

Business

The perfect blend: Madison Beanery Beyond serves healthful fare, coffee, tea

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By Amanda Pinto, Register Staff

MADISON — It's nearing closing time at the Madison Beanery Beyond, but when a woman strolls through the front door, owner Jeff Allen lets her know they have the croissants she favors.

Another customer, Richard Geller, ducks in for a quick cup of authentic chai — the likes of which he hasn't tasted since he was in India. He smiles and says, "The Himalayas have come to Madison."

The Madison Beanery Beyond, open for about four weeks, already has a following of regulars and continues to win new fans.

Diners recently remarked on the freshness of the eatery's unique offerings — inventive omelets, sandwiches and salads prepared by Allen's business partner, Mark Garthwait, a chef whose credentials include New Haven's Scozzi Trattoria & Wine Bar and Union League Cafe.

The restaurant, at 712 Boston Post Road, offers a wide selection of coffee and tea and serves breakfast all day, in addition to a lengthy lunch menu. It serves up a variety of choices like homemade scones, omelets made with goat cheese, fresh mozzarella and sundried tomato sandwiches, and a traditional Indian soup called dal.

It's part of Allen's philosophy to offer the "best ingredients for a reasonable price." The most expensive item on the menu is \$8.

"I felt like there needed to be somewhere that people could come that was a place that had culture, that had a nice atmosphere, and food that you couldn't get everywhere else," said Allen, 37, of Madison.

The atmosphere — created by Allen, and partners Garthwait, 39, and Justin Tuthill, 24 — is rich with hints of India, Tibet and Nepal; photographs of Tibetan nuns line the maroon and green-hued walls.

"A lot of flair that you see here just comes from my own philosophy and experience," said Allen, who lived in India and Nepal, is fluent in the Tibetan language, and currently translates for a retired abbot of the Dali Lama's monastery.

Allen established a nonprofit organization that raised more than \$100,000 for the education of Tibetan nuns, who had no previous access to education and will now receive degrees equivalent to a doctorate in Buddhist philosophy.

Allen said he and his partners are socially conscious, and apply a great deal of thinking to their choices; when he created Madison Beanery Beyond's menu, he aimed for healthful options, with less of a focus on meat, that gave the customer a variety of choices.

Allen and Garthwait have known each other since 1989. Both began in the restaurant business as teens. Allen worked at a variety of restaurants including Portofino Pizza in Madison and Half Moon Coffee and Grille Cafe in Wallingford.

Their restaurant experience allowed them to learn many different styles of cooking.

When Madison Gourmet Beanery and Hometown Bakery closed about three months ago, Allen saw the need to fill the void downtown. He, Garthwait and Tuthill got together, revamped the interior with friends, and opened a restaurant "all their own" Garthwait said.

They knew they wanted to provide fine dining in a casual atmosphere.

"All the ideas we've had throughout the years, we could put them together," Garthwait said.

Allen said the idea beyond the restaurant was to stand out, to "be a destination" on the Shoreline.

"Our main goal was not to be pigeon-holed into anything anyone else was already doing and come up with something new, exciting and fresh," he said.

Madison Beanery Beyond is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Allen says he aims to open the restaurant on Sundays soon.

Amanda Pinto can be reached at apinto@nhregister.com or 203-789-5734.

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