

Upstart Nöam Restaurant has gained a loyal following on Decarie

MtlRestoRap

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In 1987 Howard Szalavetz and his late father Dave purchased a property at the corner of Decarie and Vezina which housed an auto mechanics garage and a car wash. Over the years, Howard tried to add a culinary mix to the building, first with a coffee shop and then a REAL Bagel franchise. Neither succeeded,

Now, with a growing empire of some 100 buildings under his company's wing it is safe to say that the food component on Decarie was hardly top of mind. Then last spring the telephone rang. Brothers-in-law Meir Azerad and Ynon Cohen wanted to open a polished sit-down kosher restaurant there. Howard had to think long and hard, trying to figure out how a business model like that could succeed in what was essentially the waiting room for people as their cars were being washed. Meir and Ynon were convincing and he agreed to a lease. The duo proceeded



One of the Noam popular pasta dishes.



to create a model from scratch, dubbing it Nöam Restaurant in the memory of a family member who had passed away a number of years ago, and undertaking significant renovations.

Interestingly, a wood oven remained from the REAL Bagel

experiment. Meir and Ynon were able to repurpose it to make pizza at up to 1000 degrees Fahrenheit in two minutes. The place opened last summer. I must admit I only found out about it recently while chatting with Howard, who encouraged me to come by. I did and what I found was one of the trendiest new spots in Montreal. Yes, this is a kosher restaurant. But the menu here is for everyone, regardless of whether you are kosher or even Jewish.

The place is open every night except Friday, as well as Sunday for brunch. There are only 60 seats and reservations are strongly recommended. You can do so via Open Table, where Nöam Restaurant has already been listed on their top 100 list in Canada. The night I went, there people were still coming in the door after 9 pm.

Since the garage and car wash are closed during most restaurant hours, there are some 30 parking spots available and plenty more on Decarie and side streets. Meir and Ynon are already in discussions with Howard to add a party room at the upstairs level of the building.

The menu here has many options: soups, salads, appetizers, pasta, pizza, fish, decadent desserts and a full liquor and wine menu as well as smoothies and milkshakes. If it is your birthday be prepared to be serenaded as loud Israeli music plays and the servers bring over a yummy dessert with sparklers in it.

Howard was my dining partner and we had an opportunity to share many items on the menu.

Ynon brought a number of dishes over to the table, enabling me to sample the cuisine and pack up the remainder to share with my office colleagues the following day.

The caprese features tomatoes and fresh mozzarella with balsamic reduction and pesto. Noam's special is called that for a reason, a crispy fried zucchini pyramid served with homemade tzatziki sauce. The mozzarella sticks were coated with mozzarella in a herb and parmesan breadcrumb mix, served with their marinara



Owners Meir Azerad and Ynon Cohen

sauce. Then there was the arancini, three risotto balls with mushroom, mozzarella, breadcrumb coated and served with alfredo funghi sauce.

Ynon was particularly proud to showcase the Beet Carpaccio, made from roasted beets with feta cheese, balsamic reduction and topped with a glazed nut mix and the fried olives.

For the main course I went for the pan-seared tuna steak, beautifully cooked with side orders of potatoes and risotto. Howard ordered one of their amazing pasta dishes and a Napoletano pizza, piping hot out of their special oven.

For dessert we shared their homemade chocolate lava cake, which came with some vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce.

"We are working very hard the both of us to make something different in the city and a big, big vibe," said Meir. "That is really what we are focusing on."

Nöam Restaurant is open Monday to Thursday from 5 pm to 11:30 pm, Saturday from 9:30 pm to 2 pm and Sunday for brunch from noon to 3 pm and then 5 pm to 11 pm. It is located at 6647 Blvd. Décarie. You can call 514-564-6626 or log on to www.noamrestaurant.com for the menu and delivery options.

Mike's Resto Notes: Tommy Café + Apéro, Le Fou Fou

It has been nine years now since major restaurant franchisor Foodtastic opened its first Tommy Café + Apéro on Notre Dame Street in Old Montreal. There are now 10 locations and more on the way. My friend Tony and I got to experience the newest one at Royalmount, with a first-class backgrounder session and lunch in the company of Daniel Harvey, the company's senior vice-president of full service restaurants.

Tommy Café is one of the few Montreal restaurants where you can get a refreshing array of breakfast and brunch items all day. While the Royalmount location is a stand-alone spot beside the skating rink and not physically within the mall premises, it does stay open until 9 pm each weekday and 5 pm on weekends. There is a terrific retro look to this place, which can seat 72 people and 20 more on a planned seasonal patio.



Lenny Lighter is back at PRIME Bar à Boeuf at Royalmount

Avocado toast is the Tommy trademark and it comes in different incarnations. From the main menu we selected the BAE (two eggs scrambled with bacon and

multigrain bread, served with salad and potatoes), La Totale (French toast, scrambled eggs, maple syrup and bacon or sausage) and the gobble (ciabatta, sliced turkey, honey Dijon, mixed greens, bacon and tomato), adding the keylime pie and chocolate cheesecake for dessert. Info: <https://tommycafe.ca/en/menu-royalmount/>

Le Fou Fou: Have you experienced Le Fou Fou yet? I have now visited this innovative food hall at the new Royalmount development a few times. It redefines Montreal's culinary scene with two à la carte restaurants, 10 unique culinary concepts, and three individually themed bars from celebrated chefs and renowned restaurateurs.

Innovative technology enables customers to place orders from multiple vendors simultaneously, merging their selections into a single ticket and delivery. A friend and I decided to dine the old fashioned way, going from kiosk to kiosk and using the gift card provided to us for our choices. First choices goes to PRIME Bar à Boeuf by Lenny Lighter of the original Moishes Steakhouse, offering irresistible burgers and steak frites crafted from top-notch cuts of meat, infused with decades of steakhouse know-how. I recommend the smash burger. My friend went for a classic Neapolitan pizza at Tiramisu.

There is also À la Table Vins et Fromage, offering uniquely Fou Fou wine flights perfectly paired with premium charcuterie from À la table by Hanna; Tori Ramen by Hanhak Kim, delivers the finest ramen in Montreal; Bar Sucré, delightfully offers post-dinner cocktails and decadent desserts by the slice; Eva's all-day café by Shah Kash offering a mouth-watering all day

menu from classic brunch staples to Mediterranean inspired plates and juicy fried chicken; Exchange Marché du Café offers local roasts, specialty lattes, and a selection of pastries by the renowned Hof Kelsten bakery; Hogar Taqueria by the Torres brothers serves up authentic chef-crafted Mexican classics such as tacos, enchiladas, and tostadas made with steakhouse-quality ingredients; Il Miglio by legendary restaurateur Claude Pelletier, offers his signature, made from scratch pastas; Le Lucky Belly, comptoir asiatique serves up poke, boba and regional Asian specialties; Spirulina health bar has something for everyone, serving up mouth-watering toasts, salads, and smoothies, by Jessica Power and Olivia Farruggia; Le Taj has bold and flavorful Indian cuisine; and finally Le Fou Fou's cocktail bar. Info: www.lefoufou.com



There is a nice selection of egg items at Tommy Café

For a more thorough look at these places and more, please go to www.MtlRestoRap.com