

Galettes galore at Hepburn's

If you were a ballerina with a business degree, and the real estate company you worked for closed its doors, how would you chose to make a living in the present economy? Why, you'd open a *crêperie*, of course! At least that's what Deanna Birg thought. Her decision was based on solid research: crêpes always did well in Europe, but did you know they are also big in Australia, and HUGE in China? "The United States are often the last to adopt new trends in food," chuckles Deanna. Well, gourmets – and expats – rejoice, because at Hepburn's Crêpe and Coffee, you are in for a treat of the senses as well as the taste buds. Think "Breakfast at Tiffany's" or "Roman Holiday." You are surrounded by stills of classic movies featuring everybody's favorite style icon, Belgian-born Audrey Hepburn. The aroma of coffee (they roast their own beans) and crêpes wafts through the air. Crêpe chefs are at work behind a glass partition: you can watch your order being prepared, if you so choose. But you can also take your order number outside and install yourself under an umbrella on the patio facing Van Dyke Road. If it's a while since you've been this way, you won't recognize the area: Shelby Township is creating a little "downtown" here, at the intersection with 24-Mile road, with new condos, town houses, and businesses.

Dessert and more!

Not quite a pancake, a crêpe does make a lovely breakfast, or lunch, or even dinner. The savory kind is called "galette" and made with buckwheat batter. In Brittany, on the French Atlantic coast, the traditional *galettes de sarrasin* are made with 100% buckwheat, but to ease our American palates into the transition, Hepburn's feature a mixture of wheat and buckwheat flours. To make ordering easy and fun, each creation bears the name of a movie star. There is a wide array of toppings to choose from, ranging from the basic (the George: maple syrup, butter and powdered sugar - \$3) to the inspired (the Harrison: smoked salmon lox, tomato fondue, fresh spinach, fresh lemon, rosemary, fresh cream cheese - \$8). Bagels, muffins and cookies are also available, as are cider, juices, and bubble tea (got to try it!) – and espresso drinks and hot or iced tea and gelato.

Deanna likes to indulge in Hepburn's offerings herself, she admits, but running around all day helps to preserve her svelte dancer's figure. She takes orders, makes cappuccinos and supervises the crêpes makers, baristas, and servers. If necessary, she (and most of the other staff members) can turn out crêpes too, using the imported Krampouz griddle, and they are "comme il faut": meltingly soft

in the middle and crisp around the edges. The busiest time is between 9 AM and 2 PM, then it slows down a bit to pick up again at dinnertime (6-7PM).

Creating jobs

Entrepreneurship flourishes in the present business climate. Several people have approached Hepburn's with franchise requests, and surrounding towns have shown an interest. The plan is to open 10 more outlets over the next five years. Deanna and her business partner are currently looking at locations in Grosse Pointe, Royal Oak, Partridge Creek and as far away as Traverse City. Rochester is not on the list at the moment, because it is only a hop and a skip away from the original Hepburn's. "It will be hard to let go of my baby," Deanna sighs. But adopting a new one is the best remedy, I assure her. Think of all the jobs you can create right here in Michigan. (EK)

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Smart move...
Deanna Birg (L), general manager at Hepburn's Crêpe and Coffee, dreamed up the concept combining French crêpes and buckwheat galettes (top) with vintage movie imagery.