

Grab a sandwich or luscious dessert at Sweet Spot Cafe

BY LINDA SPAREMAN
CORRESPONDENT

The Sweet Spot Café is tucked in the Village Five shopping center at Five Mile and Newburgh, where for the past two years owners, Julie and Charles Bou-Maroun have served fresh pizza twists, specialty coffee and teas and a delightful assortment of salads, soups, cheesecakes, and ice cream cakes at the shop.

The couple talked about owning their own restaurant for a long time before settling on a location and actually starting the cafe. They live in the area, and remember wishing there was somewhere to stop for an ice cream while out for bike rides with their children.

"There was no place to stop, sit down, have a cup of coffee, and just relax for a little bit," remembers Julie, a lifetime Livonia resident. Now, there is a place, but the Bou-Marouns are not on their bikes anymore—they're running the ice cream shop.

Charles had previous experience in the restaurant business when he co-owned a Ram's Horn with his brother. Without a national chain like Ram's Horn promoting the business, the Bou-Marouns found, they've had to work twice as hard getting established.

"When people see a national chain name, they know what to expect, but when you see our name, it's a variety of things," said Charles.

But, things have grown at a steady pace, and today they enjoy serving many patrons who have become regulars.

"It's kinda funny," said Charles about the cafe's regular customers, "you might forget someone's name, but you remember what they eat. We've tried to make this a place where local people can hang out and feel comfortable," he added.

The cafe is clean as a whistle, with a festive atmosphere. The Bou-Marouns decorated the restaurant themselves. In spite of its size, the cafe feels roomy and inviting inside. Fabric draped over well-placed lighting resembles kites, making the atmosphere cheery. There are a few deli-style tables, including one outside the shop, where diners can grab a quick bite. However, most Sweet Shop customers use the carry-out service.

Specialty teas are featured at Sweet Shop Cafe. Monkey King Jasmine tea is a delicate varience from traditional tea, with an exotic, yet not over-powering taste.

Bulk candies are available, as well as pre-made gift baskets. Giant jaw breakers are in constant demand.



Julie Bou-Maroun with some of the many sweet treats available at the Sweet Spot. On the trays, from left, caramel apple cheese cake, raspberry rumple cheesecake, cannoli and chocolate frosted brownies.

Sweet Spot also has a thriving catering business. "Our catering went from dessert trays to people asking for cheese trays, or fruit trays," said Charles. "Then, we had customer's say, 'OK, you've gotta start with appetizers, and have everything to desserts.'"

They happily complied. Photos of past catering trays are available for customers to look through for ideas.

Even treats like Smoothies can be catered by Sweet Shop, as they were at a homecoming celebration at Ladywood High School. "One girl came over to me and said how she just hates everything," remembered Julie. "She said she was a really a picky eater, but she drank our smoothie, and just loved it." "The girl's exact words were, 'You rock!'" Julie smiled.

If you've been looking for Guernsey Ice Cream and Sander's Hot Fudge topping, this is your place. The Bou-Marouns hand select menu items, like Lavazza coffee (Italy's most popular brand), Ghiradelli chocolate for their hot chocolate, and Sander's Hot Fudge.

They also feature specialty cheesecakes they have delivered from Chicago. Guernsey ice cream is featured in their desserts, including their ice-cream cakes which Julie makes herself.

The menu includes soups, salads and pizza twists. The attractive dessert menu includes gourmet cakes, cheesecakes, pies, and ice cream cakes made by Bou-Maroun with Guernsey Ice Cream. A full range of ice cream specialties is also available. Soft serve yogurt and yogurt specialties finish off the dessert selections. Soup served in edible bread bowls will be featured soon.

Sandwiches average \$3.75. Salads are priced from \$2-\$3.50. Desserts begin around \$1 for a Kiddie Scoop ice cream cone to \$4.25 for a Banana Split. Cheesecakes are \$2.75 per slice, or \$26.95 for the whole cake. Ice cream cakes begin at \$15.95, for six to eight servings and go up to \$23.95 for 12 to 16 servings. A six-serving ice cream pie is \$13.99.

SWEET SPOT CAFE

Where: 37575 Five Mile in the Village Five Shopping Center, Livonia

Hours: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Monday-Friday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Saturday; closed Sunday

Menu: Sandwiches, soup, salads, desserts

Cost: Lunch of sandwich with salad or soup averages just under \$5; desserts average \$3

Credit cards: All major accepted

Carryout orders: Phone (734)

464-4200; fax (734) 464-9080

Catering: Available

Seats: 20

DINING BRIEFS

HOLIDAY BUFFET

Students at the Oakland Schools Technical Campus Southwest will serve a holiday buffet 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10, 6-7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 11 and 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12, at the campus, 1000 Beck, Wixom.

The menu will include soup, salad, bread and rolls and dessert. Three entrees will be served: Roasted chicken stuffed with mushrooms, bacon, onions, garlic and shallots and served with a sauce, sour cream and chive mashed potatoes; roast prime rib au jus with horseradish sauce; and pistachio-crusted salmon with rice, cranberry relish and honey butter sauce.

The meal costs \$12 for adults and \$7 for children. For more information call the student restaurant at (248) 960-5429.

SANTA AT SHIELD'S

A few spots still remain open for Cookies with Santa at Shield's Restaurant and Pizzeria, 9:30 a.m.-noon, Saturday, Dec. 7, at the Troy restaurant, located at Maple and Crooks roads.

Children will decorate one dozen cookies during the event and meet Santa Claus.

Shield's will provide pre-baked cookies and trimmings. The cost is \$7, which includes a beverage. Sessions run from 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.-noon.

Parents can sign up and pay in advance by calling Shields at (248) 637-3131. Walk-ins will be allowed, but preference given to those who sign up in advance.

HOLIDAY DINNER

Cafe Cortina will serve a special holiday dinner, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 24. Strolling musicians will entertain during the three seatings at 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 31. Visit the restaurant, 30716 W. 10 Mile, Farmington Hills, online at www.cafecortina.com or call (248) 474-3033.

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Spelling = A

Math = B+



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**Data by CareChoice 2001 data. **1 measured and reported by plans in 2002.

***Based on the source of all 11 measures and the measures included in Quality.