

SPECIALTIES of the *House*



Authentically French In Food and Culture

Attention to detail is what sets La Vie en Rose Patisserie and Café apart, says owner Stéphanie Lapparre, a native of Toulouse, France. From the rich coffee to the pastries created with European butter, Lapparre wants to truly re-create the dining experience that one might have in a French bistro. "I know that people appreciate this," Lapparre says. "Food for French people really is a culture, and I want to remain true to that idea."

One of the most popular specialties at La Vie en Rose, 402 1/2 W. 6th St., is the quiche. The café has three different quiches each day, depending on the availability and freshness of the ingredients. Lapparre's recipe for quiche may seem different to American taste buds, however: She uses fewer eggs and more cream, as well as a lighter crust. True to form, Lapparre has imported special French baking dishes to create her daily offerings.

Lapparre says she has some customers who have never tried French cuisine, and she's happy to introduce them to the food of her native land. There is no ketchup, hot sauce, or coffee-to-go here, but customers who have been to Paris tell her the croissants are the best they've had outside of France. "I want people to have the real French experience—very authentically French," she says.

La Vie en Rose is open Tuesday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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Southern Hospitality and Cuisine

From a sign on the wall that reads, "Honey, always do the right thing," to the made-from-scratch fare, Joella's Hot Chicken strives to bring southern hospitality to everyone who walks in the door. "We are southern scratch cooking," says Christina Happel, regional vice president of operations for Joella's Hot Chicken. "We serve Nashville-style fried chicken and all our sides are made from scratch, including creamy mac & cheese, and we have vegan and gluten-free chicken options. When people come in, what they're going to see and feel is southern hospitality."

The story of Joella's Hot Chicken centers around Miss Ella, the composite of an ideal that focuses on always doing the right thing, especially when it comes to food and food service. "Miss Ella was all about doing the right thing and taking care of customers, the community, and employees," says Happel. "Being part of Joella's team is special."

The star of Joella's cuisine is its all-natural chicken. "We are proud of the quality of our food—it's fresh, antibiotic- and hormone-free—our sauces are made from scratch, and with vegan and gluten-free options, there's something for everyone," Happel says. "You can start with a good, southern fried chicken and build the heat up to what you want." Those sauces come in several heat levels, from southern—no heat—to Fire-In Da-Hole, which requires customers to sign a waiver before eating.

Desserts include made-from-scratch, grandma-style banana pudding and Pie-In A-Jar that customers can take home, as well as classic silk pie, strawberry shortcake, seasonal fruit pies, and

Nutella poppers—pastry dough with Nutella-branded chocolate-hazelnut filling.

Keeping with a more natural menu, Joella's serves Boylan Cane Sugar Sodas instead of traditional branded drinks. "We partner with companies with the same philosophy," Happel says. "As we've grown, they've grown."

Bloomington is the eighth Joella's for the Louisville-based company. "Small towns speak to Miss Ella and our brand," Happel says. "Bloomington was the next natural step for us to be in this city with IU—which is growing—and we want to be a part of that." The local venue is the first Joella's to have drive-through service.

Hoping to become integrated into the community, Happel says, Joella's offers catering for weddings and social gatherings, and a food truck to service local events. For information, visit joellas.com.



Joella's classic chicken "Sammie," topped with homemade pimento cheese, and a side of fries. Photo by Martin Boling

An All-Encompassing Experience

Michael Cassidy opened The Uptown Cafe in 1976 as a 30-seat diner specializing in omelets. While continuing to serve breakfast—as well as lunch, dinner, and brunch—the restaurant has evolved into an all-encompassing dining experience. The food, service, music, paintings, wood, brass, carpet, colors, and cocktail bar have all been chosen for their collective ambience. “It all works together,” Cassidy says. “It’s the painting we’re trying to create. Everything we do is consciously chosen to be part of that production. We concentrate on food and service, but because of what we’ve created, it tastes better in this environment.”

By staying true to those roots, Cassidy has evolved and adapted The Uptown Cafe to become the gumbo of the community, combining multi-international influence with local flavor to offer a place for everyone. “We attract a very diverse clientele—professionals, blue-collar workers, graduate students, international students—probably because of the broad menu,” he says. “We’ve really reached the state of a truly classic, independent, community-oriented restaurant.”



(l-r) Galen Cassidy with his father, Michael Cassidy. Photo by Martin Boling

That community-mindedness is at the heart of The Uptown Cafe’s philosophy. “What we’re trying to get at and evolve to and offer to our community is business growth that the community can be proud of, so we can be an active participant in

making this a better town,” Cassidy says. “It starts with the food, but doesn’t end with the food. It all has to work together. The feeling of warmth of the whole place is a specialty we strive for.” For more information, visit the-uptown.com.

