

parдон, desserts such as the chocolaty César sundae, and the fresh lime cachaça (kah-SHAH-sah) cooler—made before your eyes by a bartender so handsome, he could be the best Spanish import in the place. Lunch and dinner daily. ☹️☹️☹️☹️

Commis 3859 Piedmont Ave., (510) 653-3902, commisrestaurant.com. Many of the creative dishes developed by Manresa alum James Syhabou and served at Commis will rock your world.

The squash potage says farm to table—with a long, careful stop in the kitchen—and a visit from some fresh-out-of-the-drink bay shrimp. The lin cod also popped out of the deep blue that minute, before being cooked to crisp perfection, and its mussel liquor with vermouth was downright sexy. A soft farm egg with crisp pork jowl will ruin you for anything less fresh, flavorful, or deliciously fatty, although an accompanying smear of fermented black garlic

didn't appeal to us. Soft, warm rolls were a perfect vehicle for the to-die-for house-made butter. Commis' menu is prix fixe—\$59 for three courses, plus \$29 for paired wines—and the servers are quiet and respectful, like docents in a museum. On our visit, the desserts were challenging: a melon soup that could have been simpler and more fruity, and a black sesame cake. Next time, we'll order three savory courses. Dinner Wed.–Sun. ☹️+\$\$\$\$

Doña Tomás 5004 Telegraph Ave., (510) 450-0522, donatomas.com. Oakland's Doña Tomás is the antidote to Taco Bell: Mexican slow food, made painstakingly by hand, using only seasonal, sustainably grown or raised ingredients, including Niman Ranch meat and Hoffman Farm poultry. Chef-owners Thomas Schnetz and Dona Savitsky opened their bright, airy Oaxacan-style eatery in 1999 to great acclaim, and they're still doing things right. The seedy Temescal block the restaurant is located on has grown up around them and is home to a flock of good casual eateries. You won't find burritos on the menu here. The frequently changing roster of dishes includes a variety of moles; quesadillas oozing fillings as varied as earthy *cuitlacoche* (a corn fungus) or *queso* Oaxaca, onion, and *epazote*; wonderful, house-made corn tortillas and salsas; and outstanding margaritas. The carnitas can be uneven—a little too dry at times—but when they're good, they're very, very good. Service is efficient and friendly, the atmosphere convivial, the bar lively. And dining

alfresco in the courtyard (there are heat lamps) is an all-too-rare treat for East Bay residents this side of the tunnel. Dinner Tues.–Sat. ☹️☹️+\$\$

Flora 1900 Telegraph Ave., (510) 286-0100. The owners of the ever-crowded Temescal Mexican eatery Doña Tomás have headed in a new direction with Flora. The restaurant, located in a 1920s building in Oakland's Uptown district, exudes a retro cool—an art deco bar outfitted with swivel chairs wraps around the kitchen. Cocktails are precisely prepared throwbacks such as the wonderfully tart, absinthe-kissed Corpse Reviver No. 2. Caramelized shallots and black truffle vinaigrette lend deep flavor to a little gem lettuce salad. And we enjoyed a decadent, if salty, small plate of braised short ribs paired with crisp potatoes topped with cheddar cheese béchamel. Lively sautéed spinach complemented a juicy Niman Ranch strip steak, but burned eggplant ruined the pasta Norma. Service is a dream. At dessert, don't miss the spumoni, with its brandied cherries. Lunch Tues.–Fri., dinner Tues.–Sat.; brunch Sat. ☹️☹️\$\$\$

Genova Delicatessen 5095 Telegraph Ave., Bldg. A, (510) 652-7401. Walk into Genova Delicatessen, and you immediately find yourself in some kind of neo-Old World time-space continuum. Shouting, mustachioed, white-aproned counter-men wrap sandwiches loaded with prosciutto and mortadella while dodging dangling salamis and balls of smoked

provolone hanging overhead. Meanwhile, placing orders are cell phone-wielding yuppies; tattooed, bejeweled urban-primitive hipsters; and workmen clutching Arizona Teas from the refrigerator case. Established in Oakland's historic Temescal district in 1926, Genova is still cranking out house-made ravioli alongside its terrific sandwiches, as well as offering a salad bar, hot take-out foods, and Italian wines and confectios. Whether you order a house-specialty sandwich, such as the pancetta with fresh mozzarella and sun-dried tomatoes, or compose your own, Genova won't disappoint. Lunch and dinner Mon.–Sun. ☹️☹️\$

