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dining in the d



Le Petit Zinc Creperie & Café

My friend Francine chose a delightful restaurant for our lunch this summer. Though new to me, Le Petit Zinc Creperie & Café has been in business for years.

This bright and charming French restaurant, “hidden” in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood, is on Trumbull Street, between West Lafayette and Howard. It truly was surprising to find the little building with private patio in an urban area.

When my good friend Susan arrived on the very same Tuesday for her own first-time visit, we had to say: “What were the chances?”

The comfortable French dining at Le Petit Zinc won’t disappoint anyone in the mood for classic dishes like Ratatouille (five-vegetable stew) or Salade Nicoise (tuna, string beans, tomatoes, anchovies, potatoes, olives and hard-boiled eggs over mixed greens).

These are two of the café’s most popular items, according to Le Petit Zinc co-owner Karima Sorel. She also recommends Le Petit Dejeuner (baked eggs served with croissant or baguette, Brie, fresh fruit, mixed greens, broiled potatoes), Saumon Fume et Epinard (smoked salmon, spinach, hard-boiled eggs), Assiette de Fromage (cheese plate) and Citron Sucre (lemon-sugar crepe).

My delicious choice was Feta et Epinards — a thick, sweetish crepe stuffed with fresh spinach, feta and mushrooms. Naturally, this healthy choice justified sharing dessert: a thin crepe rolled around chocolate and bananas. No regrets.

Another day, Susan and I both chose Salade de Poulet. Somewhat like Nicoise, it features roasted chicken. Our beautifully arranged plates had tomato and potato slices bookmark-

ing ingredients in the center.

We shared a “chef’s special” dessert crepe, finding bliss in every mouthful of fresh strawberries and honey. The coffee Susan praised with its “dark honey and cinnamon notes”



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comes from Ann Arbor-based Mighty Good Coffee Roasting Company.

Sorel has an interesting background. She and her Parisian ex-husband, Charles Sorel, formerly owned restaurants in Paris, New York and Rio.

Leaving Brazil to rejoin Karima’s widowed mother in Detroit, the Sorels opened

Le Petit Zinc

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\$½ out of \$\$\$\$\$

Le Petit Zinc in 2009 in her mother’s own building. The couple decided Detroit needed a mid-range dining option that wouldn’t require an extensive kitchen. Crepes and other French specialties filled the bill.

The four Sorel offspring live with Charles in Paris. When Karima Sorel goes for extended visits, co-owner Scott Rutterbush and dedicated staff hold down the fort.

Le Petit Zinc is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily, except 9-3 for the busy Sunday brunch.

The cheerful dining room features colorful artwork on yellow walls with green-trimmed window frames. Two hand-crocheted window panels come from Brazil. Craft paper-covered wooden tables with straight chairs stand on painted terra-cotta tiles. Typical of French neighborhood bars, patrons’ wear and tear on the zinc metal bar top gives it a unique texture.

There’s still time to enjoy the sheltered garden patio built around a classic, multi-level fountain. Flowers, vegetables and herbs grow around the patio’s perimeter.

When Francine and I sat at our umbrella table, we felt perfectly at peace with the world. 🍷



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