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Making Pains - a market destination in Hyannis



*Written by David G. Kmetz
Photography by Scott Erb and Donna Dufault*

*B*read: known as the "staff of life" down through the centuries and for good reason. What other basic foodstuff elicits such sighs of delight as well-made fresh bread right from the oven or a rustic brick kiln? That warm crunchy crust and meltingly soft interior releasing steam when first opened and a scent from the gods...sigh indeed. Though fans of the real thing often had to search beyond their local market for many years, bread like this was worth the extra miles and effort.

Not so the fortunate citizens within travel distance of Pain d'Avignon, which was one of the first business efforts in the southern New England area to return to legitimate traditional artisanal baking craft and quality. Founded in 1992 by Serbian transplant Vojin Vujosevic along with several of his Yugo-

slavian buddies and based on the French boulangeries Vujosevic recalled from his youth, Pain d'Avignon represents the culinary baking heritage and pastry traditions of Old World France, now brought to the lower Cape in Hyannis.

Their legacy is a long one - the yeast starter dates back over 23 years, created during the first Bush administration. Yeast is a living, breathing entity, consuming sugars and making carbon dioxide, which causes the bread to swell and rise. It is deeply affected by temperature, humidity, altitude, and perhaps even more by the environment in which it lives - the bakery itself. Any baker knows this intuitively, if not consciously. Like brewing and cheese making, bread requires the intermingling, assemblage, and release of latent energy in chemical

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reactions between water, flour, yeast, enzymes, bacteria, and the atmosphere in which they thrive. Also, time: Vujosevic says it averages 24 hours of prep for each loaf baked. "It can't be rushed - the quality suffers, and the results are unsatisfactory."

The bakery side of the business is a major operation, with 130+ employees at the height of the summer season. They bake at least 20 varieties of breads, bagels, display breads (used for presentations at special occasions, all edible), croissants averaging five examples daily, and most recently, crackers. Their most popular items are the cranberry-pecan and brioche breads, chocolate croissants, raspberry streusel pull-apart bread, and house made kettle-cooked potato chips. All told, the bakery produces more than 200 varieties of artisan breads, pastries, and "goodies," with distribution and deliveries to over 350 locations across New England.

Though much of the ingredients are sourced locally, including their fruits, cranberries, eggs, onions, and herbs, plus poultry from nearby Blue Ribbon Farms in Yarmouth, the incredible quantity of flour they use every week dictated that they import from a major mill based



in North Dakota.

After fire damaged their original store in 2007, the group used the loss as a chance to establish a new home, offering a bakery *and* a café, serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Café-Boulangerie opened in late 2008. Today, Vojin and wife Donna manage the business operation, while co-owner Toma Stamenkovic oversees sales. Celberson Lemos heads the production team as head baker, with Mario Mariani serving as general manager of the bakery, café, and restaurant.

Their French bistro menu is rife with

classic French dishes, melded with contemporary international flavors. They are committed to using only the freshest ingredients of the best quality, while supporting local farmers and purveyors. To complement their "fait maison [home-made] cuisine," breads and patisserie, cheeses, pâtés, olive oils, sandwiches, salads, and to-go items, they offer a wonderful assortment of French wines, French and Belgian brews, and compelling cocktails at their Red Bar. "Our bakery's trademark has always been quality, taste, and authenticity, and the same is true for Café-Boulangerie.

To complete your dining experience, one can expect excellent, attentive service; superb music; contemporary Parisian ambiance; and a fresh bread loaf to take home and enjoy,* said Vujosevic.

The most recent addition to the team, replacing the very talented and well-respected head chef Rebecca Arnold, is executive chef Matthew Tropeano, a native of nearby Randolph, Massachusetts. Before coming to Pain d'Avignon, Tropeano had started very young at an Italian restaurant in Millis (Ristorante Primavera), then trained at Newbury College in their culinary program while also doing nighttime work at the famed—and now infamous—Bay Tower Room in Boston, where he was elevated to sous chef in a short six months.

In 2002, Matthew moseyed down to Texas for a spell at Nana in Dallas as saucier, then back up to Manhattan for a decade, including a lengthy impressive stage as executive chef at La Grenouille, one of the highest rated traditional French restaurants in the city. Following a brief stint at Le Silhouette in Hell's Kitchen (how sweet!), the young

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chef decided to move closer to home, somewhere he and his wife could raise their two young children in a quieter, more mellow environment. Having summ-ered on the Cape "for as long back as I can remember," Chef Matthew began looking around for a spot suitable for both the family and his traditional French culinary chops. The chef knew of Pain d'Avignon for many years, and a friend in the food business recommended he stop by to introduce himself.

Initial discussions were "touch and go" by Chef Tropeano's admission, as he toyed with the idea of opening a B&B in the area. But steadier heads prevailed, and Tropeano joined the august staff of Café-Boulangerie in March 2013. Bringing such stout knowledge and experience in classic French bis-tro cuisine for one so young (he just turned 34), the café looks to be on a sound and reliable culinary course in the months and years to come. Much of the menu has been left in place with



just a few subtle tweaks to dishes as is chef's wont.

There will be special offerings for the Christmas and New Year's holidays, among them: Poularde de Noel - a whole-roasted chicken (from Miss Scarlett's Blue Ribbon Farm in Yarmouth) loaded with truffles and a chestnut and sausage house-made stuffing (made with Pain D'Avignon's signature house-baked bread) Champagne Oysters - Barnstable oysters (caught by Chef Matthew himself) topped with caviar and served with a champagne granite.

Asked who has inspired him in his

culinary journey, Chef Matthew replies: Chef David McMillan (currently Executive Chef at Meddlesome Moth in Dallas, TX).

So whether it is a craving for a fresh warm buttery croissant and café latte, brioche loaf or just to sit and sip a vin rose with your plate of oysters, mussels or foie gras in the café next door, Pain d' Avignon can both sate the appetite and nourish the soul. Bon appétit!

Pain d' Avignon is open seven days a week: Counter Service Daily 7am-6pm (Kitchen closed 4pm-6pm), Dinner Served Wednesday (live music), Thursday & Sunday 6pm - 10pm / Friday & Saturday 6pm - 11pm. Closed Monday & Tuesday nights. **F**

Pain D'Avignon
15 Hinckley Road
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