

Fork it over, Boston!

a food blog by rachel leah blumenthal

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Escape to the Cape: Pain d'Avignon (Hyannis, MA)



I grew up in Massachusetts, but we weren't one of the many families who regularly vacationed on the Cape. Trips to see New Hampshire's Old Man in the Mountain (may he rest in peace, crumbled in a gorge somewhere) and the Flume were more our style, so my only real exposure to the Cape growing up was a quick trip to P-town in a friend's four-seat plane. So when I was invited to sneak out of Boston on an April evening to take a media field trip to **Pain d'Avignon** in Hyannis, I was immediately on board. We'd get the chance to tour the facilities, taste a sampling of products, and meet the new executive chef, Matthew Tropeano, a native of Randolph, Massachusetts (right near my hometown of Sharon). Before coming to Pain d'Avignon, Tropeano had been in New York for a decade, including a stint as executive chef at *La Grenouille*.



The French-style bakery and cafe/bistro is known in particular for their gorgeous handmade breads, many of them meant for display purposes (followed, of course, by eating). When Valentine's Day comes around, for example, they create a heart-shaped chocolate and hazelnut bread. Even if you don't frequent the Cape, you've probably already spotted their bread closer to Boston; Pain d'Avignon's goods appear at many local farmers' markets and grocery stores.



When we arrived at Pain d'Avignon, we spent some time perched around high tops in the bar area sipping cocktails. A popular choice was the Snowbird, a collaboration with [Bully Boy Distillers](#) and [Bonnie's James](#). This description is snagged from a press release, but it's rather lovely:

"Just as snowbirds chase warmer weather, this drink evokes a feel of spring and summer year-round. The butterscotch and banana undertones in Bully Boy's White Rum mixed with the cardamom tincture and the Peach Ginger Jam create a combination of tropical fruit flavors and spice to warm things up as we part ways with the snowy winter."



We then placed our food orders for the evening before being whisked around the production area for a tour. Second only to vanilla extract, the smell of bread baking is one of my favorites, so I could have stayed in their forever amongst the seemingly infinite loaves and rolls.



When it was time to eat, we finally had the chance to taste some bread, and it was just right: soft and springy on the inside, crunchy and full of character on the outside, and perfectly complemented by a small spread of butter.



I decided to go a stereotypical bistro French route for my meal, starting with French onion soup - the best in recent memory. There were generous amounts of the best part, the crispy melted cheese clinging to the side of the bowls, just waiting to be peeled off indelicately and popped in my mouth, table manners be damned.



Next, the steak frites. (See? I warned you I went the stereotypical route.) Full of cocktails, wine, bread, and cheese, I couldn't make much of a dent here, but the fries were irresistible - just a little bit flexible and precisely the right amount of salt.



And finally, the heavenly crêpes Suzette, two delicate crêpes swimming in a cloud of citrus and caramelized sugar.



Pain d'Avignon also serves breakfast and lunch (soups, salads, grilled pizzas, sandwiches), and there's a small patio outside, perfect for the warmer days ahead. I'm not sure when I'll find myself in Hyannis again, but I'd certainly make a point to return to Pain d'Avignon if I were in the area. Until then, I'll be adding the loaves I find at the market to my standard rotation.



Disclosure: This meal was complimentary, but all opinions expressed are my own.

<http://forkitoverboston.blogspot.com/2013/06/escape-to-cape-pain-davignon-hyannis-ma.html>