Mongolian Grill, 1161 Davie St. (604) 669-4545
Grilled meats and vegetables (very reasonable)

“Mongolino” (Bo) Marrugato is from Zimbabwe and is tiny. She looks like a younger sister of super model Naomi Campbell (just a foot shorter). She is a big fan of the Mongolian Grill on Davie St., and can keep up with the best of her larger FDU-Vancouver classmates with the Grill’s all-you-can-eat or single-serving service.

“My friend introduced me to the restaurant a couple of months ago,” Bo says, “and I have been hooked ever since. I love the Grill because it gives you the opportunity to customize your meal and watch it being prepared.”

“The ingredients are always fresh and crisp!” she says. “Also, I’m the type of person who enjoys variety, and the Grill allows me to create a different kind of dish every time I go there. Therefore, I think that it is safe to say that I don’t really have a favorite dish there because every dish is my favorite!!!”

Bo will mix beef, chicken and pork with vegetables and one of the Mongolian Grill sauces and then give her bowl to the chef who grills all the ingredients—using five-foot-long tongs—on a large, hot, greasy surface. The tradition of cooking on a hot griddle dates back to the time of Genghis Khan, when his soldiers built fires under their shields and cooked meat on top using their swords as cooking utensils.

The Mongolian Grill is open for lunch and dinner, and you can order single-serving small or large bowls or choose the all-you-can-eat option. The prices are student-friendly which translates into very reasonable.

Lupo, Hamilton St. (604) 669-1940
Italian with a twist (moderate)
Reservations a good idea

“Lupo is a wonderful restaurant tucked into three floors of a 19th-century Telegraph townhouse.

Michael Mameli, working with his partner and chef Julio Gonzalez-Petroni (from Buenos Aires), has transformed what used to be a rather formal Italian restaurant into one with a relaxed atmosphere and a constantly changing menu offering something for everyone. There is a wonderful gourmet pizza appetizer, crisp salads, traditional pastas with red sauce as well as beef, chicken and seafood specialties, all complemented by an extensive wine list.

Mameli says the menu is rooted in familiar dishes and Italian favorites, but has a sense of adventure and extravagance that comes from Chef Petroni’s background in fine dining and the original, more formal Villa Del Lupo which he owned at the same location.

And although the menu is extensive, the chef always prepares specials of the day, and they are worth listening too before making a decision.

Provost Cecil Abrams and FDU New Jersey visitor Art Petrosimoleo dined together at Lupo recently and had difficulty making entire choices. The Provost chose lobster risotto, while the chef was kind enough to pair two of the pastas as a main course for Petrosimoleo. The Caesar salad was a great starter and the tiramisu a great closer.

Joe Fortes, 777 Thurlow St. (604) 669-1940
www.joefortes.ca

Oyster Bar and Seafood Restaurant (moderate to expensive)

It’s loud, crowded, busy and high-tech, but if you are looking for seafood (and who isn’t in Vancouver) and don’t want to cab to the waterfront(s), Joe Fortes is the place. Located in the center of the downtown, the restaurant takes its name from a bully seaman who landed on the Island in the late 1800s — and became a legend as a bartender and the island’s first lifeguard.

When you enter Joe Fortes, you are greeted with a soaring oyster bar that features a variety of the freshest shellfish. The dining room is filled with tables for 2, 4 or more along with cozy booths. The seafood is “super fresh” and served tastefully. There are several varieties of Pacific salmon to choose from as well as fresh fish entrees that change daily.

The bar offers wonderful draft beer from throughout the region, and the desserts (try the Banana Cream pie!) is worth leaving room for. Joe Fortes isn’t a regular stop for FDU-Vancouver students, but a place that most visitors to Vancouver gravitate to for a memorable dinner in an upscale atmosphere.

Samba, 1122 Alberni St. (604) 696-9888
Traditional Brazilian Barbecue (moderate)

Samba is a taste of home for Altino Schoenberger and Carlos Nakashima, Brazilian natives studying at FDU-Vancouver. They got to Samba with friends wherever they can and savor the barbecue beef, chicken and pork brought to their table by servers holding larger skewers out flat off the barbecue grill.