Italian Colors Ristorante 2220 Mountain Blvd., Ste. 100, (510) 482-8094, italiancolorsrestaurant.com. This popular Montclair restaurant, perched above Mountain Boulevard at the back of a small shopping complex, plays friendly host to constant crowds both day and night. But fear not, there's usually room in the sprawling, high-ceilinged restaurant or on the spacious patio for a single diner or your extended family. Lunch means panini or a bowl of pasta; dinner spells choices from thin-crisp pizzas to sumptuous lasagna. Lunch Mon.–Fri., dinner daily. ☹️☹️\$\$\$

Koryo Wooden Charcoal BBQ 4390 Telegraph Ave., Ste. J, (510) 652-6007. If you love Korean-style barbecue, head down Telegraph Avenue to Koryo Village Center, on the fringes of the Temescal, and sizzle up a tableside feast at Koryo Wooden Charcoal BBQ. A favorite late-night

haunt of local restaurant cooks, Koryo makes a delectable *pa jun* (pan-fried green onion pancake), *bi bim bab* (casserole of rice, egg, meat, and vegetables served in a stoneware crock), and broiled meat and seafood dishes. It's hard to go wrong, even if you just make a meal of *bi bim naeng mean*, cold buckwheat noodles in a spicy sauce, and the endless array of *panchan*—tiny, savory snacks ranging from dried anchovies in a sweet chili sauce to deliciously jiggly *cheongpumuk*, a green lentil jelly. Lunch and dinner Mon.–Fri. ☹️+☹️\$

La Taza de Café 3909 Grand Ave., (510) 658-2373, latazadecafe.com. This pan-Latin tapas café used to be tucked away in the Montclair Hills but in early 2006, it moved into an elevated, wood-floored dining room on Grand Avenue that once housed Autumn Moon Café. At the end of the handsome, old bar you might hear a first-rate bossa nova singer, and the menu shows influences from Cuba, Mexico, and even Colombia. Don't leave the premises without sampling the Oaxacan *tinga*, tender shredded chicken in chipotle chili sauce served over thin, crisp corn tostadas. The *tinga*'s smoky, sweet heat goes well with a hearty Laurel Glen Lodi Zinfandel, but you'll also find numerous Spanish, Chilean, and Argentinean wines on the list. Service is personable, and the ample sangria menu makes La Taza a great place for birthday parties. Dinner Tues.–Sun., brunch Sun. ☹️☹️+\$\$\$

It's a Wrap

SUPPOSE YOU COULD have your sandwich wrapping, and eat it, too?

Well, that's been made possible by Tara McHugh, a researcher at the USDA's California Agricultural Research Service in Albany, working in collaboration with a private company.

McHugh has developed an edible food wrap that looks like paper but is made from concentrated puree from fruits and vegetables, including apple, mango, broccoli, and tomato. Each wrap is equal to a one-quarter serving of fruit or vegetables.

"The wraps are a way to help people eat more fruits and vegetables, and add value to agricultural commodities—they are an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic wrap and aluminum foil," says McHugh.

Perhaps not quite as appetizing as wolfing down your sandwich wrap is that some of the wraps have antimicrobial properties. Those properties come from natural and even flavorful ingredients such as oregano and cinnamon, and help combat food-borne pathogens such as *E. coli* and salmonella.

A small but growing number of food manufacturers use the wraps and sell their products at such stores as Trader Joe's and Costco. McHugh is working on an edible straw that should be available within a year.

All this gives new meaning to finishing everything in your lunchbox.

For more information, email McHugh at tara.mchugh@ars.usda.gov. —Leah Dobkin