



CROQUE MONSIEUR



SMOKED SALMON SANDWICH

Bread and Vine Bakery

By Bryce Parks

Where do I begin to gush about Bread and Vine Bakery in Galena, IL? We saw food photos online. We heard good things. But we were not at all expecting what greeted us when we opened the door at 217 S. Main St. This wasn't a quiet local sandwich shop. This place was rockin'. Well, maybe we should say it was boogying, as it was classic '70s disco pumping through the sound system. From the decor to the beautiful displays of food, to the energy of the staff, to the full room of patrons, everything about the vibe of Bread and Vine, a bakery and wine bar, felt like I had stepped off the streets of Galena and into somewhere else entirely. Not that I don't love Galena, I do. But, wow. This place is a unique experience in the town filled with unique experiences.

If I said the eatery had the feel of a restaurant chain, it sounds bad, but it has that vibe in all the best ways. There was a clear, bold, and fresh design aesthetic throughout the space, modern and bright with orange accents.

The staff was all in similar uniform, and the entire process seemed well-practiced and organized despite being a fairly new venue. In total, it is a feast for the senses ... all of them. It's bad enough having to look at a menu where everything sounds delicious, but here you are bombarded with the sights of those offerings right behind the glass. So now you have to choose among tasty treats that you can lust after with your own two eyes.

The new restaurant concept is the brainchild of Eric Bonnetain, a wonderfully fascinating native Parisian, who, thanks to fate, stumbled upon Galena during the COVID summer that never was in 2020. Clearly, I was on the right track when I noted the vibe that seemed to match the best franchises out there, as this establishment is the first of many more to come. By the way, you'll want to just go ahead and apply a cool French accent to anything you read here in quotes that follow.

"A lot of people tell me that about the atmosphere because I used to create building concepts all over the world," says Bonnetain. "This is the first one, but I'm going

to be opening other locations in Austin, TX; Nashville, TN; Charleston, SC; Lexington, KY; and Naples, FL."

If anything good came out of COVID-19, look to Bread and Vine as one of those happy accidents.

"When COVID hit," Bonnetain begins, "I was in China working on a massive project involving a Chinese restaurant, a Japanese restaurant, a Korean restaurant, an American Brasserie, a French restaurant, and a nightclub, and suddenly I lost my job with COVID last year. So I took a sabbatical here with my wife, who is in Chicago, to think about my future. We were traveling here to Galena over a weekend and this little town was on fire with activity last summer while everyone was complaining in New York and Chicago. I was next door having a drink at Jamie's Wine Studio, and Jamie introduced us to the building owners here, John and Doug, who knew we did work in opening new places and said, 'Can you look at my little space here and give me some ideas?' I told him to give me a couple of weeks to come up with a concept for you and discussed with my wife that maybe it's something we should look to do for ourselves. And the rest is history."

Six months of construction later, after gutting the whole place, Bread and Vine is very much a reality.

"It's good energy," says Bonnetain. "It's good music. We play disco music because all different ages come into this place from you young kids who want macarons to the grandma who wants to have a patisserie, so we make the energy work for everyone. In the morning we have the coffee and croissant. For lunch, the locals come in for a sandwich and come back again for a drink and a small plate.

"All the sandwiches are made here in the kitchen. My chef Manny and pastry chef Laura used to work for me. I called her and said I need you, I'm opening this business. And she called the next day and said okay, you put a lot of pressure on my shoulders, and after 28 years in Chicago, she decided to move to Galena and is very happy. We have about 20 employees now and everyone is happy. I had no problems finding staff."

And that staff was one of the things that immediately stood out when we entered the restaurant. Vibrant enthusiasm is how I would describe their attitudes. They truly seemed excited to help us discover all of the hidden treasures they have behind the counter.

So now the problem is, how do we attack this menu in words without filing the whole issue?! We've had one meal there so far, and I think my next three visits are already mapped out in my head (and in my heart and my belly as well).

We're going to go out of order, because how do we talk about Bread and Vine's delectable eats without starting with dessert? It is, after all, staring you in the face when you stand at the glass windows at the counter. Each thing looks more inviting than the last.

We had four different flavors of macarons, which leaves just about 20 flavors we didn't try yet. Not to be confused with macaroons that are coconut-based, French macarons are almond flour-based. They are clearly a main feature of Bread and Vine, prominently displayed at the center of the counter in a rainbow of pastel colors and flavors. The nutty almond base of the cookies is accented with everything from coffee to berries, chocolate, caramel, citrus, and more. There IS a flavor for you. And hey, they're naturally gluten-free!

Drool-worthy pastries include three tartelettes: salted caramel chocolate, seasonal pastry cream with berries, and lemon custard with Italian meringue. You can't go wrong with a classic NY-style cheesecake, a flourless chocolate cake, tiramisu, or chocolate mousse. You likely have not tried a hazelnut cream "Lola Bun" (named after Eric's dog), which is a cream puff with caramel filling, and éclairs never disappoint. There is a strawberry lemon confit and mascarpone cream or Valrhona dark chocolate. Win and win. Or you could just be super boring and have a croissant. (Just kidding.) They look like little flaky morsels of love, and you can even get ones with almonds, chocolate, or a savory version. You can also just let go with La Pompadour, which features four of the signature desserts with a whimsical display of freshly spun cotton candy.

