

Mosaic Redefines the Square Meal; [FINAL Edition]

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Does that turkey sandwich on whole wheat seem too bland? Maybe even pumpernickel has gotten a little prosaic. Mosaic Cuisine and Cafe in Rockville may have the answer: waffle sandwiches.

The thick, crispy waffles are sliced through the center, leaving the squares on the outside and a soft, airy texture inside. At breakfast, the "waffleissimos" can be stuffed with scrambled eggs, turkey and Swiss cheese sauce, salmon and lemon-cheese sauce, or five other options. At lunch, turkey breast sandwiches are dressed up with cucumbers and herb mayonnaise. Pecan grape chicken salad or even grilled cheese on a waffle is also on the menu. At dinner, try the waffle sandwich filled with grilled eggplant, peppers and squash with an olive-pesto spread or the prosciutto and fresh mozzarella waffle. They range from \$5.75 to \$9.75.

"I am reinventing the waffle," owner and chef Thierry Jugnet said. "It's a novelty. A lot of people are very surprised because they think sweets and breakfast when they hear 'waffle' and not stuffed like a sandwich."

Jugnet opened Mosaic in April, initially calling it Mosaic Eclectic Cuisine after the checkerboard pattern of the waffle and the varied types of food he serves. But Jugnet jettisoned "eclectic" when too many customers said they just weren't sure what it meant. But in a restaurant where thin reeds of red-colored bamboo decorate the tables instead of flowers, close-up photos of everything from dried beans to pineapples cover the wall, and flavors on the menu range from Cajun to Thai to French, Mosaic's intent is clear.

Waffles are just the beginning. Breakfast also includes such staples as French toast with strawberry puree, smoked salmon and whitefish salad served with cream cheese and a bagel, and three-egg omelets with a host of fillings.

Lunch also includes 10 salads served with a waffle on the side. But in acknowledgement of the low-carb craze, the menu notes that "for a low or carb-free salad, ask your server to eliminate the waffle garnish." Like the waffle sandwiches, the salads (\$6.45 to \$9.25) go beyond the run-of-the-mill Caesar, although those are available, too. More creative choices include pan-seared marinated scallop salad tossed in sesame dressing with bell pepper and cabbage slaw, warm goat cheese salad and saffron risotto salad.

Until three weeks ago, the restaurant was open only for breakfast and lunch.

Dinner allows Jugnet, who co-founded the former Dupont Circle eatery Midi Cuisine and served as head chef for Ridgewell's Catering, to show off his varied repertoire.

He imports what he calls "flaming torte" from Germany and his native France.

The tortes begin with a thin, crunchy-edged pastry crust. The term "flaming" refers to the high temperature at which they are baked rather than a dish in which the alcohol is ignited. The "traditional" flaming torte is topped with smoked bacon, Muenster cheese, grilled onions and tarragon. Another is covered with wild mushrooms and baby spinach. They sell for \$12.95 and

\$13.95.

The thin crust is another nod to cutting carbs, Jugnet said. "It's an alternative pizza, which is like 80 percent dough and 20 percent filling," he said. "Now we're in an age of Atkins and South Beach diets, where people don't want as many carbs. This offers them a low-carb count."

Other dinner entrees (\$11.95 to \$14.95) include pan-seared rainbow trout, with a yin/yang-like swirl of gingery jade green sauce on one half and sweet red fennel and roasted red bell pepper sauce on the other. The paprika- and Parmesan-crusting pork medallions are served with caramelized onion marmalade and Cajun lemon-caper sauce. Cumin and rosemary roasted spring lamb comes wrapped in phyllo pastry. Also on the menu is a specialty from the Basque region of Spain and France -- half a boneless, skinless chicken stewed with onions, peppers and tomatoes.

For dessert, try the crepes suzette, two lacy French crepes flambéed with Grand Marnier and served with hot orange sauce, or the warm chocolate financier, a very light, nearly flourless cake served with vanilla ice cream and a drizzle of strawberry sauce and melted chocolate.

Mosaic Cuisine and Cafe 186 Halpine Rd., Rockville (across from Congressional Plaza), 301-468-0682. Open 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and Sunday; 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Closed Mondays.

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