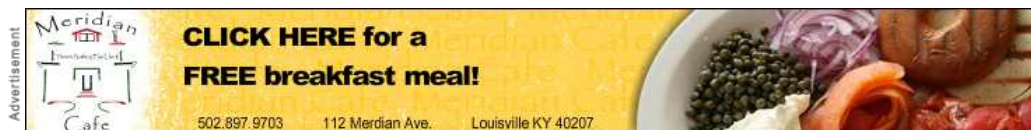


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The Cafe

Whimsy, attention to detail shine at new location

By **Marty Rosen**
Special to The Courier-Journal

The Cafe? Just "The Cafe?"

It's a name so simple, so singular, and so sure of itself that it may leave you scratching your head, wondering whether it's missing part of its moniker. Maybe it's actually The Cafe on Brent Street? Or perhaps it's Cafe Rubino?



Strata al Cucina, tomato dill soup and bread pudding are among the menu attractions at The Cafe, which moved from the Goss Avenue Antique Mall to a stand-alone spot near the east end of Broadway. (By Chris Hall, The Courier-Journal)

natural light, the same view of the L&N Railroad tracks, or the same calm, orderly elegance that made the old place seem like the very center of a civilization.

Silly me. The new spot -- a superbly renovated factory space -- is lighted by an assortment of glimmering chandeliers. The tables sport white tablecloths, blue-bottle vases and fresh-cut flowers. Mirrors sparkle on the walls.

In one corner, a whimsical assembly of doors -- pink, maroon and turquoise -- lead to nowhere in particular. Bright windows capture the northern light and gaze out at grand columns that rise to support an elevated section of the L&N Railroad. And just beyond those windows is a space that will make for great patio dining next spring.

Best of all, because it's a free-standing spot, The Cafe keeps its own hours. Service now includes breakfast, and evening hours may be coming.

On the table, things seem better than ever. Tomato dill soup (\$2.75/\$3.50) is a study in voluptuous grace -- the luxury of its fine-grained body offset by the lithe spirit of vegetables and herbs.

Salads (\$3.95-\$7.45) appear to have been assembled and inspected with a watchmaker's rigorous eye -- each green leaf, pecan or piece of roasted diced chicken breast put in place by a careful hand.

In the art of the sandwich, Chef Cindy Rubino is without peer -- and anyone who doubts that sandwich-making is an art has simply

But no, it's The Cafe. And it may be the only cafe you'll ever need.

Like many, I worried that The Cafe would lose something when it moved from the Goss Avenue Antique Mall to its new free-standing home near the east end of Broadway. I worried that the new location wouldn't have the same beautiful

The Cafe
712 Brent St.
Louisville, KY
(502) 637-6869

Rating: ★★½

[Web Site](#)

[Map](#)

Type: Sandwiches & Subs

Cuisine: Breakfast/lunch

Price Range: Inexpensive; most sandwiches with sides are \$7. Two persons could lunch or breakfast well for under \$20.

Reservations: For parties of six or more.

Children's menu/portions: Yes.

Smoking: No.

Accessibility: The restaurant appears to be fully accessible for people using wheelchairs.

Hours: Open seven days a week, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Guide to the Ratings:

- ★★★★ outstanding
- ★★★½ excellent
- ★★★★ very good
- ★★½ good
- ★★ fair
- ★ poor

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never experienced the meticulous details that transform the familiar -- tuna salad, pimento cheese, sliced ham, roasted vegetables, baguettes, walnut wheat bread and pita bread -- into the sublime (\$6.50-\$6.95).

One Saturday afternoon, I lunched on the Strata al Cucina (\$7.45). It's a humble-sounding Italian-style quiche made of leftover baguette, eggs, spinach, mushrooms, tomatoes and Swiss cheese. But The Cafe's version was a golden brown, oven-roasted treasure for the eye and palate.

Every layer expressed its unique flavor, from the slightly charred tomatoes on top (sliced in smiling halves) to the nutty strands of fresh spinach, to the tender vegetables suspended in the soft yellow curd.

Breakfast lovers will count themselves lucky that The Cafe opens at 8 -- and that the morning menu is as nicely conceived and executed as the lunch menu. Two roasts of Consumer's Choice coffee (one light, one dark, both lovely) set an accommodating tone for a menu filled with alluring delights.

Superb scones and muffins (\$2.25) are hand-crafted in-house by Martha Jones, who cultivates a tender crumb indeed. A wonderful cinnamon roll (\$2.95) is enriched with bits of sweet potato.

Baked oatmeal (\$4.95) is an innovation to reckon with, more pudding than porridge, enriched with applesauce, raisins, cinnamon and cream, then baked till it forms a bit of firm crust around the edge, topped with pink slices of cooked apple, then served in an indulgent splash of half-and-half.

And speaking of indulgences, the ultimate may be a crisp hash of roasted potatoes, ham, corned beef, roast beef and onions topped with a fried egg and a judicious dollop of cheese -- served with a bright side of apples, oranges and grapes.

Freelance restaurant critic Marty Rosen's review appears on Saturdays. You can e-mail him at cjdining@gmail.com.

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