“In Brazil, we eat a variety of barbecue meats and ribs,” the boys smile, “and this restaurant gets us close to home.”

Samba offers a half dozen different meats at lunch and double that for dinner. The all-inclusive price lets you enjoy all you can eat. A salad bar offers the beans, rice and salad accompaniments that go with Brazilian barbecue, while servers pass among the tables with skews of sizzling meats that are carved for you right at your table.

While the all-inclusive price is a good value if you are a meat eater, there are also a la carte chicken, seafood and vegetable dishes. Come to the restaurant hungry. The boys promise you will leave full.
Vera’s Burger Shack, 213 Carrall St, Vancouver (604) 508-5850
www.verasburgershack.com
Gourmet Burgers (reasonable)
Anna Kropita likes Vera’s Burger Shack so much that she even works there. The third-year FDU-Vancouver business student from the central Ursals in Russia raves about the quality of the beef, the freshness of the vegetables and the unusual side orders available. One of a number of Vera’s locations in and around Vancouver is in an historic building in the Gastown tourist area. Visitors and natives alike love strolling the Gastown streets, so planning a visit around meal times makes sense. You choose your burger or other menu item and sides from large wall menus and then order at the counter. You then find a table and your order is served. The extensive menu includes basic burgers, specialty burgers, hot dogs, weekday specials, combinations and a kids menu. Vera’s offers traditional burgers as well as specialty burgers with unusual toppings made from Canadian beef raised in an animal friendly environment without steroids or food additives. Vera’s has become popular with Canadians and tourists alike. Anna is such a Vera’s fan, she is a shift manager at one of their suburban locations.

Pita Fresh, 1175 Davie St. (604) 568-9777
www.pitafresh-davie.com
Greek and Mediterranean Cuisine (very reasonable)
FDU-Vancouver’s Steve Dias, a senior information technology major from Brazil, found Pita Fresh on Davie Street by accident. It was convenient to his apartment, and he was hungry. “It was clean and the food looked good,” Steve says, “so I tried it. Now I am a huge fan.” Pita Fresh has two locations in Vancouver, on Davie St. and at the Sinclair Centre (West Hastings St.). “The food at Pita Fresh is indeed fresh,” Steve says, “and healthy! I love the Shawarma chicken and the rice and salads. It is very inexpensive — great for students.”

Pita Fresh is good for day or night, eat in or take out. Portions are good sized and prices are reasonable. Although Shawarma is very popular, the Falafel is unique,” Steve says, “as it is made fresh for every order using chic peas and spices unique to the restaurant.” Pita Fresh also offers roast lamb and a number of wraps with chicken and vegetables as well as combo plates with meat, potatoes and vegetables. Lots of choices — and Baklava for dessert.

Urban Thai, 1119 Hamilton St., Vancouver 604-408-7788
www.urbanthai.com
Asian Thai (moderate )
Lynda Kull (originally from South Africa) and Natalia Khartonova (Russia) happened on Urban Thai in the Yaletown section of Vancouver by chance one spring day. Now they are regulars at the spot for the spicy Thai cooking. Lynda is now a Canadian citizen, and Natalia immigrated to Vancouver with her husband and daughter in 2006 from the Oral Mountains in Russia. “When Thai’s menu is extensive and so much of it is spicy, you ask only for a degree of spice to suit your tastes. The restaurant has been open for 10 years and remains a popular spot for locals and tourists.” The décor has a dark, Far Eastern look with both booths and there is an outside dining area, similar to many Yaletown restaurants, for good weather days. Lynda recommends Kangrieng Neua, which is with red curry paste, bamboo shoots, bell peppers, basil and coconut milk. For Natalia, it is the traditional Pad Thai Platter, which includes stir-fried noodles with eggs, shrimp, ground peanuts, chili paste, bean sprouts and green onions.

Table service at Urban Thai is at a leisurely pace as dictated by the choice of entree, each cooked to order.

Look at the menu online for a sampling of the traditional and exotic offerings — all at moderate prices. Urban Thai is open for lunch and dinner, has an extensive take-out menu, delivers locally and even offers cooking classes.

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