

Review: Pleasant & Main Is A Housy Hub

By Nichole Dupont

I have this friend who used to live on the Lower East Side, and I would take the train into Manhattan to visit her in her little shoebox on the ninth floor. Saturday would be devoted to museum hopping, bargain hunting, and a Broadway show followed by way too many drinks at a dive bar just downstairs from her place. And yet, despite the high-octane city shuffle of Saturday, what I looked forward to the most was Sunday brunch before catching the train back to the sticks. She had “a place” that was comfortable, a place that welcomed — with natural light, great omelets and strong coffee — our sad debauched souls. I’ve been on the hunt for “a place” for years, and it looks like, for certain, I have found it.

[Pleasant & Main](#) (on the corner of, well, you guessed it) in Housatonic, Mass. is a like a pirate’s treasure chest; the outside appears unassuming, even dingy, but once you open it up the realization that you’ve struck pure gold is immediate. High-ceilinged, red-walled, sprawling, the café has an old-timey ambience that meets somewhere comfortably in the middle of Cheers, a bistro in Paris and your grandmother’s front parlor. The wide-open dining room is flanked on either end by massive wooden shelves chock full of collectibles (most for sale), from silver candlesticks to kitschy 1950s fishing gear. Natural light floods through the front portion of the café, highlighting the giant stained glass window that is a definitive feature of the space, which formerly housed [Jack’s Grill](#), a summer hub that closed some four years ago.

But grandiose windows and glittering knick knacks are just that without good food. Not surprisingly, Pleasant & Main does not disappoint on the gastronomic end. It has the kind of menu that diners will savor again and again, perhaps settling at last on a favorite dish.

The menu is unpretentious; a daily offering of veggie quiche (always with a side of fresh greens) delights with a light crust, the savory eggs Florentine is topped with a healthy dollop of classic hollandaise that literally melts in the mouth. The croissants are perfect and buttery and the coffee — be it espresso, latte, cappuccino — is never bitter and perfectly hot. A basic lunch lineup of turkey clubs, egg salad and burgers is thickened with European home-food options like savory ratatouille crepes, Croque Monsieur and beet and goat cheese salad.

These little extras pay homage to the café’s mastermind, veteran restaurateur [Craig Bero](#), who spent the last 35 years on the food scene in Manhattan and the lower West Village, most recently as the owner/operator of the Cosmopolitan Café in Tribeca. Bero packed up his impressive collection of antique silver and fishing gear (he is an avid angler) and he, along with long time chef [Sixto Rodriguez](#), set up shop in Housatonic in late March after seeing a for rent sign on the door in January. (Bero, a Wisconsin native, has a cabin in Hillsdale, N.Y. that was his escape from the Big Apple for decades.) So far, so very good. Along with breakfast/brunch and lunch, the café dishes up community suppers Thursday-Saturday nights, with a simple menu that rotates with the chef’s creativity, Bero’s fastidiousness and Mother Nature’s palate. In keeping with the simple sophistication of the daytime eats, the suppers provide simple, unfettered fare with a twist; beef pot roast with a burgundy gravy, lamb shepherd’s pie, orange sunshine cake.

Perhaps the real sunshine is Bero himself, who quietly yet purposefully trolls the dining room, making sure everyone is happy, well fed, and deep in conversation. Be warned, he is a generous and convincing soul (must be that Midwest spirit). I was happy with my quiche. I told him it was perfect. I sipped at my coffee, and yet somehow, there I was, with a pleasantly full belly staring down at a lemon crepe.

After polishing off the whole thing, it dawned on me, that that tangy, incredibly light, yet somehow nostalgic confection was what I was after. What we are all chasing after. That signature dish, you will find it here. I promise you.

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