

Raleigh's Eclectic Ethnic Food Scene Serves All

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Once a city where one could only find down-home country cooking and the same old fast food places, Raleigh's restaurant scene now includes various types of ethnic dishes that reflect the Triangle's growing cultural diversity. Under "Raleigh: Recreation" on city-data.com, Raleigh is specifically praised for its unusual "ethnic eateries." The restaurant styles tend to be just as diverse as the food served: some are elegant sit-down places whereas others are little "hole-in-the-wall" joints; some are owned by ambitious Americans, while still others are family-owned by immigrants from the host country. Regardless of the style of restaurant or type of ethnic cuisine, Raleigh citizens can enjoy a unique cultural variety of food choices that have sprouted up in and around the Triangle over the last decade.

Amber Williams, a contributing writer for the Raleigh Ethnic Restaurants Examiner, writes about Abyssinnia, an Ethiopian restaurant on Avent Ferry Road. Williams states, "Abyssinnia has such an authentic Ethiopian atmosphere that a visit can make you forget you are still in Raleigh, NC." She further explains why Abyssinnia provides a more "intimate" experi-

ence for customers: "There is a comfort level here that feels as if one has walked into someone's home and not a place of business. The hostess and wait staff are considerate and very attentive without being pushy. Conversation over dinner is expected and not rushed. Most tables are set up for two people at a small, round table, just big enough for a plate from which both people share." Williams sings this restaurant's praises for anyone seeking a drastically different dining experience. For example, one cultural aspect that restaurant goers may find unusual is the lack of silverware. "Silverware is not required for this journey," Williams states, "An adventure to this place means going beyond the ordinary dining experience and satisfying the taste for something different." For more information on Abyssinnia, check out <http://abyssiniarestaurant.net/>.

Raleigh citizens hungry for a different kind of Asian food need look no farther than Crazy

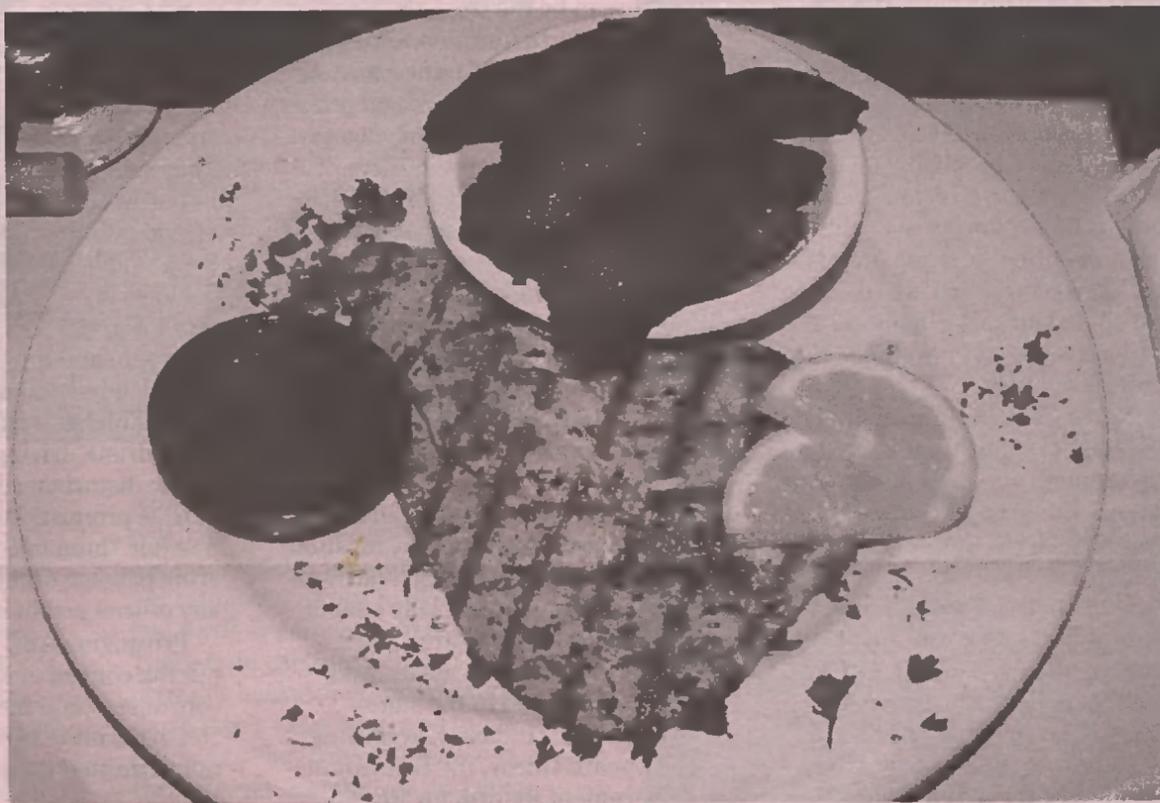


Photo courtesy of The Oakwood Café

Fire Mongolian Grill. Based in North Carolina, Crazy Fire has five locations, three of which fall in the Triangle. In this unconventional restaurant, one makes his or her own meal by choosing various raw meats and seafood from a refrigerated buffet and taking them to the grill. Then the chef of the day tosses the bowls of raw food over the fire and cooks it to fit each customer's individual preferences. Best of all, the chefs often do demonstrations of entertaining "tricks" while cooking the food, so Crazy Fire provides dinner and a mini show all in one! More information about this Mongolian local treasure can be found at <http://www.crazyfiremongolian.com/>.

Ron W., author of the popular blog "Foodalicious Follies: The Triangle's Food Scene," spends the majority of his time eating out and critiquing every one of his restaurant experiences. One of his ethnic Raleigh favorites is The Oakwood Café on Edenton Street. Although neither the name nor the first-sight appearance of the café screams "ethnic," this Argentinian family-owned-and-operated, "hidden ethnic gem" of a restaurant

serves the only authentic Argentinean and Cuban cuisine in Raleigh. Ron W. describes the atmosphere of the small restaurant as "spartan" and "reminiscent of a down-home country restaurant." As for the food, he highly recommends the empanadas, which are little, puffy, fried triangles stuffed with one's choice of beef, cheese, spinach, or chicken, and he especially praises the great selection of meats: "Like most Latin-American cuisine, the Oakwood Café is really about the meat. Whether you're talking pork tenderloin or churrasco steak, that's where Oakwood really shines." Ron W. ends his blog entry with a special appraisal of his favorite dessert on the menu: the "tender and toothsome" fried, caramelized plantains. For more information on The Oakwood Café, visit the website at <http://oakwoodcaferaleigh.com/>.

Raleigh citizens are lucky to have multiple cultural eateries to choose from when chowing down out on the town. Be they small, family-owned businesses or multiple-location chains, the eclectic, ethnic food scene in Raleigh that serves all has something fitting for every taste bud.

IN THIS ISSUE...

State & Local: NC Privatization of Liquor, Meredith Sustainability

National & International: Sixteen and Sailing, What's Up with this Weather?

Arts & Entertainment: Oscar Fashion, Ice Festival

Campus Life: Jodi Piccoul, What to Eat?

Science & Technology: A War Waged On the Oceans

Sports: Tennis Preview

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