell Theatre from Oct. 10-18. Student tickets are \$6.

The second fall Main Stage show is Sam Sheperd's "A Lie of the Mind," directed by Paul Steger. This play, revolving around two families and their married children, details how the families come together after domestic violence breaks out between their children. The show runs Oct. 31-Nov. 8 in the Studio Theatre. Student tickets are \$6.

The semester's final Main Stage show is Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" With songs such as "Oklahoma!" "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'!" and "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," this show tells a tale of young love and tragedy. The show is a collaboration between the theater and music departments and the Lied Center for Performing Arts. It will show at 8 p.m. from Dec. 11-13, and at 2 p.m. on Dec. 14 in Kimball Recital Hall. Student tickets are \$11 and \$7.50.

The spring semester Main Stage performances include John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" in the Howell Theatre, Christopher Marlowe's "Dr. Faustus" in the Studio Theatre, Spring Dance '98 in the Johnny Carson Theater, and "Arcadia" by Tom Stoppard in the Howell Theatre.

This season, the theater department will institute Main Stage student previews for theater, dance and art students who are required to see the shows. These previews will be the night before the show's public opening, and admission is \$5. All Main Stage shows will have previews, except for "Oklahoma!"

The Theatrix season, UNL's second stage, also begins in October with "Minor Demons," written by Bruce Graham and directed by Michael Rothmayer. The play focus-

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