Sabor Venezolano **Arepas**
venezuelan gastropub

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Offering Distinctive Venezuelan Cuisine

Dreaming of one day owning a restaurant together, Juan Palacios, a native of Venezuela, and Darlene Gonzalez, from Puerto Rico, launched their food truck business, Juancho’s Munchies, in 2014. They wanted to offer health-conscious Venezuelan cuisine in Bloomington and build a following before jumping into the commitment and overhead of a full-service restaurant and bar.

For many months, Palacios and Gonzalez parked their food truck near their dream location and watched for the brick-and-mortar space to become available. After four successful years, they finally got their chance and signed a lease on 254 N. Walnut, thus beginning the long process of breathing life into Arepas Venezuelan Gastropub.

“Since beginning, we have focused on quality and distinctive food, charismatic customer service, and cleanliness,” Gonzalez says. “These traits have enabled us to grow as a company and will continue to be paramount in this new establishment.”

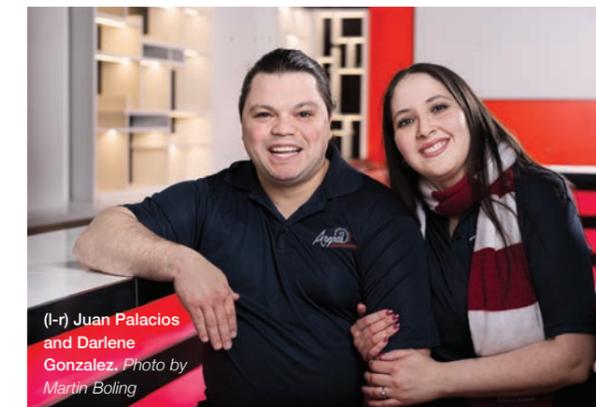
The staple of their business—and of Venezuelan cuisine—is the *arepa*, a corn flatbread pocket that’s gluten-free and stuffed with meats, vegetables, cheeses, and sauces, as well as traditional Venezuelan fillings like quail eggs and plantains. The restaurant also has rice bowls and empanadas, which are fried corn turnovers.

Apart from made-from-scratch *tequeños*—Venezuelan cheesesticks—and *pastelitos*—Venezuelan fried turnovers filled with savory fillings—the restaurant is gluten-free with vegetarian and vegan options available.

Arepas Venezuelan Gastropub focuses on full-menu native fare throughout the day and evenings, but after 10 p.m. the restaurant

takes on a club feel with a full bar, upbeat music, and dimmed lights. “The food bar is available late night in what we call Arepas Express, but only for takeout,” Palacios says. “Before that, it is a fast-casual restaurant.” The bar area offers beer, wine, and wine cocktails in addition to small, shareable plates.

“We want to make something different here in Bloomington—good food and good experience,” Gonzalez says, with Palacios adding, “We want something you’d find in big cities—modern and upbeat.” Someday the couple would like to replicate the Arepas Venezuelan Gastropub’s fast-and-casual model across the country. However, that’s years down the road, according to Gonzalez, who says their goal right now is to focus on serving Bloomington customers a new culinary experience. Palacios adds that the establishment only offers 100 percent compostable containers. For more information, visit www.arepasgastro.com.



(l-r) Juan Palacios and Darlene Gonzalez. Photo by Martin Boling

THE BAR AT UPTOWN CAFE

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Bloomingfoods: Growing Local Partnerships

Phil Phillipy grew up working on his family's dairy farm where all 75 cows had names. As manager of Bloomingfoods Near West, those farming days have come in handy as he builds and fosters partnerships with local producers. "We have farmers that we've been dealing with for 10, 15 years or longer—we've seen their kids grow up," Phillipy says. "It's important to see more traditional practices carried on and still be sustainable for families that otherwise couldn't compete in the marketplace."

Phillippy recalls working with meat producers like Rice's Quality Farm Meats in Spencer early in his career, and how those partnerships have grown to include other farmers like Rhodes Family Farm—which provides all the eggs used in the co-op's food service—and Miller Poultry, the only chicken served on its hot and salad bars. "We'd like to continue to expand on that," Phillipy says. "We want to deepen our connections in the community and make calculated efforts to reach out to more local producers and see what's out there that we can offer, as well as work more local products into our prepared foods."

These community relationships help co-op owners and customers make connections to the world that they might not otherwise have if they just walked into a store and took products off a shelf. "They get to see the people impacted by their purchases, and they're connected to the world in a way that's not very common anymore," Phillipy adds. For more information, visit bloomingfoods.coop.

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