Consider, also, that you might want to try to actually eat a sandwich before you even get to the desserts. Of course, it's Galena and the rules are off, so dessert can be a meal for sure. The menu is big. Almost too big for me to make a decision that I fear I'll regret because I didn't get those other three sandwiches I wanted. But I can't indulge my desire to have it all.

To make for a speedy transition from your desirous glances to your watering mouth, most of the sandwiches appear to be pre-assembled in a delicious display at one end of the counter. So when you order your croque monsieur, they simply pull one out of the array of sandwiches and complete it by toasting it to perfection and serving it in just a couple of minutes. What is a croque monsieur? Only the best ham and cheese sammich you've ever had.

The BVB Chicken features grilled marinated chicken, Russian dressing, and Parmesan cheese. The chicken



PORK BELLY BAO



MACARONS

Milanese's panko-coated chicken comes with confit red pepper, tartar, and romesco sauce on a baguette. A steak baguette boasts pesto, caramelized onions, and brie cheese. The Parma has that fragrant rosemary focaccia bread with ricotta, mozzarella, prosciutto, and more. We've been told that Miami regulars say their Cubanito is the real deal Cuban, with roasted pork, ham, Swiss, mustard, pickle, and mojo butter on true Pan Cubano bread. That croque monsieur I raved about has this rich béchamel sauce and gratinated Gruyère cheese. The French Hotdog is a huge seller, also with the béchamel sauce and Gruyère. The Pan Bagnat is a sexy name for a killer tuna sandwich. We also had the smoked salmon on a croissant with cream cheese, cucumber, red onion, and capers for a fresh, light flavor. You can also get a breakfast omelette on a savory croissant for the meat-free crowd. The Veggie sandwich puts roasted veggies, tomato concasse (rough chopped sauce), and pesto on rosemary focaccia.

They are all freshly prepared daily in the kitchen using high-end local and European ingredients and made ready for a rush of customers over the lunch hour: a smart, time-saving prep decision that has no downside in the quality and flavor of the sandwich when it's finished a short time later. They guarantee freshness by baking their bread and pastries multiple times throughout the day.

Yes, the salads were big and beautiful, and maybe one day I'll have that goat cheese and pear or salmon and quinoa, but it is not this day. One look at those truffle oil and Parmesan french fries and you can forget that salad. They even have poutine, bless their souls.

Perhaps you are afraid that a whole sandwich won't leave room for that desert? Never fear, the small plates and boards are here! Classic cheese and charcuterie boards are joined by blue cheese bruschetta. And then it gets really fancy with foie gras au toucheon (duck or goose liver with local pineapple jalapeño pepper jam and baguette slices), quiche Lorraine, and Cuban croquetas. How about

deep-fried beer-tempura mini burgers? And one of my all-time favorites, pork belly bao buns (SOLD!) You might also choose to share or hoard your own pizette. Choose a veggie version, a salmon with caramelized onion and horseradish crème fraiche, or the classic French Alsatian Flammekueche with crème fraiche, caramelized onions and bacon. Who cares if you can't pronounce it? You shouldn't talk with your mouth full, anyway.

A full bar features a number of wines and spirits from local creators. Supporting local and appealing to the local population is of utmost importance to Bonnetain, not just the tourist crowd. Their goal is to make the greatest wines accessible to as many people as possible, offering a large selection of wine by the glass, beautiful labels, and famous winemakers, but also little nuggets. You will find the most interesting wines to please the most delicate palates. Their knowledgeable bartenders will help you pick the right wine by the glass to pair with either a French quiche or your selected cheese or charcuterie board. And we didn't even get into the mixed drinks. But, hey, it was lunch-time. We had to go back to work after.

There's so much to offer in this not-so-big space. Fast, friendly, and delicious. You'd wonder how they pull it all off until you consider the resume of the man with the plan. Eric Bonnetain was born in Paris, where his parents owned two restaurants. He became the chef there and moved into management when he was very young. He then decided to move to the United States, working in New York for 25 years focused in Manhattan at 2- and 3-star Michelin restaurants under esteemed chefs such as Éric Ripert at Le Bernardin. Then onto Miami where he was vice president of a hotel company on the food and beverage side, doing a lot of openings for them for concepts and in charge of 57 restaurants and nightclubs, before tackling the project in China just before COVID.

So yeah, I'd say he sort of knows his stuff. And Bread and Vine Bakery proves it. We know you'll love his stuff too. As always, tell 'em 365ink sent you! ■



Bread and Vine Bakery

217 S MAIN ST, GALENA, IL
815-402-2100

BREADANDVINEBAKERY.COM

Hours: Wed–Thu: 9 AM–9 PM;
Fri–Sat: 9 AM–10 PM; Sun: 9 AM–9 PM;
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Ordering Options: Indoor and outdoor seating, carryout, catering



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