

On the Menu

Paige Matthie takes us with her as she samples the best Charlottetown has to offer, and at prices acceptable for the average student

Being German, I may be biased, but I am a firm believer that some of the best, highest quality baked goods, sweets, and all around culinary offerings come from Germany. The Germans are renowned for their insistence in pure, fresh ingredients of the highest quality, in simple, hearty meals, and for the perfection they demand from their product. The new German café on University Avenue, Leonhard's, offers all of these things in a charming and meticulously designed environment.

You may be familiar with Axel and Alexandra Leon-

hard from their stall at the Charlottetown Farmer's Market, where they sell their various breads and pastries (the organic dark rye is my favourite). Both are available at their downtown location, near Beanz, and the menu of two soups and a casserole changes daily. What makes Leonhard's truly special, though, are its coffees. The two-page spread of hot and cold caffeinated drinks has the classic coffee, cappuccino, and lattes, but you can also get a soothing hot milk and honey and a tempting hot apple or orange juice with whipped cream and cin-

namon, one of the more interesting beverage combinations I've come across.

Needing a mid-morning zing, I opted for a standard cappuccino, which was anything but ordinary. There weren't any fancy bells or whistles parading on top, but the froth was rich, the coffee was smooth, and the little sprinkle of noticeably fresh cinnamon left just the right amount of spice in the aroma. Their vanilla macchiato is also unrivaled, and the hot chocolate is just downright pretty.

I thoroughly enjoyed my choice of celery soup with some of their medium rye. In true Germanic fashion, real cream was employed in the base, and the veggies were cooked just right (just enough to soften them slightly). The thinly sliced rye acted as a perfect sponge for the remainder of the creamy liquid, and I was somewhat transported to

my Great Aunt's kitchen in Wertheim, Germany where I have enjoyed many light meals similar to this one. This soup was not only flavourful and nourishing, but also comforting.

I followed things up with a presently unnamed dessert that was basically a sponge cake topped with peaches and a cherry jelly. The combination did little to warm me after a frigid trek through the wind and snow, and would probably be more appropriately served in summer, but it was delicious all the same. German sponge cake is not exactly the light and fluffy treat we're used to in North America, rather it is slightly denser and is a strong base for lighter toppings like cream, nuts or fruit. The sweetness of the peaches here are perfectly offset by the tartness of the cherry jelly, which is a beautiful, regal colour of purple, similar to red wine.

The care that goes into preparing the food and drinks is equalled in the careful design of the restaurant. Light and airy in atmosphere, the dining area is grounded in the velvety fabric of the bench seats, the vibrant throw pillows, and the rich wood chairs and floor. The cherry on this cake, aside from the ones in the Schwartz Wald Kirsch Kuchen (or Black Forest cake), is the delightful crystal chandelier which hangs in the center of the room.

Leonhard's has elevated the café and bakery to an art and is on my list of top eateries for 2009.

One further note, if you're in the mood to stretch your budget, and I mean really splurge, the only place to do it in Charlottetown is Lot 30, the new Island venture by internationally renowned Chef Gordon Bailey. Save this place for celebrations and special occasions.

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