

Homecoming
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It was a long flight.

When you're in an airport, it doesn't matter what city you're in; every place in the country looks nearly identical. The whitewashed walls, the immaculate flooring, and the people constantly piling in and out, shuffling around from place to place – it's almost impossible to distinguish one place from another in such an antiseptic environment.

Unwilling to spend any more time in such sterile surroundings, I wheeled my luggage out through the sliding doors of the airport and reveled in the sunlight. Jet lag takes a lot out of you, but being out in the open again is always an invigorating feeling. I glanced at my watch. It was mid-afternoon, and I hadn't had anything to eat besides the meager bag of peanuts they handed out on the flight.

Being away from home for so long, one of the things I missed the most, I noticed, was the food.

Having lived in San Jose all my life, I'd acquired a soft spot for the local cuisine – the crunchy shell of a warm taco, the steam rising from an aromatic bowl of Pho. Elsewhere, it seems almost impossible to find a decent restaurant that serves Vietnamese or Mexican food. It wasn't until I was out of the city that I realized living in San Jose has spoiled me. Down every street I drove, I was bound to see a smattering of Taquerias and Pho restaurants; in places like Maine or Vermont, these restaurants were nowhere to be found, a gaggle of fast-food chain restaurants in their stead.

Eager to return home, I hastily loaded my luggage into the trunk and seated myself inside the car. As the engine roared to life, I pulled out of the car park and hit the highway.

Coursing along the freeway was a welcome change of pace. As I passed Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and city after city, I saw the color bleeding back into my life as I took in the verdant trees and the lush, clear sky.

Upon my arrival in San Jose, I pulled into a restaurant. As it turns out, all it took for me to feel at home again was a warm bowl of pho. It may be a little ironic, seeing as I'm an African-American, but that's what I love about living in the east side of San Jose, after all.